

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

We the clay, you the potter, we are all the work of your hand.

First Reading

O Lord, rouse up your might, O Lord, come to our help. *Psalm*

God by calling you has joined you to his Son, Jesus Christ.

Second Reading

Father in heaven,
our hearts desire the warmth of your love
and our minds are searching for the light of your Word.

Increase our longing for Christ our Saviour
and give us the strength to grow in love,
that the dawn of his coming
may find us rejoicing in his presence
and welcoming the light of his truth.

Old Opening Prayer

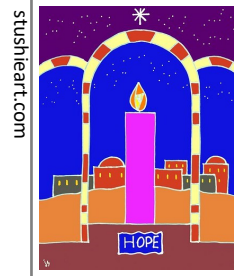
This week's texts if you want to reflect further:
Isaiah 63: 16–17; 64: 1, 3–8; Psalm 79 (80); 1 Cor. 1: 3–9; Mark 13: 33–37



Stay Awake!
because you do
not know when
the master of the
house is coming.

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



First Sunday of Advent
Year B, 3rd December 2023

'Stay awake! Be ready!'

As we begin the season of Advent, the readings continue to focus (as in recent weeks) not just on the coming of Christ at the end of time, but also on his coming in our own lives.

The people of Israel, newly returned from exile, find the task of rebuilding their land difficult, and ask God their Father to come and help them. They have done penance, and now trust that he will return (**First Reading**).

The **Psalm** continues this theme, appealing to God 'the shepherd of Israel' to come to the help of his people.

In the **Second Reading**, Paul writes to the Corinthians of his gratitude for the graces they have received. Their strong Christian witness and the gifts of the Spirit they have been given will stand them in good stead when the Lord returns on the last day.

In the **Gospel** Jesus uses images familiar to his audience to warn them to remain alert and awake, as a doorkeeper would. In this way they will not be caught unawares when the Lord comes again.

So we, too, pray to enter this season of Advent trusting that the Lord will come: as he came in history at Christmas; as he comes in our hearts if we keep our door open; and as he will come at the end of time. We pray for all those in the world who are waiting with longing and hope for freedom from oppression and peace.



Opening Prayer

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ
with righteous deeds at his coming,
so that, gathered at his right hand,
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom.

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 1: 3–9

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send you grace and peace.

I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have received through Jesus Christ. I thank him that you have been enriched in so many ways, especially in your teachers and preachers; the witness to Christ has indeed been strong among you, so that you will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit while you are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed; and he will keep you steady and without blame until the last day, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, because God by calling you has joined you to his Son, Jesus Christ; and God is faithful.

At the beginning of this season of Advent, I reflect on my mood. What are my hopes and desires for the forthcoming weeks? I pause, take a couple of deep breaths, and when I feel quieter, I relax into my prayer.

I read the text slowly. Perhaps it helps if I imagine that Paul is writing to me personally.

How do I respond when he thanks God on my behalf?

Perhaps at the moment I am inclined to focus on my problems; the irritants in my life rather than the graces I have received.

I ponder, and try to name at least three things in my life for which I am grateful. That might include a person or possession without which my whole life would be changed for the worse.

I give thanks for all those who have loved me and supported me in my faith journey.

Perhaps I consider the gifts the Spirit has given me. How do they shape the way I lead my life? What use do I make of them?

I turn to the Lord and speak with him in my own words. I tell him what is in my heart at the moment.

I may want to repeat several times a short phrase from Paul's letter that speaks to me particularly today, such as *God is faithful*.

What images or incidents in my life come to mind?

In time, to conclude my prayer, I thank the Lord for being with me.

I ask him for what I need in order to live the next few weeks longing and waiting in hope for his coming.

Gospel Mark 13: 33–37

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!'

Before I settle down to pray this Gospel, I make sure I have all I need: perhaps my bible or simply this leaflet; maybe a favourite candle or cross. I try to block out intrusive noises and either focus my gaze on a particular point or shut my eyes. What are you going to show me today, Lord?

When I've reached a measure of inner quiet in the way that works best for me, I slowly read these words of Jesus to his disciples.

Maybe I imagine that I am there with them too, and he is speaking to me.

Perhaps I reflect on the doorkeeper, keeping watch, waiting.

Do I find it easy to wait? Who or what enables me to remain attentive, aware of others' actions and feelings as I expect the Master's return?

I pause awhile. What are people throughout the world waiting for?

Perhaps the Lord's coming represents greater freedom or better living conditions.

What are my own feelings as I await his return: dread, hope, eager anticipation ...? I ponder.

Who have been the 'doorkeepers' in my own life, enabling me to come back, encouraging and supporting me? I give thanks for them.

Is there someone for whom I am being a doorkeeper at the moment?

I speak to the Lord about my motivations, my hopes for them.

I ask him to show me how I can best stay awake and be ready, on my guard, during these weeks of Advent when there may be many demands on me. I listen carefully and remain quietly with the Lord, conscious that he is always awake, ready to open his door to me.

Eventually, I say my goodbyes, without rushing, simply grateful for the moments we have spent together.