

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

I will fulfil the promise I made.

First Reading

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

Psalm

May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all.

Second Reading

Straighten up and raise your heads,
because your redemption is drawing near.

Gospel

All-powerful God,
increase our strength of will for doing good
that Christ may find an eager welcome at his coming
and call us to his side in the kingdom of heaven.

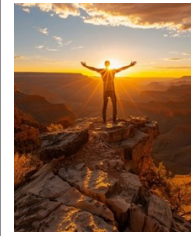
Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you want to reflect further
Jer. 33:14–16; Ps. 24 (25); 1 Thess. 3:12–4:2; Luke 21: 25–28, 34–36



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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



**First Sunday of Advent
Year C, 1st December 2024**

'Straighten up and raise your heads,
because your redemption is drawing near'

Today we begin the season of Advent, a word which means 'the coming.' There are three comings: of Jesus's Nativity at Bethlehem, of the Lord in glory at the end of time, and of Christ's Spirit into our hearts and lives at each present moment. The readings invite us to perceive our place in the present world as something that opens us out to others. They call us to live according to the perspective of the new world to come.

The great prophet Jeremiah, in the **First Reading**, offers hope in the promise of that first coming. Through the springing up of the 'righteous branch of David' the people will dwell securely. In response, I may like to imagine myself lifting up my soul to the Lord (**Psalm**). St Paul, writing to the Christians at Thessalonica (**Second Reading**), reminds them to be ready for that second coming of the Lord in glory. They believed this to be imminent, and being ready for it meant abounding in loving service.

In the **Gospel**, Jesus consoles his disciples – and us. When the signs of his coming in glory are to be seen, we can stand tall and eager for the gift of redemption, for what we are awaiting is the fulness of Christ's Spirit, already alive and active in our hearts.

Let's pray, this week, that we may find every opportunity to live as though Christ died yesterday, rose from the dead today, and is coming in glory tomorrow. Amen.



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.

First Reading 1 Thessalonians 3:12–4:2

Brothers and sisters: May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Finally, then, brothers and sisters, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

How am I coming to this time of prayer? How am I feeling just now?
Am I carrying something with me? Am I able to hand over some of my worries and concerns into the Lord's care?

I ponder these questions to ready myself for prayer as I take some slow, deep breaths. Gradually I become stiller, quieter.

I ask for the grace I need for these moments.

Only when ready do I begin to read the text slowly, prayerfully.
As I read, what do I notice? Is something drawing me? Resonating within me? I read again and pause, perhaps to savour a word or line.

There may be something challenging me in this reading. Or I may be feeling consoled. I might consider... who am I before the Lord?

In what ways do I please God?

How might I walk in God's way even more?

Perhaps I imagine myself standing before the Lord Jesus with all his saints, asking (as St Ignatius invites us to do in the *Spiritual Exercises*): 'What have I done for you? What am I doing for you? What will I do for you?' I ponder these questions in the Lord's presence and, perhaps, await his response.

When ready, I end with a slow sign of the cross.

From today onwards in the RC Church in England, Wales, and Scotland, all readings are taken from the Catholic version of the ESV (English Standard Version) translation, thus replacing the Jerusalem Bible used in the Lectionary since 1969. You can read more about this change in the Prego Plus for the First Sunday in Advent.

Gospel Luke 21: 25–28, 34–36

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples: 'There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. 'But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.'

We begin this cycle of readings from St Luke with a dramatic Gospel that has an apocalyptic style about it. As I prepare myself to read and pray with this text, I settle myself, getting in touch with how I am feeling and becoming aware of the Lord, present to me now.

I read the lines slowly, deliberately, staying with the vivid images.

To what words am I being drawn?

What am I noticing within me as I read?

I talk to the Lord about how I am feeling about this reading.

I speak very honestly and openly.

I read it again, this time very conscious that the Lord is at my side.

I am being shown what is to come, calmly and gently. The Lord is telling me about his own coming in glory. I trust him.

How am I feeling now?

Perhaps, a second time, I imagine myself standing before the Son of Man. This time I am straightening up and raising my head, not in my own strength, but in the strength and encouragement of the Lord himself. How does this feel?

I rest in his encouragement, asking for the confidence to trust him ever more deeply.

When ready, I end: *Glory be ...*