

Catholic

UPDATE

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Celebrating Advent

GOD IS WITH US ALREADY...
AND NOT YET.

This collection of reflections is based on the classic Advent formula of "Already, Not Yet." Each day of the season aims to provide a starting point for reflecting on how our faith is already handed to us but not yet perfectly lived.

FR. DANIEL P. HORAN, OFM

★ First Week of Advent

Sunday: A Prophet's Challenge (ISAIAH 2:4)

Some of life's patterns are comforting and assuring, like the rising and setting of the sun, while others can be disconcerting, like a powerful storm. The latter explains this passage from Isaiah in reference to some of the disturbing things we regularly witness in life. Isaiah challenges us to imagine an end to violence and division; to consider working toward a more perfect world. It's a reminder of the fulfilled promise we anticipate during Advent and celebrate at Christmas, when God entered the world as one of us to show us that what we imagine is possible.

Monday: New Beginnings (MATTHEW 8:8)

The centurion in Matthew 8 is a kindred spirit with those who have stopped going to Mass or participating in the sacramental life of the Church because they feel unworthy to do so. He rejects Jesus, in practice if not by intention, to save Jesus the trouble of rejecting him. In response, Jesus assures him that nothing, not even his own sense of limit-edness and sin, can separate him from God's grace. Advent is a perfect time for new beginnings—a time of preparation, renewal, and celebrating the reality that no one is worthy to receive God's gifts, particularly God's gift of self at Christmas. The only barrier we face in inviting Jesus into our lives is our own fear or shame that keeps us from extending the invitation.

Tuesday: With Open Eyes (LUKE 10:23-24)

Jesus' words to his disciples in Luke's Gospel affirm that many experience doubt or are unable to recognize God is at work before them. Their eyes are blessed because they see what has long been expected. Still, even the disciples deny, betray, and abandon Jesus.

In Advent we await the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation for the whole world. Pray for the courage to see with open eyes the faith tradition that has been handed down. Christ remains present in our midst. How can we overcome our fear and doubt so we recognize *Emmanuel*, God with us?