

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near.

PENITENTIAL ACT

I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.



May almighty God have mercy on us..... Amen.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

(The Gloria is omitted awaiting its Christmas Proclamation.)

OPENING PRAYER

O God, who see how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity, enable us, we pray, to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing. Through our Lord Jesus Christ.....

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING Isaiah 35: 1 - 6.10

A reading from the prophet Isaiah
The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken; to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison; to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord. 'I exult for joy in the Lord, my soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me in the garments of salvation, he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity, like a bridegroom wearing his wreath, like a bride adorned in her jewels. 'For as the earth makes fresh things grow, as a garden makes seeds spring up, so will the Lord make both integrity and praise spring up in the sight of the nations.'

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps. Lk.1)

R. My soul rejoices in my God.

1. My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour. He looks on his servant in her nothingness; henceforth all ages will call me blessed. [R]
2. The Almighty works marvels for me. Holy his name!

His mercy is from age to age, on those who fear him. [R]

3. He fills the starving with good things, sends the rich away empty. He protects Israel, his servant, remembering his mercy. [R]

SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians

Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.

Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the gift of prophecy with contempt; think before you do anything - hold on to what is good and avoid every form of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has called you and he will not fail you.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! The spirit of the Lord has been given to me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor. Alleluia!

GOSPEL John 1:6-8. 19-28

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John.

A man came, sent by God. His name was John. He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light, so that everyone might believe through him. He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light. This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked, 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not,' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied: a voice that cries in the wilderness: Make a straight way for the Lord.'

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you - unknown to you - the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light,



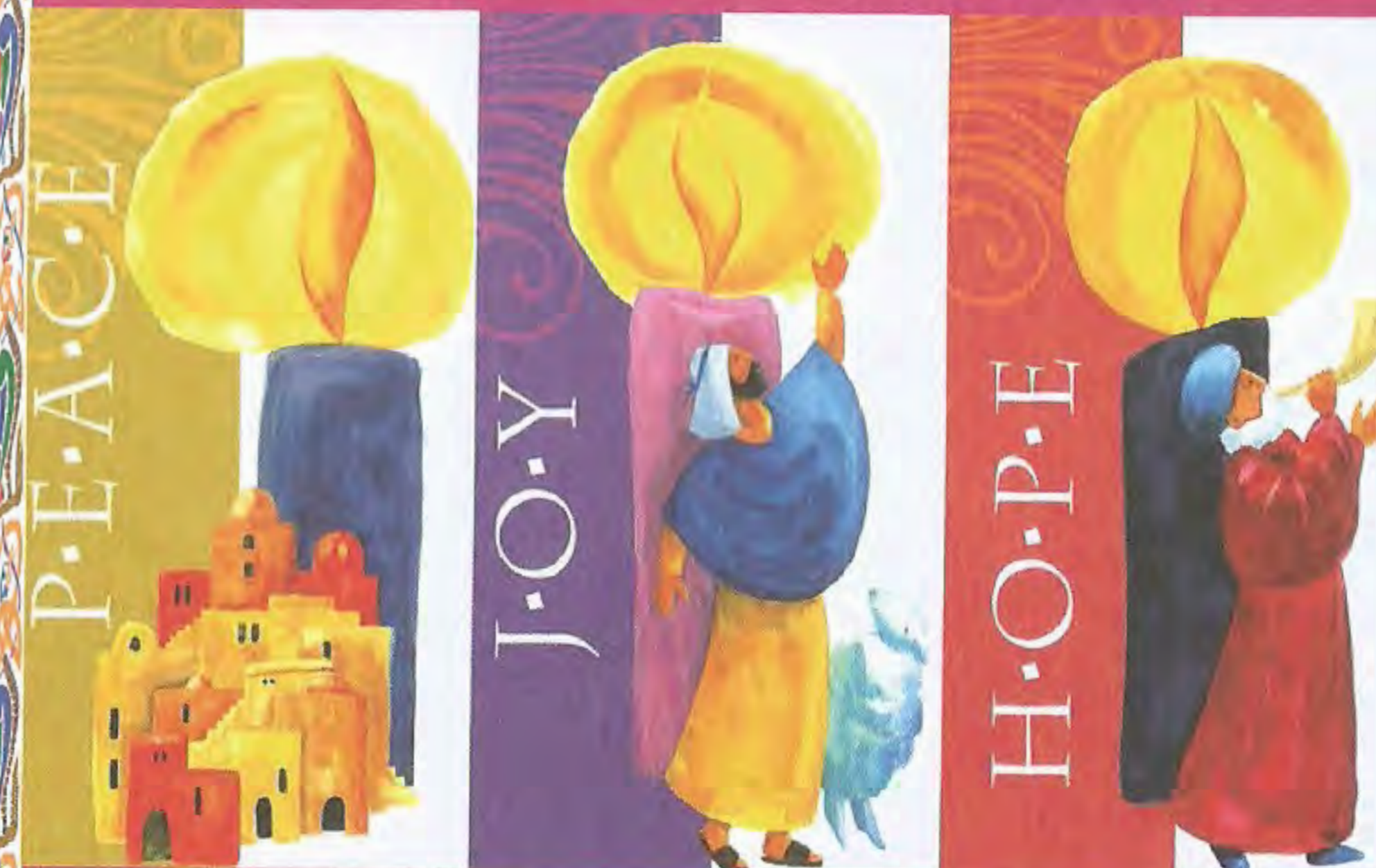
focus on sunday

The coming of Christ is a message of joy: a joy founded and rooted in God's love and care for his people, and his promise of an eternal companionship.

true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

All bow for following three lines:

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.



LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the sacrifice of our worship, Lord, we pray, be offered to you unceasingly, to complete what was begun in sacred mystery and powerfully accomplish for us your saving work. Through Christ our Lord.

AFTER THE CONSECRATION

The mystery of faith.
When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear. Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We implore your mercy, Lord, that this divine sustenance may cleanse us of our faults and prepare us for the coming feasts. Through Christ our Lord.



I met a married couple from Nigeria who worked on night duty in Roscommon hospital. One Sunday morning, I was getting ready for the early Mass at 8.15. They came in to talk to me. They were shattered and fatigued. They asked to be excused from the Mass. Then they asked me a startling request, if I would read and explain the Word of God for that Sunday. They said that hearing this Word instead of going to Mass, would nourish and sustain them as their prayer for that day. Their hidden witness preached and lived the Gospel for me that day. Among you stands one who you do not know.

Advent celebrates our search for meaning, purpose and wholeness. It is succinctly put as our search for God and, conversely, God's search for us. Our search is led and radically changed by Jesus Christ, born of the Chosen People, who does not merely speak 'in the name of God' but he is God himself speaking his eternal Word made flesh. Among you stands one who you do not know.

Our Catholic and Christian faith should not be defined or understood by what it is not. It is not a narrow denomination or a breakaway movement. It is a gifted response to a revealed truth - a truth which possesses it, and not a truth which any Catholic can ever pretend to possess fully. The anguish that has scarred innocent lives in the Church for decades is a painful festering wound. The Church forgot the truth of today's gospel: among you stands one who you do not know.

Our Advent journey is about waiting, wonder, welcome, prayer, preparation, penance and promise. Advent celebrates with joy on this rejoicing Sunday that among you stands one who you do not know.

From Fr Cullen's Alert, Aware, Attentive: Advent Reflections, available from www.messenger.ie/books, €4.95.