

Advent Candle Readings

- Expectation, Preparation, Justice, Joy

First Sunday of Advent

The First Candle – a candle of Expectation

Reader 1: Christmas is coming! We all have expectations – tinsel, presents, food, laughter.

Reader 2: We live in a world where our expectations are built up all the time - the computer we should have, the house we would like, the holiday we need. When we don't get those things it hurts. We need better expectations.

Reader 1: There are people in many parts of the world who have learned to expect nothing – not food, not shelter. Sometimes not love. They should be able to expect better.

Reader 2: Christ is coming! As we look forward to our Christmas celebrations **we light this first candle** in expectation of the coming of Christ, who brings joy and justice to all people, everywhere.

Lighting of the first candle

Prayer: Lord of all, remind us of the things that are truly important. Come to this world, come to us, come to all people and bring the joy and justice that few expect but all need. Amen.

Second Sunday of Advent

The Second Candle – a candle of Preparation

Reader 1: Christmas is coming! Are you prepared? Are you ready? Are you counting down?

Reader 2: Have you got the tree up? Food and presents bought? Cards sent? Are you prepared for the time you will spend with family, friends or colleagues? And what about all those annoying Christmas advertisements you have already seen too many times? Are you prepared?

Reader 1: Are we prepared to invite in those who are lonely or sick or troubled? Are we prepared to reach out to a broken world? Are we prepared to bring Christ's love?

Reader 2: Christ is coming! As we prepare for our Christmas celebrations **we light this second candle** as a sign that we are prepared to be the light of Christ, bringing his healing presence to a needy world.

Lighting of the second candle

Prayer: Lord of all, remind us of the things that are truly important. Come to this world, come to us, come to all people and bring the joy and justice that few expect but all need. Amen.

Third Sunday of Advent

The Third Candle – a candle of Justice

Reader 1: Christmas is coming! What will your Christmas be like? What will it be like for others?

Reader 2: We give gifts to show we care, to show our love. There are many around us who are struggling with problems of all sorts. Sometimes the best gift we can give is our time, our understanding, our company.

Reader 1: There are many in the world struggling to survive. The poor get poorer, the weather gets harsher, wars rumble on. We see the injustice and have a burning desire to bring Christ's love to all people everywhere.

Reader 2: Christ is coming! As we approach our Christmas celebrations **we light this third candle** as a sign that we will always be here for those in need, and that Christ's light will shine out from this place and illuminate a sometimes dark world.

Lighting of the third candle

Prayer: Lord of the downtrodden and the outcasts, come soon. Come and break the chains of injustice, remove disaster, deal with oppressors and bring your joy and harmony to all corners of this world. Amen.

Fourth Sunday of Advent
The Fourth Candle – a candle of Joy

Reader 1: Christmas is coming! Be joyful and celebrate!

Reader 2: Some people just celebrate because that's what you do at this time of year, some celebrate because they think they are going to be given good gifts! But for us it is different. Very very different.

Reader 1: Joy came into the world at Christmastime with the birth of a baby two thousand years ago. That joy is in our hearts, and is bursting to get out, so let it out! The world needs all the joy it can get!

Reader 2: Christ is coming! As we wait expectantly for Christmas day **we light this fourth candle** as a sign that the joy and love and peace that arrived with the birth of Christ are still here with us today, and we want to share them with everybody around us.

Lighting of the fourth candle

Prayer: Lord of celebration, thank you for the joy that you have brought to this world. Let it burst out of us in every word, every action, every smile so that all around us will be touched by it and will begin to feel a little of that same joy. Amen.

Christmas Day
The Christ Candle

Reader 1: Christmas is come!

Reader 2: Christ has come!

Reader 1: No more waiting!

Reader 2: No more darkness! **We light the Christ candle** because the light banishes the dark. .

Lighting of the fifth candle

Prayer: Lord of never-ending light, we welcome you into this world.

The colours of the candles and the way they are arranged will vary from church to church. Mostly they are arranged with the first four candles surrounding the final candle, which represents Christ and is usually white. In many older traditions the other candles are often purple or blue apart from the third week which is pink, representing Joy. I have also seen four reds and a white, five reds and five whites. If you have a tradition of your own that is different from these, stick with it! And if you don't have one – make one up, perhaps according to your readings! When the readings above were first used we lit the pink candle on the fourth week instead of the third, because the fourth week was joy. Go with a symbolism that works for you.

Usually the candles that have already been lit are lit in each subsequent week's service. So for instance in week three candles one, two and three are lit. Sometimes the previous weeks' candles are lit just beforehand, to show that they are already lit and so that the candle lighter only has one candle to light.

Please let me know what traditions you have! Share with us on the DramatisDei Facebook page.

These readings were written for year C of the lectionary cycle but would work well in any year.