

SoulSpace

SERIES: AWAITING SOME REAL
GOOD NEWS

Season colour: PURPLE

In this series, Gerard Moloney CSsR takes a deeper look at the great Season of Advent.

I have a friend who has a problem with the dark. He doesn't like it; he has a fear of it; it's almost like he has a phobia about the dark. He will always have the light or lights turned on. Even on a glorious summer's day, he will have to switch on the lights, and the lights bum always in his room.

He can't stand the darkness. Especially winter darkness. He has said more than once that December 21 is his favourite day of the year, because the days will gradually start to get brighter after that. It gives him life, confidence, hope.

It is no coincidence that this time of year is dull and dark. We are in deep mid-winter. Darkness is all round. And when we look at our world, there is a lot of darkness also; people broken by addiction or self-harm; people abandoned in Direct Provision or to sleep homeless on our streets; people caught up in civil wars and conflicts; people trapped in abusive relationships; people weighed down by depression or physical illness.

There is so much darkness, but Advent is about hope. Advent is the great season of hope. It reminds us that darkness does not have the last word, because into that darkness a light has come and is coming – Jesus, God-with-us, the light of the world. Advent reminds us that God has heard the cry of his people, and God responded to that cry by sending his Son as one like us to save us. Hope has taken shape in Jesus. Darkness has been destroyed.

WITNESSES TO HOPE

What does that mean for us? Two things, I think.

First, to be hope-filled people, who live in

the light. Yes, there is so much darkness, but we Christians can never let it overwhelm us. St Paul tells us that the three great Christian virtues are faith, hope and love, and to hold onto hope is every bit as essential as to have faith or to show love. Our hope is rooted in the certain knowledge that God is with us, that God has come among us, and that God will come again to take us home to him. We are a people redeemed.

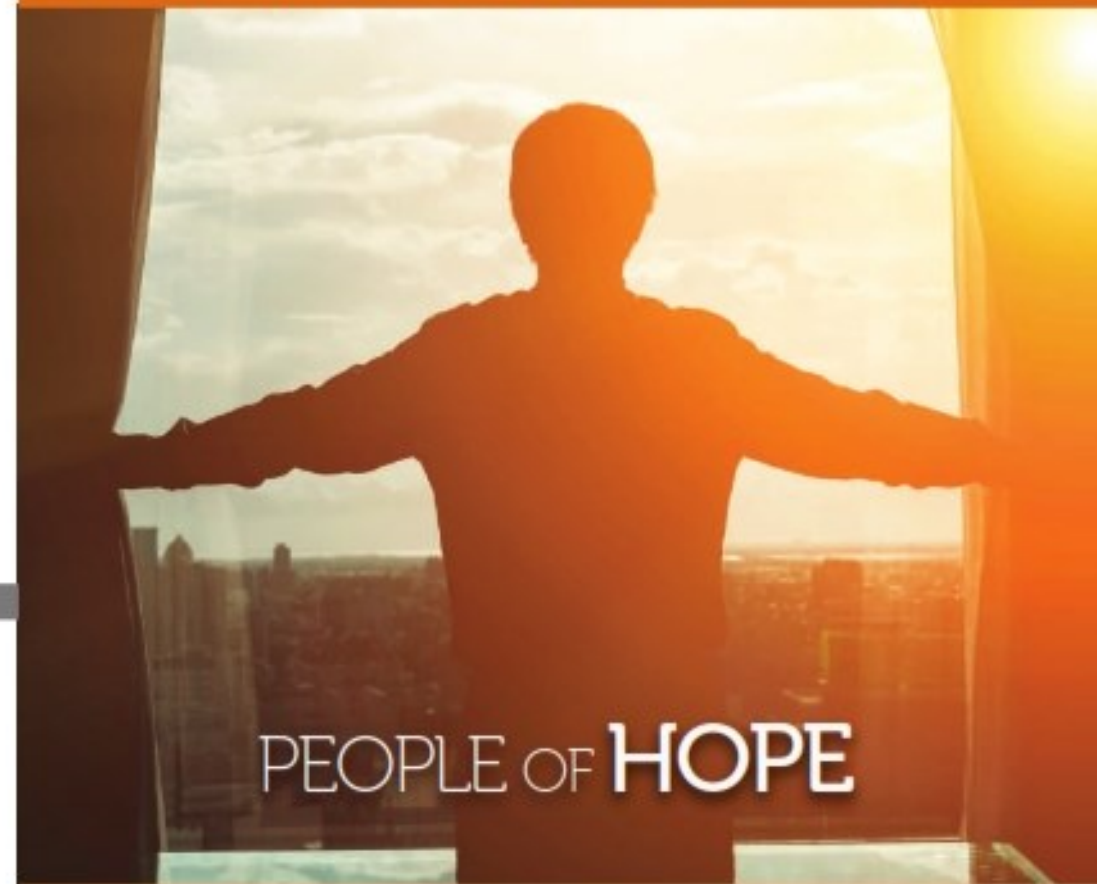
Second, we are called to be witnesses to hope, people who reflect God's presence in our world, who shine as beacons in the deepest darkness.

That's what Redemptorist Fr Alex Reid did. In the darkest days of the Troubles in Northern Ireland he held onto and transmitted hope; when all seemed lost and there was intransigence on every side, he held onto hope; even as the years dragged on and more lives were destroyed, he didn't lose hope. He refused to let go of it.

And he showed the way. When two army corporals lay stripped and bloodied on a Belfast wasteland 30 years ago, he was to be found bent over them trying to save them, their blood smeared on his distraught face as he tried to kiss them back to life – a single beacon of hope on a dark, dismal day. What consolation he must have given to their families in their heartbreak and devastation.

Fr Alex was a Spirit-filled person who exemplified what Advent is about, who hoped against all hope, who hoped even when hope seemed futile, and whose hope helped bring about a better future. He would not give in to the darkness.

Like Fr Alex, we must be Advent people, a sign of hope to the hopeless. Advent calls us to live like people who know that God himself will come to save, that God himself has come to save. There is no need to be afraid of the dark. ■



Advent invites us to be both people of hope and bearers of hope.

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Today's readings

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11
2 Peter 3:8-14
Mark 1:1-8

Mark will be our guide through this liturgical year and today we read the very beginning of his Gospel. Mark's symbol is the lion which recalls the "voice crying in the wilderness". John the Baptist was also a voice crying in the wilderness. The place of his mission was a crossing point on the River Jordan. The banks of the Jordan were steep and the surrounding country was dry and barren, but crowds of people had to pass through it on their way to Jerusalem so it was an ideal place to reach a constantly changing audience. John is a wild ascetic who calls on the passing crowds to prepare for the coming of someone more powerful than himself, the Messiah. It is a reminder how we also can prepare for the coming of the Lord at Christmas time.

GOD'S WORD TODAY



SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
10th December 2017

When God comes, he comes with power but also with compassion restoring all things. We can prepare the way of his coming with lives of holiness.

ADVENT JESSE TREE The Jesse Tree is a way of reflecting on the key people who prefigure the coming ('adventus') of Jesus.

Symbols for the Jesse Tree are:

ADVENT JESSE TREE - WEEK TWO

The Ram symbol represents ISAAC

The Ladder represents JACOB

The Water Jar & Coat represent JOSEPH

The Tablets & Paschal Lamb represent MOSES.

ADVENT PRAYER Father, in the wilderness of the Jordan, you sent a messenger to prepare people's hearts for the coming of your Son.

Help me to hear his words and repent of my sins,

so that I may clearly see the way to walk,

the truth to speak, and the life to live for him,

Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

BLESSING OF THE ADVENT WREATH IN THE HOME:

Lord God, Let your blessing come upon us as we light the candles of this wreath. May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation. May he come quickly and not delay.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

CHOOSE LIFE

"The deletion or amendment of Article 40.3.3, would serve no purpose other than to withdraw the right to life from some categories of unborn children. To do so would radically change the principle, for all unborn children and indeed for all of us, that the right to life is a fundamental human right."

Irish Catholic Bishops, Two Lives One Love

THE WAY OF GENTLENESS A personal enrichment journey for Advent. Mondays, 11th & 18th December at 8.00pm in Saint Patrick's Church, Strandhill. All welcome.

ADVENT SCRIPTURE SHARING GROUPS Reflections available to download at www.elphindiocese.ie/advent and other prayer booklets available from Justin Harkin, phone 087 6171526 or email justin@elphindiocese.ie

ADVENT REFLECTIONS RECORDING Fr. Eugene McLoughlin's presentation 'Advent as a time of anticipation and preparation' available to listen and to podcast at www.elphindiocese.ie/recordings

RECONCILIATION SERVICE Welcome home for Christmas. Christmas is homecoming time. Journey with us towards a personal homecoming with the Christchild by availing of this opportunity for Confession Monday, 18th December at 7.30pm in the Holy Cross Friary. A celebration of the Lord's forgiveness in an atmosphere of calmness and peace with the opportunity for individual confession.



BINGO, GILLOOLY HALL, TONIGHT,
SUNDAY 10th December at 9.00pm
TONIGHT'S JACKPOT €2,850.

Raffle at interval with refreshments available. All welcome.




SUNDAY READINGS for 17th December: 1st Reading: Is. 61:1-2. 10-11; 2nd Reading: 1 Thess. 5:16-24; Gospel: Jn. 1:6-8. 19-28.

SLIGO CATHEDRAL PARISH – 2200 FAMILIES

SUNDAY, 3rd December **PARISH ENV: €1,523 PL/STAND. ORD: €1,750**

THANK YOU for your contribution.

ST MARY'S PRESBYTERY ☎ 071 9162670 SACRISTY ☎ 071 9161261

 **SLIGO CATHEDRAL CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE** 
YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO JOIN OUR
CATHEDRAL COMMUNITY DURING A SERVICE
OF LESSONS AND CAROLS ON
SUNDAY, 17th DECEMBER at 8.15pm.
FEATURING THE CATHEDRAL CHOIR UNDER THE
DIRECTION OF CHARLES O'CONNOR. 
All most welcome.

Sligo Cathedral Christmas Fair Thanks

We wish to express our sincere thanks to all who supported our Christmas Fair held in Gillooly Hall yesterday. As we go to print we have not obtained total raised however we wish to acknowledge the contribution of our entire Parish Community. Full details will feature online on our website and in next weekend's Newsletter.

ONLINE ADVENT CALENDAR As a unique Advent prayerful resource, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference has provided its online Advent 2017 Calendar which can be enjoyed by people of all ages. The calendar is available online, and on your smartphone, on catholicbishops.ie. This year's Advent Calendar focuses on the theme of family as we prepare together for next year's World Meeting of Families in Dublin from 21st - 26th August. Each day during Advent you are invited to click open a virtual door where you will find faith content for family, school and parish. During Advent, families are invited to take special time together to pray, to talk, and to be together. Family members are encouraged to undertake a daily act of kindness or charity - as suggested by the calendar - and by so doing reaching out to help those around us. By using the online calendar, we hope that you will be part of our journey through Advent this year. www.catholicbishops.ie

CHRISTMAS 2017
CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
SUNDAY – DECEMBER 17th
CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE - 8.15 p.m.
MONDAY – DECEMBER 18th – FRIDAY – DECEMBER 22nd
MASSES – 8.00 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.
SATURDAY DECEMBER 23rd
MASSES – 8.00 a.m., 10.30 a.m. Vigil: 7.30pm
CONFESSIONS - 2.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m.
SUNDAY DECEMBER 24th CHRISTMAS EVE
MASSES - 8.30 a.m., 10.30 a.m. & 12noon
CONFESSIONS - 1.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m.
9.30 p.m. CHRISTMAS CAROLS
CHRISTMAS VIGIL MASS 10.00 p.m.
CHRISTMAS DAY
MASSES - MONDAY - DECEMBER 25th
8.30 a.m. - 10.30 a.m. - 12.00 noon

CATHEDRAL of the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Upcoming **EVENTS**

THE WEEK AHEAD

Wednesday 13th December **"Wednesday Tea"** after 10.30am Mass.

Saturday 16th December **Confessions** from 2.00pm to 4.00pm.

PARISH OFFICE at St. Mary's Presbytery ☎ 071 9162670

Please note that the parish office is open to the public at the following times:
Monday - Thursday 9.30am - 4pm & Friday 9.30am - 2pm.

DATES TO REMEMBER

ST. JOSEPH'S YOUNG PRIESTS SOCIETY monthly meeting will be held in the Cathedral after the 10.30 a.m. Mass on Monday, 11th December. Please come and spend a few minutes in prayer for vocations.

ACTIVE RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION Meeting on Tuesday, 12th December in Presbyterian Hall at 2.30pm. New members welcome.

SLIGO ORPHEUS CHOIR present *Carols by Candlelight* in Holy Cross friary Sligo today, Sunday 10th December at 8.00pm accompanied by organist Charles O'Connor and String Quartet, Ramona Sakalauskaite Concert Harp under the direction of Austin McManus. Singing a wide variety of classic carols and modern favourite's Sligo Orpheus Choir hope to entertain and awaken the spirit of Christmas with Carols old and new. The concert is free with a retiring collection in support of the local Homeless Charity the **NORTH WEST BRANCH OF THE SIMON COMMUNITY**. Carols by Candlelight is a wonderful way for families and friends to get together and celebrate the spirit of Christmas.

THE AVALON ACADEMY PIPE BAND The Avalon Centre is delighted to announce the start of the Avalon Academy Pipe Band in January 2018 for learning bagpipes and drums. Piping classes will take place on Monday evenings from 7pm-9pm, the time and date for Drumming classes has yet to be confirmed. Tuition is free and all instruments will be provided. The minimum age for learners is 10 years of age. Please contact Paul Tolan at the centre on 071 9161836 for further information or to express your interest in signing up.

FINANCE AND ASSET MANAGER The Diocese of Elphin is advertising for a Finance and Asset Manager. Job description is available on www.elphindiocese.ie

NORTH WEST SIMON COMMUNITY looking for your support this Christmas - Fri 22nd Dec – Tesco Shopping Arcade Sligo, Sing for Simon from 11am to 4pm with choirs – collection for charity. Sun 7th Jan – Women's Little Christmas Ladies Lunch, Kilonan Castle, Tickets from 087 7708865. North West Simon Community thank all their supporters and volunteers very much. www.northwestsimon.ie

anniversary & remembrances

DAY	8.00 a.m. Mass	10.30 a.m. Mass
MON 11 th	SUSAN MURRAY	—
TUES 12 th	GERRY & KITTY KEANEY	KATIE MCTERNAN
WED 13 th	BERNICE & ALEC MILLER	JOE & JACK MAHON & deceased family members
THURS 14 th	Special Intentions MARK ROONEY (RIP) ✠	PATRICK KENNEDY
FRI 15 th	BREEDGE FARRELL	1st Anniversary JOHN FOX ✠

✠ **MONTH'S MIND MASS** for SCOTT FREDERICK WERHLY will be celebrated at the 7.30pm Vigil Mass on Saturday, 16th December.

rest in peace Your prayers are asked for the repose of the souls of: MICHAEL MCCARTHY, Treacy Avenue; DOROTHY O'GRADY (NEE FRIEL), Maugheraboy Estate and MAUREEN ROSSITER, Wexford and formerly of Sligo.
May God grant them eternal rest and comfort and console their bereaved families and friends.