Waiting in Joyful Hope

Daily Reflections for
Advent and Christmas
2026–2027

Peter Dwyer



LITURGICAL PRESS
Collegeville, Minnesota
litpress.org

Nihil Obstat: Rev. Robert C. Harren, J.C.L., *Censor Librorum*
Imprimatur: ✠ Most Rev. Patrick M. Neary, C.S.C., Bishop of St. Cloud, March 19, 2026

Cover design by Monica Bokinskie.
Cover art courtesy of Getty Images.

Daily Scripture excerpts in this work are from the *Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America, second typical edition* © 2001, 1998, 1997, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. Used with permission. All rights reserved. No portion of this text may be reproduced by any means without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Other Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

© 2026 by Peter Dwyer
Published by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever, except brief quotations in reviews, without written permission of Liturgical Press, Saint John's Abbey, PO Box 7500, Collegeville, MN 56321-7500. Printed in the United States of America.

ISSN: 1550-803X
ISBN: 979-8-4008-0180-8 979-8-4008-0182-2 (ebook)

Introduction

We begin again, as we have so often before. The familiar, favorite seasons of Advent and Christmas come around and we try to step back from the hubbub. We are a year older, perhaps a little wiser. It is tempting to think that this year we might hold the secular world at bay as we prepare for these holy seasons. But don't we miss the point if we set our spiritual life apart from the everyday world? After all, the Incarnation that we anticipate and celebrate in these seasons, is literally God-with-us in the flesh, in *this* world.

In our Advent readings both Isaiah and John the Baptist call us to "prepare the way." We associate this phrase, in particular, with Advent, but such preparing is a lifelong process of repentance and conversion of heart. We recall and relearn the way of the kingdom of God all through our days. Along the way, in striving to live the Beatitudes, we receive and offer a glimpse here on earth of what we hope to attain at heaven's gate.

Our ultimate goal is in the future, but we await the birth of Jesus in the present, while remembering the past through Scripture. We journey with our ancestors in faith, learning from their stories. We pray with the

psalms and hymns they created, giving voice to praise and fear, joy and sorrow. We also carry our personal stories, attentive to the mercy and grace of God in our own experiences.

This is a journey of hope, not one of haste. Day by day, in the midst of our deeply flawed world and imperfect lives, let us examine our hearts and the work of our hands as we await the coming of our Savior. May the newborn light of the Incarnation set us and keep us on the path of salvation.



FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT



Watch Out!

Readings: Isa 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7; 1 Cor 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37

Scripture: "Be watchful! Be alert!" (Mark 13:33)

Reflection: We begin our Advent journey with the exhortation: "Be watchful! Be alert!" But what are we to watch for? And how are we to stay alert? A body gets tired, after all. And we are so easily distracted.

As a lifelong daydreamer, I know a bit about distraction. When I worked for a time on a maintenance crew in a railroad yard, the boss began each day like a broken record: "Watch yourselves out there. Stay alert!" One December morning I found out why.

A snowstorm had clogged the old manual switches that connect each set of tracks. As we got to work clearing switches, it started to snow again, the heavy and thick flakes muffling every sound. Enchanted by the silence, I stood up slowly, imagining a snow globe. A sudden prickling on my neck snapped me out of it. I turned to see a huge boxcar emerging from the whiteout. I scrambled out of the way as it rolled past with barely a whisper. I took a deep breath and went back to work. But I couldn't

shake the prickles. Or silence the broken record in my head: "Stay alert . . . Stay alert . . ."

Like an enchanting snowfall, the beauty of this Advent season is well worth our attention. But to prepare the way for the kingdom of God we must also be alert to hardship and suffering, and yes even danger, in the world around us.

Meditation: Alive to this moment, we also look to the future, alert to God who was, is, and will be. We seek Christ in everyone around us. And respond with mercy to those who hunger, thirst and seek shelter from any storm.

Prayer: O Living God of all creation, open our eyes to the beauty and abundance that you have brought into being. And open our hearts that we may respond graciously to everyone we encounter.

Call and Response

Readings: Rom 10:9-18; Matt 4:18-22

Scripture: At once they left their nets and followed him. (Matt 4:20)

Reflection: Given all the reasons we might say "no," how could Andrew and Simon respond at once to Jesus' invitation, "Come after me . . ."? Does it seem believable that they would walk away from their lives, work, and even family without any apparent discussion or consultation? A little of the backstory might help us make sense of this scene.

A few verses earlier in Matthew we learn that Jesus had moved to Capernaum in Galilee when he heard that John the Baptist had been arrested. This was the start of his public ministry: "From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Matt 4:17). In a very short time all of the people in Capernaum would have seen him or heard of him, and perhaps listened to him in synagogue. In the way of small towns everywhere, his teaching and healing would have been the talk of the town.

Likely, then, the seeds of faith—planted by Jesus' words and actions—are already stirring in these fishermen before Jesus came walking by the Sea of Galilee. When he calls Andrew and Simon they are able to respond at once because they had been preparing, whether they knew it or not.

For most people the invitation to discipleship isn't as clear and direct as it was for Andrew and Simon. And we rarely respond at once. But more important than the speed of our response is that we continue to find our way to "yes" through all that life brings.

Meditation: Mending and tending our nets is important. Family, job, friends, school and church communities, interests and hobbies, volunteer gigs and more; these are life-giving connections deeply deserving of our time and attention. It is important, though, to also tend to our own well-being. Let us quiet ourselves this day to listen to the Word of God stirring within.

Prayer: O God, you bring all things to fruition. Nurture us as disciples, steadfast in your Word.