



## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT YEAR A

*God of majesty and power,  
amid the clamour of our violence  
your Word of truth resounds;  
upon a world made dark by sin  
the Sun of Justice casts his dawning rays.*

*Keep your household watchful  
and aware of the hour in which we live.  
Hasten the advent of that day  
when the sounds of war will be for ever stilled,  
the darkness of evil scattered,  
and all your children gathered into one.*

*We ask this through him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near:  
your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever. Amen.*

*Opening Prayers: Collects in Contemporary language.  
Scripture-related prayers for Sundays and Holy Days, Years A, B & C.  
Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2001.*

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We, the people of Boonah Catholic parish,  
acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our parish is located  
and where we conduct our mission and ministry.

We pay our respects to ancestors and elders, past and present.

As a local community of faith within the Church of Brisbane,  
we are committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'  
unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas  
and their rich contribution to society.

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*Warm greetings to the members of the Boonah Catholic community and beyond on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent. It is also the first Sunday of the new liturgical year – Year A!*

## 1. Reflections on the Sunday Word.

**The reflection for this Sunday is offered by Julian McDonald, a Christian Brother who lives in Sydney.**

Advent was included in the Church's calendar as a period of reflection intended to engage the Christian in giving attention to the significance of the fact that, in the person of Jesus, God demonstrated unequivocal solidarity and identification with all of humanity. Two words which occur again and again in the prayers and readings of Advent are "Emmanuel" and "incarnation". Emmanuel is one of the names attributed to Jesus and literally means "God with us". It first appears in the Bible in the prophesy of Isaiah, who proclaimed how Jesus would be born as a child and take a place in human history. In a prophesy to Ahaz, Isaiah declared: "Watch for this: A girl who is a virgin will become pregnant. She'll bear a son and name him Immanuel (God-With-Us)" (Isaiah 7:14). We will have to wait till the Fourth Sunday of Advent to hear this reading.

"Incarnation" is a word that is rarely used outside the context of religion. It is derived from the past participle of the Latin verb *incarnare*, which means "to make/become flesh". From about the year 1300, the noun incarnation was used quite specifically to mean "the embodiment of God in the person of Jesus Christ". The word also appears in the flower name *carnation*, flesh colour.

Advent invites us to reflect on the enormity of how God touched humanity in the person of Jesus and how, as a consequence, we are able to encounter Jesus in and through our human experiences. The prominent Catholic theologian and Bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius (c.295-375) wrote a treatise on the Incarnation entitled *DeIncarnatione*, in which he stated: "God became like us so that we might become like him".

The implication of this is that Jesus grew and developed through childhood, adolescence and adulthood like every other male. He asked the kind of questions about his origins and development

as everyone one of us has asked. He had to learn how to befriend his body and make his way through the challenges and traumas of adolescence as every other adolescent has. He had to deal with the whole gamut of human emotions within himself and in everyone he encountered. He experienced grief and rejection, loss and acceptance, illness, suffering and the depravity of humiliation, torture and execution of the kind experienced only by a minority. And he died as we all must.

Regrettably, Advent in the world we know has almost become a non-event. The world of retail commerce has already begun selling for Christmas, and Christmas carols can be heard already in shopping malls the world over. For any of us to set aside time for Advent prayer and reflection requires special effort and discipline.

There is an additional irony in some of the readings set down for this First Sunday of Advent. God's incarnation in human flesh in the person of Jesus not only points to the value and dignity of human flesh and blood - the fact that Jesus adopted our human flesh and blood implies that - but it suggests that this is worth celebrating. In today's reading from Romans, however, the human body seems to be the object of some severe criticism. The problem we face here is that the Greek word for flesh used in Romans can have two meanings. Sometimes *flesh* is equated with *our sinful nature*, while at other times it is used to refer to our human condition, worthy of our reverence and admiration, despite its fragility. The fact that God, in the person of Jesus, has identified in the incarnation with our flesh, in the sense of something to be revered, gives us every reason to celebrate.

At the same time, we all know the temptations we experience when we let bodily urges and desires get out of control, when we fail to treat our bodies with reverence, respect and self-control. But that does not mean that there is something about our bodies of which we should be ashamed or embarrassed. We, with our bodies, talents and emotional life, are gifts from God. It's important that we stop from time to time to remind ourselves that all of God's gifts are good, and so worthy of respect and reverence. We also know that gifts can be misused, and today's reading from Romans is simply a reminder to us to use our gifts for the purpose for which they are intended.

That complements the call in the gospel-reading from Matthew to be alert to what is happening within our own lives and in the world around us. That does not imply that we are insensitive to, or burdened with despondency by, the prevalence of violence and the injustice of events taking place in the troubled parts of our world. We also know of many people, including ourselves, whose generosity is at work to bring relief and healing to our sisters and brothers who are victims of injustice, prejudice and neglect. The Gospel call to stay awake is also a reminder to us to recognise the presence of Jesus in everyone we encounter in the course of each day. The corollary of that is that we take care to avoid slipping into living our lives as though each day is just a matter of business as usual. That can so easily lead to complacency and dulling us from being surprised by God's unexpected revelation in very ordinary events.

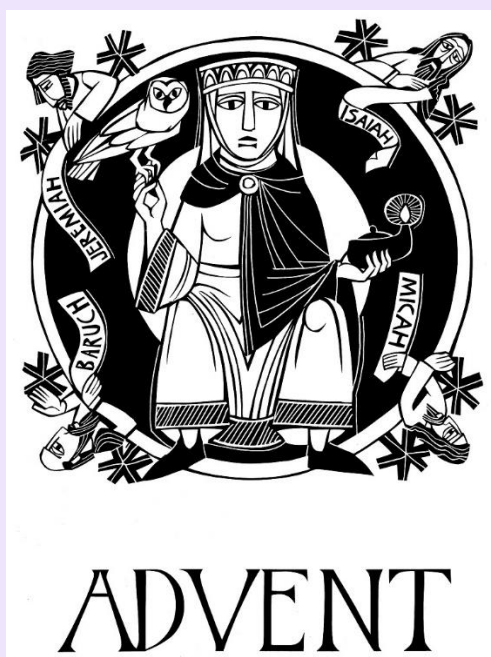
Still there is one more image in today's gospel-reading that cannot be ignored. It strikes me as something of a shock that God will come into our lives like a thief. Yet, apart from the extended metaphor of God as thief in today's gospel-reading, there are two similar references in the Book of Revelation (Rev 3:3; and 16:15) and another in Thessalonians, where Paul wrote: "The day of the Lord

will come like a thief in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5: 2). I have to admit that I am more comfortable with Jesus as the Light of the world, the Bread of Life, the true vine, the door, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, and God as the potter. But thief? In real life, there are many who believe that their bank accounts, their houses, their cars and their health insurance are their guarantee of lasting security. But God has a way of stealing from us the false sense of security we can create for ourselves. Thieves who break into houses don’t advertise their coming, and when they do invade our homes, we can feel violated. God, on the other hand often comes unannounced into our lives. We experience God’s presence in the kindness of neighbours who turn up with meals when we are grieving the loss of a loved one, and in the many other acts of kindness extended to us by friends, neighbours and strangers. Moreover, God is ever intent on “stealing” our hearts and our allegiance, not by deception, but through the insights we get, from time to time, into God’s love for us expressed in very ordinary events. We may even have found ourselves resonating with the experience of the prophet, Jeremiah who acknowledged how God had captivated him: “You have seduced me, Lord, and I have let myself be seduced” (Jeremiah 20: 7) In this context, I am reminded of what a friend said to me after losing all his treasured family photos and other possessions in our recent floods: “In a very real sense, it was a blessing, because those things were distracting me from making sure that my heart was in the right place!”



A **second reflection** is by Sister Teresa Maya who is a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas, USA. She currently accompanies other religious congregations as facilitator and consultant.

Click [HERE](#) to watch and listen to her homily.



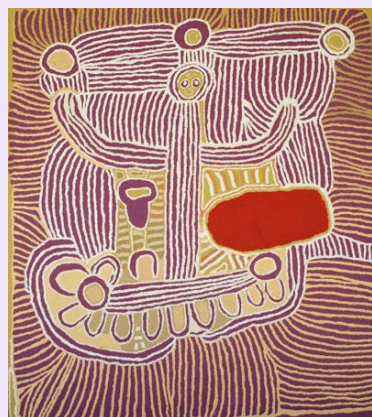
## 2. *Boonah Parish happenings . . .*

from commands to invitations,  
from laws to ideals,  
from threats to persuasion,  
from coercion to conscience,  
from monologue to conversation,  
from ruling to serving,  
from withdrawn to integrated,  
from vertical and top-down to horizontal,  
from exclusion to inclusion,  
from hostility to friendship,  
from static to changing,  
from passive acceptance to active engagement,  
from prescriptive to principled,  
from defined to open-ended,  
from behaviour-modification to conversion of heart,  
from the dictates of law to the dictates of conscience,  
from external conformity to the joyful pursuit of holiness.

When these elements are taken in the aggregate, they indicate a model of spirituality. This, they say, is what good Catholics should look like and this is how they should behave. That means the elements indicate what the Church should look like and how it should behave. This is a significant model-shift. This is a teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

- Fr. John O'Malley SJ, 2006

Our **Sunday eucharist** schedule is:



*Desert Eucharist*

Linda Syddick Napaltjarri (b. 1937)

### *Saturday*

5.00pm

**Boonah church**

### *Sunday*

7.30am

1st and 3rd Sunday: **Harrisville church**

2nd and 4th Sunday: **Peak Crossing church**

9.30am

**Boonah church**

### **5th Sunday of the month:**

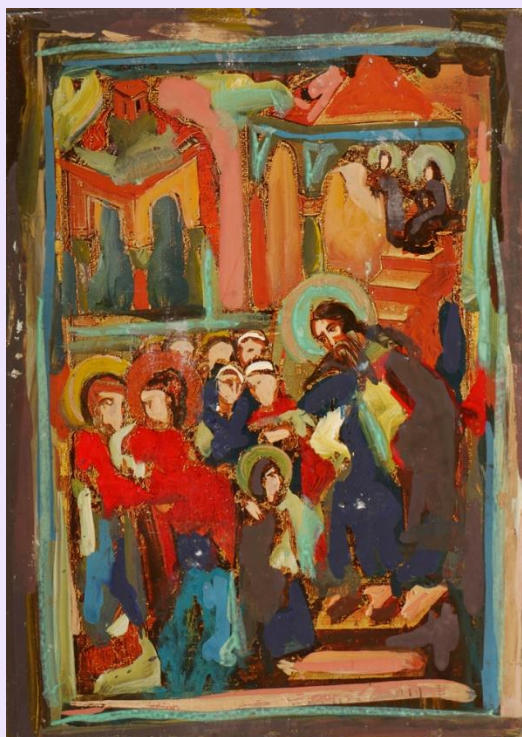
6pm Sat night Harrisville church &

9.30am Sun morning Boonah church.

**WE HAVE A 5TH SUNDAY ON 29TH JANUARY 2023!**

Our **weekday liturgy and Mass** schedule for this week, the 1st Week of Advent, is:

Tuesday	29 <sup>th</sup> November	7.00pm Liturgy of the Word - Yr 6 End of Primary Schooling, <b>Boonah</b> church
Wednesday	30 <sup>th</sup> November	9.15am Liturgy of the Word – Thanksgiving for the School Year, All Saints’ parish school, <b>Boonah</b> church  6.00pm, <b>Peak Crossing</b> church followed by dinner at the Peak Pub
Thursday	1 <sup>st</sup> December	8.00am <b>Boonah</b> church
Friday	2 <sup>nd</sup> December	8.00am <b>Boonah</b> church



We **pray with and for those who are sick in our parish and beyond**: all across the globe infected with COVID-19; all those who are unwell because of the war raging in Ukraine and in other places of the globe; all who are starving; Chris Healy, Paul White, Arthur Devin, Liliana Toohill, Libby Shields, Marko Babic, Max Gardiner, Bernadette Pinchin, Cate Mitten, Bernice Brault, Paula Ebrington, Fletcher Casey, Jill Archer, Louisa, Lynne Nunan, Bea Bedard (USA), Carol Libke, Angela Kearney, Tony Pisani, Lorraine Bakon, Maureen Wilson, Moira Lehmann, Robert Hensen, Wally Velasquez, Hans Mitterlechner, Sandra Skerritt, Dominic Vakaci, Robert Parkes and sick members of parish families and those beyond our parish boundaries.

- **Boonah Parish Safeguarding Officer.** Leigh Muller is the Parish Safeguarding Officer. Email: [boonah@bne.catholic.net.au](mailto:boonah@bne.catholic.net.au)
- **Celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation.** The 1<sup>st</sup> Rite for Reconciliation (formerly known as Confession) may be celebrated anytime. Please phone 5463 1057 to make a suitable time. Alternatively see me before Mass (if there is plenty of time) or after Mass (once the majority of people have left the church).



- **Every Sunday** when we gather for the Sunday eucharist, there are baskets (of some kind or another) at the entrances of our churches. We are invited to bring a gift of **non-perishable food or goods** for people seeking help from our local St. Vincent de Paul. *The local conference very much appreciates our weekly support.*

**Our Mission**

The St Vincent de Paul Society is a [lay Catholic organisation](#) that aspires to live the gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope and joy, and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.

The hand of Christ blesses the cup  
The hand of love offers the cup  
The hand of suffering receives the cup

- **Did you miss Christmas by the Lake?** Well, the Moogerah Passion Play Association are holding a one-off **Christmas Carols** with a short Nativity Play next Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> December from 2pm-3pm at the Church of Christ, Coronation Drive, Boonah. *All are welcome. Refreshments available. Gold coin donation to the church.* Contact Chris Young on 0422 878 744 for further information.



- Mr Shane Seymour serves the parish community as our school principal and he has done this for the last eight years. On Thursday last week Shane wrote this letter to the community:



Thursday November 24, 2022

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is with much sadness that I write to inform you that not only will I not be back to school before the end of the 2022 school year, but I will also not be returning for the first 6 months of 2023.

I am currently writing this letter in a hospital room with my wife, who is currently hospitalized as she battles cancer. On Wednesday, November 2, my wife, and I visited a surgeon at the Mater Private Hospital to investigate a large wound on her scalp. To our shock and horror, we were informed that it was an aggressive SCC (squamous cell carcinoma) of the skin. After undertaking numerous tests and attending several meetings, the only treatment that was available to her was immunotherapy. A relatively new therapy where the body's own immune system is super-charged to fight the cancer.

It has not been an easy road to travel. In fact, we have not really been home since my wife was admitted to hospital on November 2. There is hope that the immunotherapy will shrink, and or kill the cancer, but it will be a long road that we will walk together. In fact the next 3 to 6 months will be critical.

It is for this reason that I sadly say goodbye to the wonderful and amazing staff, students, parents, Parishioners and wider members of the community of All Saints'.

I have absolutely loved my 8 years here.

I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know and building a relationship with all the students at the All Saints'.

It has been wonderful working with the parents/carers who have been part of the school community in my time here.

It has been my absolute honour to work with and learn from the talented, caring and awesome staff at All Saints'.

I have grown so much, as a person and as a Principal in my time here at All Saints'. Thank you to everyone who has helped shape the person that I have become.

For the next 6 months, Mr Robert Campbell will be the Acting Principal at All Saints'. I will be taking up an APRE position at St Bernadine's Regents Park, which puts me much closer to my home in Rochedale.

Please continue to keep my wife in your prayers.

I wish everyone a very blessed Christmas and a peaceful and safe New Year.

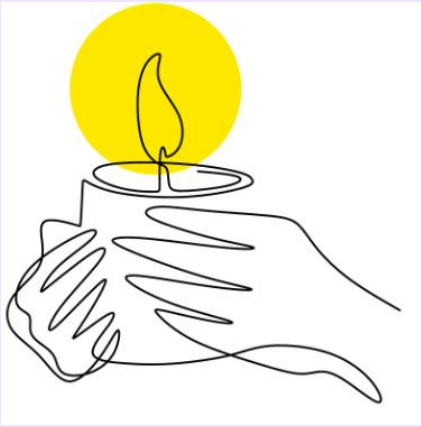
Take care everyone. You will always be in my prayers and thoughts.

In the language of the Ugarapul peoples, Nanni ngin – which means, see you later.

Shane Seymour

As All Saints' is our parish school, I extend our communal support to Shane and his wife at this time. This kind of reality in our life is never welcome and intrudes like a thief in the night, upsetting our plans, schedules, dreams, and everyday patterns in ways that we never imagine. As Shane asks us to keep his wife in our prayer, let us also keep him, their children and grandchildren also in our prayer.





▪ At the 9.30am Sunday Mass at Boonah this weekend, we have invited our Year 6 students and their families to the celebration of Mass to mark the end of their time at our parish school. At the start of the school year, we invoked God's blessing upon the Senior badges our Year 6 leaders would wear throughout 2022. As the final week of Year 6 begins, we will again invoke the blessing of God upon them. We will also present them with a candle bearing their first name to mark the end of their primary schooling and the beginning of their secondary schooling. We thank *Deb Morton* for preparing a personalised candle for each of

our students.

**3. Andy Hamilton sj acknowledged the tragedy of violence against women in an article on 24<sup>th</sup> November, "Elimination of violence against women".**

Every year the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is celebrated on 25 November. This year it is particularly significant because it follows shortly after the release of the [National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children](#). The Plan goes beyond exhortation and good intentions to propose a ten year project to eliminate violence against women in a generation. The plan will be followed by two detailed five-year action plans, backed up by set targets and reviews. Crucially, it enjoys the support of Federal and State Governments. Of course, as has been the case with the commitment to close the gap between Indigenous and other Australians, large initial hopes may be disappointed. The implementation of plans is always the most difficult challenge.

The National Plan itself is impressive in its seriousness and focus. It identifies a national scandal and names it uncompromisingly. Its focus is on persons who have been wronged, on the violence which they have suffered and on its lasting effects on their health and confidence. It asserts that domestic violence is overwhelmingly suffered by women and children, and is overwhelmingly inflicted by men. The extent of violence is illustrated by the claim that one in three women have suffered from physical violence after they are fifteen years old, and that one in five have experienced sexual violence.

This focus on the persons who have suffered violence shapes the goal of the National Plan. Its intent is to spare people intolerable pain and abuse by eliminating violence. This focus on persons draws it beyond identifying, exploring and apportioning blame. It also names what must change if persons are not to suffer, states how it can be changed, establishes processes of evaluation, and sets dates by which change must take place.





The tight and practical focus on the persons who suffer from violence paradoxically leads to a very broad survey of what is involved in a proper response. Persons, as distinct from individuals, are defined and shaped by their interlocking relationships. All these are salient to their experience of violence and freeing themselves from it. They include personal relations to parents, children, partners, friends and neighbours, institutional relations to police, courts, hospitals, schools, banks, churches, and government departments of health and welfare. They also include cultural relationships involved in personal history, religion, peer group influences and environment. Because violence against women involves a destructive relationship with men, to understand and address it must be built on understanding the same range of relationships in the men who abuse them. If women are to be freed from violence men must form respectful relationships with them and receive help to act respectfully.

From this perspective any plan to eliminate violence must consider all these relationships, not simply to approve and disapprove of their current shape, but to consider how they can be changed, coordinated, reformed and built upon in order to support people who suffer violence. For this reason the National Plan situates them within the story of persons caught into an abusive relationship, trapped in it, seeking to get out of it, getting free, finding justice and beginning a new life. A woman forming relationships needs the support of a community familiar with the early signs of abusive and manipulative behaviour. She must be able to access trustworthy advice, to know that her report of violence will be taken seriously and that any court orders will be policed, that she will be able to find safe emergency accommodation, assured accommodation after separation, and help in working through the trauma she has suffered. This will demand coordination and cooperation between a range of government programs.

*If [men] learn early to respond to frustration by lashing out,  
learn never to acknowledge weakness or express tender feelings,  
and have themselves experienced violence in their childhood,  
their own relationships with women are more likely to be violent and uncommunicative.*

To focus on persons within their multitude of relationships breeds a proper humility. Much significant knowledge is not gathered, or it is inaccessible outside particular departments. To change this demands communication and sharing of information across jurisdictions. Even then, so much remains unknown about people, cultures and situations. The National Plan commendably recognises this in promising a separate plan to respond to violence suffered in Indigenous communities. It accepts that a plan cannot be imposed as a 'whitefella' solution to an Indigenous problem but must be shaped by the experience, situation and cultural needs of Indigenous people.

One of the most satisfying features of the Plan is the care with which it consulted agencies and people that have addressed violence against women and reflected their experience. In its careful attention to the attitudes of the young men who act violently against women and children, the National Plan reflects many of the central themes of the experience and research of Jesuit Social Services, particularly through The Men's Project. It identifies cultural influences in the way that young men see and express their masculinity. It also acknowledges the destructive capacity of violent pornography and of abusive behaviour in social media and in public life to model young men's relationships with women.

The experience and relationships of men that are significant in leading them to refrain from or to perpetrate domestic violence are also complex. Their attitudes and behaviour towards women are often embedded when they are young. If they learn early to respond to frustration by lashing out, learn never to acknowledge weakness or express tender feelings, and have themselves experienced violence in their childhood, their own relationships with women are more likely to be violent and uncommunicative.



For the National Plan to be implemented, much work must be done with young men to help them come to a richer understanding of their masculinity and to form deeper relationships with women. This will require formation in emotional literacy and a commitment to consensual relationships, supported by good public role models and the readiness of bystanders, young and old, to call out abusive attitudes and behaviour. It will also require special support for children who have suffered from domestic violence, educating young men to want and form respectful relationships with women, ensuring that men are held accountable for violence against women, and are supported in responding in non-violent ways to frustration.

Ultimately, the *National Plan for Eliminating Violence against Women* enflashes the respect that we all owe to one another and that society must demand and encourage. It is to be celebrated.

**4. The weekly British Catholic newspaper THE TABLET carries an Advent reflection. The first one is titled, “Addicted to hope” by Hugh Gilbert:** *Despite all the shadows that loom over the world and over our own fears, the season of Advent is a reminder that our God-given orientation is to goodness and a better future.*

Advent will be at its longest this year – a full four weeks, with Christmas Day falling on a Sunday. But, short or long, this powerful season, which is one of the gems of the Roman liturgy, always seems to arrive at the right time. It always seems apposite, needed – not merely personally but collectively, not merely among Christians, but in the world, not merely for beleaguered humans but for the whole creation.

It is a season with a broad horizon and replete with far-reaching relevances. It is at once political, in the full sense of the word, and mystical.

Advent should not be turned into an anticipated Christmas. It runs into Christmas, certainly, and finds its resolution in that feast, and then in the octave and season that follow, in the feasts of Mary, Mother of God, the Epiphany and the Baptism of the Lord. But it is its own thing. Unfashionable as it may be to say, it is a penitential season, in the sense of being a call to conversion. It necessarily incorporates pain and a sense of lack, the whole of our insufficiency. It embraces a whole strand of human experience.

*The mass of humanity lead lives of quiet desperation, said Henry Thoreau. Who would deny it? Advent, like John the Baptist, presupposes a desert. I am repeatedly struck by how dystopian contemporary videogames, cinema and literature are. No need to egg this particular pudding by listing our current afflictions or trying to name our myriad secret sadnesses. In a late interview, the post-Christian Martin Heidegger memorably remarked: *Philosophy will be unable to effect any immediate change in the current state of the world. This is true not only of philosophy but of all purely human reflection and endeavour. Only a god can save us. The only possibility available to us is that ... we prepare a readiness for the appearance of a god.* In a more Christian register, the German Jesuit Alfred Delp wrote in 1944: *I see Advent this year with greater intensity and anticipation than ever before. Walking up and down in my cell, three paces this way and three paces that way, with my hands in irons and ahead of me an uncertain fate, I have a new and different understanding of God’s promise of redemption and release.**

Despite everything though, we remain addicted to hope. Our God-given orientation to good breaks through again and again like smiles after tears and greenness through cracks in concrete.

Advent – Lady Advent dressed in purple – takes our threatened, flickering, often misplaced hopes, and re-frames them, re-directs them. In Advent, the prophets of Israel fulfil their mission to the world more effectively than they ever could in their lifetimes.

Grace, according to St Thomas Aquinas, both purifies and elevates. Advent does this with our hope. It converts and enlarges us. It clears out our idols and throws open a horizon of cosmic, social and personal salvation. And finally, like Mary, delivers the surprise of the Child in whom all things hold together and God is with us.

**Hugh Gilbert OSB is the Bishop of Aberdeen.**

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## A PRAYER FOR ALL THOSE CAUGHT UP IN CONFLICT

*God of peace,*  
Show us how to put away the weapons of war  
and help us destroy the tools of destruction.  
**God of peace, may your kingdom come.**

*God of peace,*  
Teach us to follow the ways of justice  
and walk with us the paths of truth.  
**God of peace, may your kingdom come.**

*God of peace,*  
Challenge the weapons of war,  
and banish hatred and division,  
so that all your children may sleep secure.  
**God of peace, may your kingdom come.**

**Amen.**

*Linda Jones/CAFOD*



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