

A Day by Day Spiritual Journey Through Advent
With Deacon Chris

18th December

Light a candle and make sure it is safe and don't leave unattended.

Decorations

The tradition of having and decorating a Christmas tree seems to have originated in Germany. Apparently they would be decorated with apples and possibly other fruit too. The legend goes that a German glassblower couldn't afford apples so he made some glass ones. F.W. Woolworth, whilst on a trip to Germany, saw them and bought some which he sold on. We have the carol '*Deck the halls with boughs of holly*' written by John Ceiriog Hughes. The Romans and Druids used to decorate their halls with holly. The Druids looked on the holly tree as holy because the sun never went down on it. I think that means it is evergreen.

The focal point of our decorations is the Crib. This relates, visually, the surroundings of our Lord's birth after the angels had given the good news to the shepherds as per Luke's gospel.

St. Francis of Assisi is credited with creating the first crib in 1227. This was a live scene. The tradition grew and received papal blessings. Eventually, real people were replaced by statues.

The reason St. Francis created the scene was to get people to focus on the true meaning of Christmas which was getting overtaken by commercialism and giving gifts. Nothing new there, then.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

God our Father, as we get closer to the celebration of your Son's birth all those years ago, we prepare ourselves by going over the events in scripture. Help us to see properly what is familiar to us. As we decorate our homes and churches in the build up to the celebration of your Son's birth help us to remain focused on the great event and in doing so may we enjoy more fully Advent and Christmastide. Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Reading

Jeremiah chapter 23 verses 5 to 8

David's line

This reading places the Jewish people in exile in Babylon. They have been subjected to a series of unjust and oppressive leaders. They have turned their back on God and this is the result. Jeremiah is telling them that something good will happen and that they will return to the promised land. Not in the same way as the original Exodus but one that will be subject to praise and joy. He reaffirms that the House of David will be source of a new 'leader'. Someone who will show the way whose integrity will surpass any that has gone before it.

Prophets are not fortune tellers. They are messengers from God who tell us how it is. We have prophets today who do just the same but do we recognise them and do we listen to what they have to say.

Just a point on the use of the word Adonai. It means Lord. The Jewish people would not use God's name. They would not write or speak it. The High Priest was allowed to whisper it once a year in the Holy of Holies. We might see YHWH written; this is an abbreviation of God's name. In the ancient scroll this would have been written down but over it or at the

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side of it would be written *Adonai*. Such was their fear of blaspheming. We can see this fear in the gospels when Jesus is accused of blasphemy.

Your Own Time.

Rosary. Contemplate on the **O Antiphon** that follows

O Adonai and leader of Israel, you appeared to Moses in a burning bush and you gave him the Law on Sinai. O come and save us with your mighty power. (Magnificat antiphon 18th December Evening Prayer of the Church)

Concluding Prayer

Lord, through Moses you gave us the ten commandments as a sign of your covenant, we ask you now, to strengthen our resolve to live out all you have asked of us. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.