



Friday of the 2nd Week of Advent



Date: Friday, December 12, 2025 | **Season:** Advent | **Year:** A

First Reading: Isaiah 48:17–19

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 1:1–4, 6 | **Response:** Psalm 8:12

Gospel Acclamation: The Lord will come, go out to meet him. Great is his beginning and his reign will have no end.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 11:16–19

Preached at: The Jesuit Institute in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg, South Africa.

This homily reflects on Advent as a season of learning to listen again, especially when God speaks in ways we did not expect.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, dear friends, Advent often finds us tired before it finds us ready. We come carrying noise, disappointment, and half-answered prayers. And into that reality, God does not shout. God teaches, patiently, like a mother or a teacher who believes we can still learn.

Our first reading is from the Book of Isaiah. The people are in exile, far from home, worn down by loss and regret. God speaks to them not with anger, but with sorrowful care. I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is good for you, who leads you in the way you should go. If only you had listened, your peace would have been like a river. In the Bible, a river is not decoration. It means life, food, movement, a future. God is saying, I wanted your life to flow, not to stall or dry up. Advent holds that same sadness and that same hope. God longs to lead, but God will not force. Peace depends on listening.

The psalm today takes this further. It speaks of two paths. One person is like a tree planted near water, bearing fruit in season. Another is like chaff, light and useless, blown by the wind. This psalm was often used to teach beginners in faith. It is simple, almost blunt. Life has directions. Where you stand matters. What you listen to shapes who you become. For those of us living in South Africa today, where many struggle with rising costs, uncertain work, and young people wondering if they have a future here at all, this psalm asks a hard question. Are we planting lives that can last, or are we letting everything be blown about by fear, corruption, and short-term gain.

The Gospel comes from Matthew. Jesus speaks with frustration and sadness. He describes children in the marketplace who complain no matter what game is offered. John the Baptist came fasting, living simply, calling for repentance, and people said he was mad. Jesus came eating, sharing meals, close to ordinary people, and they called him irresponsible. Nothing pleased them. St John Chrysostom noticed that God was approaching from two sides. One path was strict and demanding. The other was warm and close. Still, people refused both. The problem was not John or Jesus. The problem was hearts that would not listen.

This Gospel lands close to home. We can be quick to criticise the Church when it feels too strict, and just as quick to complain when it feels too gentle. We want God to come on our terms. In Ignatian prayer, we are invited to imagine the scene. Picture the marketplace. Hear the voices. Then ask honestly, where am I in this story. Am I listening, or am I always finding reasons not to respond.

Jesus ends with a simple but strong line. Wisdom is shown to be right by what it does. Not by talk, not by arguments, but by the fruit it bears. This matters for Advent. Faith shows itself in deeds. In how we treat the poor, how we speak the truth, how we protect the weak, how we refuse to accept injustice as normal. In a country where many feel forgotten, wisdom looks like choosing fairness over advantage, service over comfort, and hope over cynicism.

Today the Church also draws our eyes to Our Lady of Guadalupe. She appeared not to the powerful, but to Juan Diego, a poor indigenous man. She spoke his language. She stood where he stood. She did not shout. She listened, and she sent him back with dignity and courage. Mary of Guadalupe shows us what Isaiah means. God teaches gently. God leads from within our history, our pain, our culture. She reminds us that the river of peace often begins as a small spring in the lives of the poor.

Advent invites us to that same listening. In the examen at the end of the day, Ignatius asks us to notice where God was near and where we resisted. That daily honesty is how roots grow. That is how chaff slowly becomes fruit-bearing grain.

So we wait, not with folded arms, but with open ears. God is still teaching. Wisdom is still calling. The river is still flowing.

As you pray with these readings this evening, I leave you with three questions.

- Where this week have I refused to listen because God's way felt uncomfortable or inconvenient?
- Who around me is being ignored or pushed aside, and how might God be asking me to respond with care and fairness?
- When I look back over my day in prayer, what helped me grow closer to the life God wants for me, and what pulled me away from it?

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.