

ADVENT
GOSPEL
REFLECTIONS

BISHOP ROBERT BARRON

WORD  on FIRE.

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INTRODUCTION

Friends,

Welcome to this great Advent journey! I'm so glad you're joining me and thousands of others in celebration and prayer during this holy season.

In its simplest terms, Advent is the time when we prepare for Christ. It's the great liturgical season of waiting—but not a passive waiting. We yearn, we search, and we reach out for the God who will come to us in human flesh. That's what we'll be doing for the next several weeks until Christmas.

May we spend these holy days together in prayer, penance, and hope, journeying through Advent like the Magi on our way to the newborn King.

God bless you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+ Robert Barron". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bishop Robert Barron

NOVEMBER 30, 2025

First Sunday of Advent

Matthew 24:37–44

Jesus said to his disciples: “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.”

Friends, today's Gospel compares the terror of the end times with that of the flood that destroyed the earth in Noah's time. Why does the coming of the Son of Man strike fear in us? Because if he is the Son of God, then he will break into our sinful world like a cleansing fire, or like a wild storm or violent revolution.

Since he is the Life, that life which is opposed to him has to give way. Since he's the Truth, then false claimants to truth must cede to him. And since he's the Way, then the false ways have to be abandoned. And all of this will hurt. The best way to prepare is to watch, pray, and renounce our sins.

Reflect: Are you ready for the coming of Christ? If not, what can you do to prepare?

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DECEMBER 1, 2025

Monday of the First Week of Advent

Matthew 8:5-11

When Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion approached him and appealed to him, saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering dreadfully.” He said to him, “I will come and cure him.” The centurion said in reply, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come here,’ and he comes; and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I say to you, many will come from the east and the west, and will recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the banquet in the Kingdom of heaven.”

Friends, today in our Gospel, Jesus praises the faith of a Roman centurion. How often the Bible compels us to meditate on the meaning of faith! We might say that the Scriptures rest upon faith and remain inspired at every turn by the spirit of faith.

One of the most fundamental statements of Christian faith is this: your life is not about you. This is not your project. Rather, you are part of God's great design. To believe this in your bones and to act accordingly is to have faith. When we operate out of this transformed vision, amazing things can happen, for we have surrendered to a power already at work in us "who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine" (Eph. 3:20).

This is precisely what we see in the lives of the saints: Mother Teresa moving into the worst slum in the world in an attitude of trust; Francis of Assisi just abandoning everything and living for God; Rose Hawthorne deciding to take cancer sufferers into her own home; Anthony leaving everything behind and going into the desert; Maximilian Kolbe saying, "I'm a Catholic priest; take me in his place." This is how faith transforms the Christian life.

Reflect: Do you have an attitude of trust in the presence of God? How can you be more open to what God will reveal, do, and invite?

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DECEMBER 2, 2025

Tuesday of the First Week of Advent

Luke 10:21-24

Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, “I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.”

Turning to the disciples in private he said, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I say to you, many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.”

Friends, today in the Gospel, we hear Jesus in intimate conversation with his Father. The passage invites us into very deep mysteries. Jesus addresses his Father and thereby reveals his own deepest identity within the Holy Trinity. He says, “I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have

hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike.”

It is important to keep in mind that this is not simply a good and holy man addressing God, but rather the very Son of God addressing his Father. We are being given a share in the inner life of God, the conversation between the first two Trinitarian persons.

And what are the “things” that have been concealed from the learned and revealed to the little ones? Nothing other than the mystery of Jesus’ relationship to his Father, the love that obtains between Father and Son, the inner life of God. From the beginning, this is what God wanted to give us.

Reflect: Are you ready to receive a share in God’s ownmost life? If not, what attachments to worldly goods are standing in the way?

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DECEMBER 3, 2025

Memorial of Saint Francis Xavier, Priest

Matthew 15:29–37

At that time: Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, went up on the mountain, and sat down there. Great crowds came to him, having with them the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute, and many others. They placed them at his feet, and he cured them. The crowds were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the deformed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind able to see, and they glorified the God of Israel.

Jesus summoned his disciples and said, “My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, for they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, for fear they may collapse on the way.” The disciples said to him, “Where could we ever get enough bread in this deserted place to satisfy such a crowd?” Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” “Seven,” they replied, “and a few fish.” He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke the loaves,

and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over—seven baskets full.

Friends, in today's Gospel, Jesus multiplies the loaves and the fishes. There is no better exemplification in the Scriptures of what I have called the loop of grace. God offers, as a sheer grace, the gift of being, but if we try to cling to that gift and make it our own, we lose it.

The constant command of the Bible is this: what you have received as a gift, give as a gift—and you will find the original gift multiplied and enhanced. One realizes this truth when one enters willingly into the loop of grace, giving away that which one is receiving.

The hungry people who gather around Jesus in this scene are symbolic of the hungry human race, starving, from the time of Adam and Eve, for what will satisfy. We have tried to fill up the emptiness with wealth, pleasure, power, honor, the sheer love of domination—but none of it works, precisely because we have all been wired for God and God *is* nothing but love.

Reflect: Meditate on a time when conforming yourself to the way of love and emptying out your ego brought you fulfillment.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

DECEMBER 4, 2025

Thursday of the First Week of Advent

Matthew 7:21, 24–27

Jesus said to his disciples: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

“Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined.”

Friends, in today's Gospel, Jesus gives us the parable about building on rock or on sand. On what precisely is the whole of your life built?

Your heart is your deep center, the place where you are most authentically yourself. That is your point of contact with God.

There you will find the energy that undergirds the other areas of your life: physical, psychological, emotional, relational, and spiritual.

If you are rooted in God at the level of your heart, then you will be following the intentions and commands of God, and you can withstand anything. But this does not mean that if we follow God's commands, the winds and floods will not come.

In Jesus' parable, both builders, the one who follows the commands of God and the one who doesn't, experience the rain and the floods that symbolize all the trials and temptations and difficulties at the surface of life. But if at the very center of your life you are linked with God—that power that is here and now creating the cosmos—then the storms and floods will come, but they will not destroy you.

Reflect: Rooted together in God, Christians know that they are connected to one another. In what ways can you bear the burdens of others in love? Is there someone in your life particularly in need of your help?

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DECEMBER 5, 2025

Friday of the First Week of Advent

Matthew 9:27-31

As Jesus passed by, two blind men followed him, crying out, “Son of David, have pity on us!” When he entered the house, the blind men approached him and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I can do this?” “Yes, Lord,” they said to him. Then he touched their eyes and said, “Let it be done for you according to your faith.” And their eyes were opened. Jesus warned them sternly, “See that no one knows about this.” But they went out and spread word of him through all that land.

Friends, today in our Gospel, two blind men beg Jesus to heal them.

Blindness in the Bible is very often a symbol of spiritual blindness: the incapacity to see what truly matters. Focused on the worldly goods of wealth, pleasure, power, and honor, most people don't see how blind they are to the truly important things: giving oneself to the grace of God and living a life of love. If you have not surrendered to the grace of God, you are blind. How

wonderful it is, then, that these men in the Gospel can cry out to Jesus in their need.

They are, of course, making a petition for physical healing, but it's much more than that for us. It's asking for that one thing that finally matters: spiritual vision—to know what my life is about, to know the big picture, to know where I'm going. You can have all the wealth, pleasure, honor, and power you want. You can have all the worldly goods you could desire. But if you don't see spiritually, it will do you no good; it will probably destroy you.

Reflect: Do you have a family member or friend who is spiritually blind—wandering more or less aimlessly? How can you draw them to Jesus, who comes to give sight to blind eyes?
