

# Stou( )space

SERIES: ADVENT HEROES

Season colour: VIOLET

In this new series, Gerard Moloney CSsR looks at some of the significant characters of Advent.

It's easy for many of us to identify with the Lincoln family in their sadness and tears. We lose someone close to us; a relationship breaks up, chronic pain ensnares us; financial woes strangle us, loneliness envelopes us; work – or its lack – crushes us; the future seems like deep mid-winter, dark, dank, dreary.

Politically our world seems like it's convulsed and divided, uncertain and fearful, unstable and insecure, with chilling echos of the 1930s.

Church-wise, in the West, it can feel the same. Convents closing; churches emptying, vocations collapsing, the greying and balding of those in ministry. A bleak mid-winter with few signs of spring, despite Pope Francis's best efforts.

During the next four Sundays, we will reflect on some of the notable characters of Advent. A characteristic they shared was trust and hope in God. Even when they felt lost, confused, uncertain, they trusted in God. Like the Lincoln family, they didn't give up.

Today we focus on Zechariah, husband of Elizabeth and father of John the Baptist. We don't know a lot about him. He features only in Luke's infancy narrative. We are told he was a priest serving in the Temple and that he and Elizabeth were good people, worthy in God's sight. They scrupulously kept God's law.

Yet, they had no children. For Jews back then, childlessness was a scandal. It meant God hadn't favoured them. It raised question marks about them. We are told they felt humiliated. They were also getting well on in years, and it looked like this shame would never leave them.

Zechariah must have felt profound disappointment, even despair. You can imagine what his colleagues would have been saying. God hadn't blessed them. God had let them down. They must have wondered why.

Still, Zechariah did his duty. He continued to serve in the Temple. At his age, he must have felt his future was behind him. He had abandoned hope of being a father.

No wonder he was incredulous when the angel

appeared to him in the Temple's inner sanctum to tell him Elizabeth was about to conceive and become a mum. That he would be a dad, after all, to a child he must name John. He couldn't believe it. He questioned it. How could this be?

His incredulity led him to be dumbstruck literally. He lost the power of speech; God muted him until God's plan would be fulfilled. Literally and metaphorically, Zechariah was speechless.

After John's birth, when Zechariah announced his child would be named John, he got his voice back, and he praised God in a beautiful song we call the Benedictus: "Blessed be the Lord, for he has visited his people, to redeem them, to set them free." Zechariah's sadness had turned to joy, his despair to hope, his disappointment to glorious delight. God had blessed him and Elizabeth.

## THREE LESSONS

Three short lessons we can learn from the story of Zechariah.

First is his fidelity to God. He kept going. He kept serving God. Even when all seemed bleak, he didn't give up. He remained faithful, even though it seemed his prayers would be unanswered. So it must be with us, no matter how challenging the circumstances, we must trust in God. We must never give up.

Second, disappointment is okay. Failure is okay. Zechariah experienced disappointment, but he persevered. He did his best. He continued to do his best. The same must apply to us.

Third, never lose hope. Zechariah was surprised by joy, blessed in a most unexpected and wonderful way. Always be ready to be surprised by joy. Hope is the message of the Advent season. Hope is what the story of Zechariah teaches us (what the Lincoln story teaches us). Never lose hope – for God is with us always. ■

## LESSONS FROM ZECHARIAH

**Zechariah continued to serve God even when it seemed that God wouldn't answer his prayer.**

The location was desolate, a nondescript headstone in a tiny graveyard in a densely wooded area in Southern Indiana. It belongs to a woman obscure throughout her life and for years afterwards – Mrs Lincoln's grave. Nancy Hanks Lincoln died in October 1818, aged 44. Her oldest son, Abraham, age 9, would now have to help care for the household, become a man while still a boy. Nancy would never know what her son would become, the indelible mark he would make on history. She died without that knowledge, laid to rest in a tiny grave near a tiny log cabin. I can't begin to imagine how despairing she felt at the end of her hard life – leaving behind her husband Thomas and young children.



## Today's readings

Jer 33:14-16

1 Tess 3:12-4:2

Lk 21:25-28.34-36

## GOD'S WORD TODAY

Today's Gospel is part of a teaching Jesus gave to his disciples in the Temple of Jerusalem. Although Jesus doesn't give any timetable for the 'end of the ages,' he does tell us how we should act in the meantime. It's easy to fall into the trap of keeping up with the times, of buying into its false value system. Advent invites us to be self-critical. It invites us to become aware of how our hearts, despite our best intentions, can get coarsened as though the good times will go on forever and there will be no moment of reckoning.





# Parishes of Dromara and Drumgooland

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## 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent – 28<sup>th</sup> November 2021

### Anniversary Masses

#### Leitrim

Sat 27<sup>th</sup> Charlie, Brigid, Jim, Jerome and Phelim Shields

Sat 4<sup>th</sup> Fr Lionel Murray  
Mary Teresa, Catherine & Pat Murphy

#### Dromara

Fri 3<sup>rd</sup> Hugh and Elizabeth O'Hare (Drinn)  
Sun 5<sup>th</sup> David McKay  
Laura Armstrong, Isobel and Hugh Lavery

#### Dechomet

Sat 4<sup>th</sup> Margaret Gilmore  
Margaret Leonard

#### Gargory

Sun 5<sup>th</sup> John King

### St Vincent de Paul Finnis

#### Dromara Christmas Appeal 2021

Due to ongoing COVID restrictions we have setup an Amazon Wish List for anyone who wishes to purchase a Christmas present for a local child to receive this Christmas.

Any support, no matter how small, is greatly appreciated and will go directly to support local families in need of support during these difficult times. The Wish List can be found at: [https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/1RET2PL08GHHT?ref\\_=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/1RET2PL08GHHT?ref_=wl_share)

If you have any difficulties, or if you would prefer to make a donation towards heating oil/food hampers, please contact Mary on 07738838191.

Many thanks for your continued support  
St Vincent de Paul Finnis, Dromara

#### Drumgooland St Vincent de Paul

Contact us in confidence on 078 2541 9067

### Collections 21<sup>st</sup> Nov Dromara Drumgooland

Parish £ 198 £562

Trocaire £540 last week – thank you

### St Matthews Magheramayo Fundraiser

Lucky Number Christmas Draw.

Pick a number between 1-100, £10 a number.

Prizes 1<sup>st</sup> £200, 2<sup>nd</sup> £100, 3<sup>rd</sup> £50.

To purchase a number please contact Martina Walsh 07876400820.

**First Confession for St Michael's P5 children** on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> November at 7.30pm in Finnis.

**Congratulations** to Brendan McNeill and Shannon Parr who were married recently.

**Many happy returns** to Julia McCann on her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### Synodal Reflection

There are five main areas for consideration. The questions are for your personal consideration. A process is being developed for gathering your responses.

1. *In what ways is the Church important to you?*
2. *How can the Church welcome and include everyone?*
3. *How can people be listened to more effectively and encouraged to participate in decision-making within the Church?*
4. *How can more people be encouraged to participate in the life of the Church?*
5. *In your experience, how has the Church motivated you to share the love of Christ and help those in need?*
6. *How would you like to see the future of the Diocese of Dromore?*

### Weekend masses

Sat 6:00pm Dechomet 7:30pm Leitrim  
Sun 9:00am Gargory 11:00am Dromara

### Weekday masses

Mon 9:00am Leitrim 7:30pm Dechomet  
Tues 9:00am Dromara  
Wed 7:30pm Leitrim  
Fri 7:30pm Dromara

### Christmas Masses

**Christmas Eve:** 7pm Leitrim, 8pm Dechomet, 9pm Dromara, 10pm Gargory.

**Christmas Day:** 9am Gargory, 10am Leitrim, 11am Dromara.

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> Dec:** 9am Gargory, 10am Leitrim, 11am Dromara, 12noon Dechomet.

Space is limited. There will be no pre booking system. If people also want to have an anniversary Mass it is their choice but please be aware that entry is not guaranteed.

**Sick and housebound** will be attended as follows:

Mon 6<sup>th</sup> Dec - Leitrim/Gargory, Tues 7<sup>th</sup> Dec - Dromara, Wed 8<sup>th</sup> Dec – Dechomet

**Bulletins:** Redemptorist publications will no longer publish Soul Space. From next week the cover of the bulletin will be Sunday newsletter. There will be more bulletins available from next weekend.

