

## **Donnybrook**

29 November 2021

### **Welcome**

The various church seasons profile different aspects of our faith. Lent is very clear with the call to conversion. Advent too has its own tone: as we mark the days to Christmas we are invited to go on a journey, a journey which brings together longing, faith and joy.

### **Topic**

The very first step is to hear that invitation.

### **Steps**

The spirituality of longing is clear in today's first reading from Isaiah: come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord. The Psalm echoes an invitation to pilgrimage: I rejoiced when I heard them say let us go to God's house. St Augustine captured it in his most famous line: you have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Part of our Advent journey is exactly that: we are invited to go back to basics, so notice the hungers of the heart, the search for something more. Just as the plants in the garden are drawn to the light, we are drawn to God.

Advent is also a journey of faith, as is very clear in today's Gospel. The story of the centurion is in all four Gospels and is surely historical. Matthew's version contains a sharp warning: no where in Israel have I found faith like this. We might be tempted to leave it in the past: it is to do with the fellow Jews of Jesus' day. But as we know, any community of faith can move from reassurance to entitlement to complacency

Lastly, on this Advent journey, we are invited to rediscover joy in believing. In both Isaiah and Matthew this is described as coming to a feast – that is, a place of welcome and hospitality, celebration and joy. In these difficult days, perhaps we need as never before the quiet exuberance of faith – underlined again and again by Pope Francis.

### **Conclusion**

At the very start of the season, I can ask myself a simple question. What do I need to put in place so that I can benefit from Advent this year?