



“Waiting for the Coming of the Lord”

**First Sunday of Advent (Year A)
30 November 2025**

Reflection - Mgr Daniel McHugh

“The day is at hand.” (Romans 13:12)

As I write this Reflection for this coming Sunday my recent experience of being in Trivandrum, the capital city of the Southern India State of Kerala, is very much in my mind. Just this past weekend I was there, representing Archbishop Longley, at the Episcopal Ordination of Monsignor Kuriakose Thadathil, who has recently become Parish Priest of Our Lady of Assumption, Tile Hill, Coventry; before that he was PP in Holy Name, Great Barr, Birmingham. Bishop Kuriakose is in charge of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in the UK, one of three Catholic Communities who look back to St Thomas, the Apostle, as their founder in Kerala (the others being Syro-Malabar and Latin Churches) now part of the Kerala diaspora in Europe. Indeed, Bishop Kuriakose, is the Apostolic Visitor for the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church across Europe. The Episcopal Ordination was conducted by Cardinal Cleemis, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, and I was his guest in Trivandrum. There were a number of fascinating aspects of the Ordination Ceremony, which included a second Bishop, John, who is to be Auxiliary in Trivandrum: one was

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the tradition of the new bishop being raised up on a chair three times and the congregation acclaiming OCSIOS (He is worthy). It is known as the SUNTHRONISO. Another aspect, that will impact on how the new Bishop will be known, is the giving of a new name, rather like our tradition of choosing a Saint's name at Confirmation. In the case of Bishop Kuriakose, the name given him by the Cardinal, was Osthathios, one of the greats who defended the Divinity of the Christ at the Council of Nicea, which was convened in 325. He was Bishop of Antioch after having been Bishop of Aleppo in Syria. Antioch was in Syria, but is now known as Antakya in South Central Turkey; it is the place where followers of our Lord were first known as "Christians."

In connection with Saint Osthathios (Eustathius) being a key Bishop in the struggle to confirm the traditional belief of the Church in the Council held in Nicea, we will be witnessing on the media that Pope Leo will be visiting Nicea to mark 1700 years of the Council in the coming days, and going on to Lebanon for the second leg of his first Apostolic visit.

In the Liturgy of the Eucharist for the Episcopal Ordination I was part of a Rite that goes back to Antioch. When the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church reunited with the Latin (Roman Catholic) Church in 1930, it retained the Antiochian Liturgy.

For us in "the West" the Eastern Liturgies can be a bit long! But, there was no doubting the devotion, and spirituality that lay behind this way of prayer. As I went to join the regular Sunday Mass at 6:30 am on Sunday, I could hear the

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chanting in the Cathedral. My guide, Fr Anthony, told me that people were gathered for Morning Prayer, singing the Psalms before the Eucharist. It struck me that the culture is different: the Catholic Community are “at home” with this way of prayer. What a Blessing it is that when they come to live and work and bring up their families here, they have Priests who come to join them to support them in their Catholic life. I have no doubt that as they turn to the Celebration of Christmas they will be thinking and praying about the call to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord – the focus of our Advent season. When we celebrated the Jubilee of Migrants in Rome recently the Holy Father, Pope Leo, spoke of migrants as witnesses of Hope and as people who enrich our Catholic Communities here in the West. As I think back to my experience last weekend, I think of the people as a people of Faith and Prayer; a people who would teach us that Prayer is the way to prepare in this special Advent season for the coming of the Lord: the second coming at the end of time; his coming in Bethlehem; and his coming unexpectedly for each of us.

Advent is a time to become spiritually alive and alert. “The day is at hand” as St Paul says in the second reading from the letter to the Romans. Amid all the business of this time, may we like the Community I heard in prayer last Sunday, before Mass for the Solemnity of Christ the King, find space and time to lift up our minds and hearts. As Isaiah says in the first reading,

“O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord” (Isaiah 2:5).

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