

CELTIC ADVENT: THRESHOLDS

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Jeremiah 6:16

Thus says the LORD:

Stand at the crossroads, and look,
and ask for the ancient paths,
where the good way lies; and walk in it,
and find rest for your souls.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage(s) slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. Jeremiah is a prophet who warns the people that they stand at a threshold to a new era. There is a crossroads before them, and they must choose which path they will take. They cannot remain where

they are; they must take action, even if they do not want to. Can you think of a time in your life when you sensed deeply that the choice before you would change your world entirely—that there would be no going back? What was that like? What did you learn in that process?

3. What do you know about the season of Advent? What does it mean, and are there traditions you practice during the Advent season—be it spiritual, social, or familial?
4. Celtic Advent is an invitation to “an ancient path.” Read about **Celtic Advent (below)** and reflect on what it might mean for you to travel an extended Advent season this year—not four weeks, but forty days.
 - a. How might experiencing Advent in a different way be challenging?
 - b. How might experiencing Advent in a different way be refreshing?
 - c. What do you hope to learn or experience this Advent season?
5. Thresholds can signal and structure a new way of being. Are there buildings, rooms, or spaces

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where you act differently once you cross their threshold? (Think of libraries, or a parent's home, or a church sanctuary, etc.)

6. Are you on a threshold in your life's journey? Perhaps you are on the threshold of a new school, new home, new job, new friend group, new church, new chapter in your life, or new habit.
 - a. What's it like to step through this threshold?
 - b. Where do you find strength and wisdom for this threshold moment?
 - c. Where or how do you sense God's presence in these moments?
7. Advent occurs during the natural rhythms of changing from fall to winter, the shortening of the days, and the "darkest night" that occurs on December 21. Advent is a threshold season—a season "in between" what has been and what is to come. It is a longing for the new creation to emerge out of the chaos and suffering of the present.
 - a. What are people suffering with and longing for today?
 - b. What chaos are people experiencing that they hope might be changed with God's help?

- c. How can you be a source of good news and great joy in this season?
- d. How can the church be a source of good news and great joy in this season?

CELTIC ADVENT

Advent is a holy time of preparation for the mystery of the incarnation—God's love taking human form to bring hope and restoration to a sin-ridden world. Advent is usually practiced in the church as a four-week preparatory season before Christmas, signified by the color blue or purple.

This 4-week season was only made official in the 9th century in one part of the Christian world (the Western Church).

Before that, the early Celtic Christians practiced 40 days of preparation for any major life event, and many Christians across Europe practiced a longer, even 40-day Advent (mirroring Lent, which is 40 days of preparation before Easter, also marked by the color purple).

This longer period of Advent is still carried along Eastern Christian Orthodox traditions, and goes by various names, like "St. Martin's Lent" or the "Christmas Fast."

This 40-day Lent-like Advent was about longing, prayer, and fasting, awaiting and preparing for the holy mystery of the Christ-child.

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