



Third Sunday of Advent - The Mount of Olives

The Mount of Olives sits on the east side of walled Old City in Jerusalem, stands slightly higher than the Temple Mount and has always been a place of expectation. For the Jews, the Messiah will come from the east passing over the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem. Since early times, Christians have expected Jesus' second coming (the 'parousia') from the same direction.

In the Gospels, Jesus often stays in Bethany close to the Mount of Olives (Mark 14:3-9). He sits on the Mount with his three disciples Peter, James and John, looking over Jerusalem before his passion (Mark 13:3). Today, the Church of Dominus Fleuit ('the Lord wept') sits midway up on the Mount of Olives and commemorates Jesus weeping over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44). The Church of All Nations sits at the base of the Mount of Olives and recalls his agony, betrayal and arrest (Mark 14:32-50). In Advent, the Mount of Olives brings Jesus to mind and our focus to the coming of the Christ-child.

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Fourth Sunday of Advent - The Coming of God

This season evokes thoughts of the Christmas story, especially Luke's account of the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, city of David's birth and anointing. Bethlehem was three days travel by donkey or on foot from Nazareth. The name 'Bethlehem' means 'house of meat' in Arabic and 'house of bread' in Hebrew.

There is a fourteen-pointed star under the altar in the cave in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem which marks the traditional spot of Jesus' birth. The fourteen points correspond to the number fourteen which is associated with the name of David in Hebrew, and symbolizes the three lots of fourteen generations at the beginning of Matthew's gospel. The star affirms the theology of Jesus as the 'anointed one' of God. Advent prepares us spiritually for God's coming in Jesus.

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