

Advent Reflections 2025

Week 1: A brief introduction to St Matthew – the man and his Gospel; the Patriarchs and some de-stress suggestions.

This Advent we are entering Liturgical Year A and so our reflections centre on the life and Gospel of Matthew. As Matthew begins his Gospel with the genealogy of Jesus, each week's bulletin will feature a piece on two or three key names from this. We will also reflect on a passage from Matthew's Gospel and I will share some of Stephen Cottrell's thoughts from his book, "Do nothing, Christmas is coming."

For this first week of Advent, we take a look first at what we know about Saint Matthew and some key facts about the Gospel accredited to him.

The Gospel of St Matthew appears first in the books of the New Testament, but it is not generally believed to have been the first one written. Most scholars agree that both Matthew and Luke took Mark's Gospel as a source of information. Nonetheless it is generally - although not universally - believed to have been written by Matthew, also known as Levi, tax collector and disciple of Christ.

Several well-known Biblical passages, especially around the birth of Christ, are unique to Matthew's Gospel. These include:

Joseph's perplexity on learning of Mary's pregnancy.

The homage of the Wise Men.

The flight into Egypt and the Massacre of the Innocents.

Matthew was born in the fishing village of Capernaum and is believed to have died in Ethiopia in about the year 68 AD, though whether through martyrdom or natural causes is a matter of dispute.

The account of Christ calling Matthew to follow him and the future Apostle's response to this call can be read in Matthew 9,9; Mark 2,14-17 and Luke 5,27-32

The symbol usually associated with Matthew is the human face, possibly because material unique to his Gospel tends to emphasise Jesus as the human face of God.

St Matthew's Day is celebrated on September 21st and he is the Patron Saint of bankers and accountants.

Key figures from the genealogy of Christ, according to Matthew: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are revered as the Patriarchs of Israel, the first of whom was Abraham.

Abraham

The best known events of Abraham's life are his obedience to God first in leaving his home to travel to an unknown destination, trusting God's promise that his heirs (at this point not born), would inherit the land; and his willingness to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, when God asked it of him.

(See Genesis 12,1-7 and Genesis 22,1-14).

Isaac

Isaac was the son born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. His name means "One laughs" reflecting Sarah's reaction when told by an angel that she would have a son. (See Genesis 18,1-15).

Isaac married Rebekah and became the father of twin sons - Esau and Jacob.

Jacob

Although the younger of the twins, it is through Jacob that Christ's genealogy is traced. Having tricked his brother out of both his birthright and his father's blessing, Jacob went on to become the father of twelve sons, who became the heads of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. (See Genesis 25, 19-34; 27,1-38 and 29,1-30,24)

Reflection from Stephen Cottrell's book: "Do nothing, Christmas is coming."

For this first week of Advent, Cottrell recommends strategies for taking some of the stress out of Christmas by:

limiting the number of cards you send. Only send to people you really care about and consider sending e-cards instead of physical ones. This helps the environment and money saved can be donated to charity.

Agree a spending limit per gift with family and friends and where possible buy from charities.

Take time to think about what you **really** want for Christmas. This might not be something money can buy; perhaps it's a long walk in the countryside; an uninterrupted soak in the bath or an evening spent curled up with a good book. Then

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Treat yourself!

Bible Verse: Matthew 6,34

Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.

Final thought:

Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday, and all is well
(Attributed to Dale Carnegie).