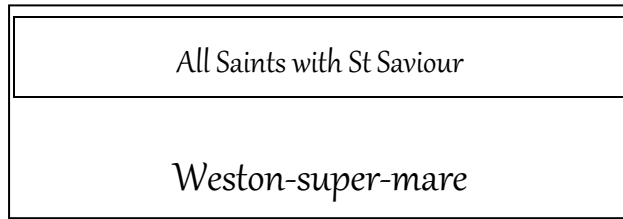




Arms of St Saviour



Arms of All Saints

18th November 2023

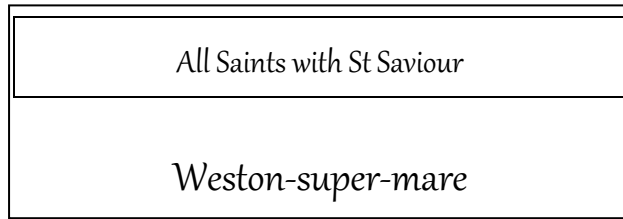
Dear friends,

Advent Sunday is on 3rd December, the first day of the Christian New Year. Some people may know that the Advent season focuses on expectation and think it serves as an anticipation of Christ's birth in the season leading up to Christmas. This is part of the story, but there's more to Advent than that.

The word "Advent" is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming," which translates to the Greek word *parousia*. Scholars believe that during the 4th and 5th centuries in Spain and Gaul, Advent was a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the January feast of Epiphany, the celebration of God's incarnation represented by the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus, his baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, and his first miracle at Cana. During this season of preparation, Christians would spend 40 days in penance, prayer, and fasting to prepare for this celebration; originally, there was little connection between Advent and Christmas. By the 6th century, however, Roman Christians had tied Advent to the coming of Christ. But the "coming" they had in mind was not Christ's first coming in the manger in Bethlehem, but his second coming in the clouds as the judge of the world. The Advent season was not explicitly linked to Christ's first coming at Christmas until the Middle Ages.



Arms of St Saviour



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Advent symbolizes the church's present situation in these "last days" as God's people wait for the return of Christ in glory to consummate his eternal kingdom. The church is in a similar situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: in exile, waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming of the Messiah. Israel looked back to God's past gracious actions on their behalf in leading them out of Egypt in the Exodus, and on this basis, they called for God once again to act for them.

In the same way, the church, during Advent, looks back upon Christ's coming in celebration, while at the same time looking forward in eager anticipation to the coming of Christ's kingdom when he returns for his people.

So '*Come, Lord Jesus*' or '*maranatha*' should be our daily prayer in this sacred season. And talking of prayer please note the invitation to an Advent Quiet morning on Saturday 16th December, 10am - 12.30pm when I shall be talking about prayer over three addresses.

With love and prayers,
Fr Brendan