

In Hopeful Expectation

PRAYERS AT HOME
FOR ADVENT
IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC



2020

What is Advent?

Each passing year presents us with a new opportunity to recall the Christian story by celebrating the different feasts and seasons of what we call the Liturgical Year. As we do so – our lives are opened up to the saving presence of God and we are drawn deeper into that great mystery of love between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Liturgical Year begins with the season of Advent, which consists of the four weeks before Christmas. Central to Advent is the Christian belief that God comes close to and visits humanity. “The first visit — we all know — occurred with the Incarnation, Jesus’ birth in the cave of Bethlehem; the second takes place in the present: the Lord visits us constantly, each day, walking alongside us and being a consoling presence; in the end, there will be the third, the last visit, which we proclaim each time that we recite the Creed: “He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead”. (Pope Francis, Angelus, 2016)

A Spiritual Opportunity

If approached in a spirit of openness, Advent can be an opportunity to deepen our sense of God who walks alongside us on the journey of life. It is somewhat like a mini Lent before Christmas. We are invited to set aside some extra time and space for prayer, reflection and good works. The restrictions in place because of the Coronavirus mean that we may not be in a position to gather as usual for our religious services. This situation challenges us to find new ways of reflecting on our faith and praying in our homes. It is hoped that this guide will assist you in doing just that.

The Advent Wreath

Catholicism has a long tradition of using images and symbols to help us to pray. Setting aside a place in your home for an Advent Wreath can help in this regard. For this you will need some ever-green leaves and five candles (it is preferable if there are three purple, one pink and one white). Arrange the leaves in a circle. Without beginning or end, the circle, along with the green leaves, symbolises the eternity of God who sustains life in all things. Put the purple and pink candles in the circle – and place the white one in the centre. As we progress through the Sundays of Advent, the different candles are lit, with the white one being lit on Christmas Eve. With the lighting of each candle we are reminded of how God draws ever-near and brings with him his saving light to dispel the darkness of our lives and our world. You might also consider placing a Bible – the Word of God – near the Advent Wreath.

Assembling the Christmas Crib

Another symbol that is used to help us connect with the meaning of Christmas is the traditional nativity scene or crib. During Advent, the gradual assembly of the crib may accompany our spiritual preparation for the celebration of Christmas. Source materials to build a stable along with crib figures (Mary, Joseph, the Ox, the Donkey, Shepherds, the Baby, the three Wise Kings). On the Second Sunday of Advent assemble the stable and leave it there empty with no visitors. On the third Sunday add some straw along with the Ox and the Donkey. On the fourth Sunday add Mary, Joseph and the Shepherds.

Broadcast Masses

While nothing can substitute for gathering in person, we are blessed to live in a time that the celebration of the Eucharist can be broadcast on radio or television or by means of the internet. This guide is also designed to help deepen your participation in those broadcasts and to assist you in getting the most out of them spiritually.



Call to Action

During each of our days of prayer there will be a call to action. To do something different or significant that puts the message of that particular day into practice.

Safety

This guide is designed for use by a single household. All health and safety advice should be adhered to. When using candles, please do so safely.

Third Sunday of Advent

13th December 2020



Today we celebrate the Third Sunday of Advent which is called “Gaudete Sunday” in Latin or “Rejoicing Sunday” in English. Traditionally Priests wear pink/rose coloured vestments instead of purple to symbolise the foretaste of the joy of the approaching feast. Joy is the central theme. Not a shallow or frivolous joy but a joy of deep contentment in the hope that the Lord is near – he is near indeed.

A Prayer Ritual at Home

Gather around the Advent Wreath that you have prepared in your prayer space. Light the two purple candles for the first and second Sundays of Advent.

If building your crib have the figures of the ox and donkey at hand. Pause for a moment of silent reflection to become aware of God’s presence.

As we begin ...

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Let us pray (pause)

Lord God, may we, your people, who look forward to the birthday of Christ experience the joy of salvation, and celebrate that feast with love and thanksgiving. We make this prayer through Christ, Our Lord. Amen

Let us listen to God's Word...

John 1:19-28

"Now those who had been sent were Pharisees, and they put this question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the Prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptise with water; but standing among you -- unknown to you- is the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandal.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising."

Let us reflect ...

The human heart desires joy. We all desire joy, every family, every people aspires to happiness. But what is the joy that the Christian is called to live out and bear witness to? It is the joy that comes from the closeness of God, from his presence in our life. From the moment Jesus entered into history, with his birth in Bethlehem, humanity received the seed of the Kingdom of God, like the soil receives the seed, the promise of a future harvest. There is no need to look further! Jesus has come to bring joy to all people for all time. It is not just a hopeful joy or a joy postponed until paradise: as if here on earth we are sad but in paradise we will be filled with joy. No! It is not that, but a joy already real and tangible now, because Jesus himself is our joy, and with Jesus joy finds its home, as your sign there says: joy is at home in Jesus. All of us, let us say it: "Joy is at home in Jesus". Once more: "Joy is at home in Jesus". And without Jesus is there joy? No! Well done! He is living, He is the Risen One, and He works in us and among us especially with the Word and the Sacraments.

We who are baptized, children of the Church, we are called to accept ever anew the presence of God among us and to help others to discover Him, or to rediscover what they have forgotten. It is a most beautiful mission, like that of John the Baptist: to direct the people to Christ — not to ourselves! — for He is the destination to which the human heart tends when it seeks joy and happiness. (*Pope Francis, Angelus, 2014*)

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection.

Ritual Action

Place the ox and donkey in your crib. We now light the pink/rose coloured candle on the Advent Wreath. As the candle is being lit all pray together:

Lord God, may we, your people, who look forward to the feast of Christmas experience the joy of salvation and celebrate that feast with love and thanksgiving. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Intercessions

We take a moment to bring before God our needs and the needs of the world at this time:

We pray for the joy of being truly content in life. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who lack joy in life. May they find consolation in their troubles and worries. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for a renewed sense of joy in our Church. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Add your own intercessions here.

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Our Father ...

Prayer (pause)

Loving Father, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” Help us to realise that true joy and happiness are found not in the things of this world but in a life of love with you and with our brothers and sisters. Help us to experience that true joy in our hearts this Christmas. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Blessing

The Lord bless us and keep us; The Lord make his face shine on us and be gracious to us; The Lord turn his face toward us and give us his peace both now and forever. Amen

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Call to Action

Write a list of “Spiritual Gifts” you would like to receive this Christmas. Why not visit your local church for quiet prayer before Jesus present there? Spread a bit of Joy about the place! Smile!



Online Celebration of the Sunday Eucharist



Before the broadcast begins:

- Light two purple candles and the pink/rose coloured candle on your Advent Wreath.

During the broadcast look out for the following:

- Today is one of only two days in the year when pink/rose coloured vestments are worn.
- The Readings focus on the building excitement at the prospect that God is going to do something amazing for humanity. In the **First Reading**, the Prophet Isaiah speaks in excited tones about the “Spirit of God” having been given to him to “bring good news to the poor” and to “bind up hearts that are broken.” The Psalm using the words of Mary rejoices at this prospect. St Paul in the Second Reading encourages the early followers of Jesus at Thessalonica to “be happy at all times; to pray constantly; and for all things to give thanks to God”. In the **Gospel** the figure of John the Baptist returns as a witness to the coming of the one – whom he is “unfit to undo his sandal-strap” – Jesus the Messiah.
- At communion time make an Act of Spiritual Communion. Invite Jesus to visit your heart, take some time to truly welcome his presence. Let the closeness of Jesus fill you with a happiness that the world cannot give. Hold on to him and whisper to him.

Take away...

What brings you Joy in life? Does religion give you joy?



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