

Parish & Families
Prayer for Advent

PEACE HOPE
JOY
LOVE



**DIOCESE of
DERRY**

The Season of Advent

The word 'Advent' means 'coming' or 'arrival'. The season of Advent marks the time we prepare for the birth of Jesus at Christmas. This year Advent starts on Sunday, 3 December. It spans four Sundays and four weeks of preparation for Christmas.

In this booklet you will find a Family Prayer Service and activity suggestions for the four Sundays of Advent as we journey towards Christmas and the arrival of the Son of God to a stable in Bethlehem. It is our sincere hope that this resource will be a spiritual support to everyone during the season of Advent.

Create an Advent Family Prayer Space

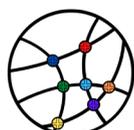
Preparation

Plan a time to gather in your home to pray.

Create a Prayer Space

A Prayer Space may include:

- Photographs of loved ones.
- A lighted candle.
- A religious symbol such as a cross, an open Bible, a sacred picture or icon, a statue or rosary beads.
- Dim the lights of the room and quieten distractions to create a calm and serene atmosphere.
- If you are gathering as a group, you might choose someone to lead the different prayers or to proclaim the Gospel readings.
- You could use your phone or tablet and connect with others outside your home.
- Couples might wish to light the candles from their wedding day or parents of a new baby, their baptismal candle.
- This is your prayer time, be creative and include additional elements that will bring you and your family peace.



Northern Pastoral Network
www.northernpastoral.network

Gospel Readings: Universalis Publishing: universalis.com/europe.ireland/mass.htm
This booklet has been created and published by the Northern Pastoral Network which comprises:

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DIOCESE OF DERRY
DIOCESE OF DROMORE
DIOCESE OF RAPHOE

DIOCESE OF CLOGHER
DIOCESE OF DOWN & CONNOR
DIOCESE OF KILMORE

***“You have made us for yourself, O Lord,
and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”***

Saint Augustine

In the short days, dark nights and the chill of winter, we reminisce of the brighter and warmer days that have passed and, in hope, long for their return. We are tired by the strain of this pandemic and the disruption that it has brought to our lives. We yearn for consistency, we seek out signs of hope, and we long for something to fill the void in our lives. Our consistency and our hope are found in God. God is with us.

As we set out on our journey towards Christmas, we may find ourselves connecting with the emotions of weariness, anxiety and fear felt by Mary and Joseph on the road to Bethlehem. Unsure of what lay ahead, Mary and Joseph embarked on a courageous journey fuelled by their trust in God and a beautiful expectant hope of better things to come. Let trust and hope be the hallmarks of our prayerful journey this Advent.

The Northern Pastoral Network has collated this prayer resource to support us in our spiritual preparations through Advent. You are invited to use this resource through each of the four Sundays of Advent. Week by week, may the candles on our Advent wreaths dispel the darkness as we journey to Christmas and the arrival of the Light of the World, Jesus Christ.

May Christ Emmanuel be with you in these weeks of waiting and anticipation and we pray that, as we journey through Advent, we will grow closer to Christ, experiencing the hope, love, joy and peace that a relationship with Jesus brings.

Advent Prayer

(from The Family Prayer Book)

Father, in the wilderness of the Jordan,
You sent a messenger to prepare people’s hearts for the coming of Your Son.
Help me to hear his words and repent of my sins, so that I may clearly see the way to walk, the truth to speak and the life to live for Him, our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

How to use this prayer resource

Preparing for the Season of Advent

This resource has several different elements that will hopefully enrich your prayer life in the days ahead. During the four Sundays of Advent there will be some activities that you might want to gather together the materials ahead of time. Do remember that Jesus was born in a stable, so it doesn't matter if your candles are a different colour, or if your crib is made from a cornflake box - be creative!

Set Aside Time to Pray

Take this time as an opportunity for you to connect with God. Find a time that will be free from interruptions or hurrying onto another task. Having a regular time for prayer helps prayer to become part of our routine and strengthens us in loving God, our neighbour and ourselves. If you already have a time of prayer such as the rosary, you can combine this prayer resource with it.

Make Time for Family Prayer

Children love to be involved. Let them read, sing, blow out the Advent candles to send the prayers to heaven and let them share their thoughts and questions. Families sometimes say it can be hard to encourage teenage children to pray. Don't make them pray. Invite them to be present with you and listen as you pray.

Pope Francis encourages an alliance between younger and older people, especially by the sharing of the wisdom and experience of older people with the new generations who are hungry for guidance and support as they prepare for the future.

Make Space For a Loved One

At this time of year many of us will be missing a loved one who has passed away. You may wish to place a photograph in your Prayer Space of someone you wish to remember or pray for.



Daily Gospel Readings

Scan this QR code with your mobile phone to view each daily Gospel reading on Universalis Publishing

3rd December 2023

1st Sunday of Advent – Hope

The first Advent candle is lit – Purple

Jesus In Our Midst

The Advent wreath is a Christian tradition symbolising the passage of the four weeks of Advent. It is a circle of evergreen foliage that holds five candles. The circle represents God’s infinite love and mercy, and the evergreens the hope of eternal life.

During the season of Advent one candle on the wreath is lit each Sunday, until all candles are lit. The candles represent hope, love, joy and peace. Traditionally there are three purple candles, one pink candle and a white candle which is lit on Christmas Day.



Today’s Reading

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

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark

(Mark 13:33-37)

Jesus said to his disciples: “Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. Watch, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’”



SCAN ME

Make an Advent Wreath

Scan this QR code with your mobile phone for instructions of how to make an Advent Wreath

Pause for Thought - Hope

Advent is a time to be waiting and watchful. The candles of the Advent wreath give us light to watch for Jesus.

As baptised Catholics each one of us has a responsibility to share the Good News of the Gospel.

Think of ways you can share the Good News in your everyday life.

Who has been a sign of hope for you?

What were their actions?

Hope is like a light shining in a dark place. As we look at the light of the candle, we celebrate the hope we have in Jesus Christ.

We light the first Advent candle in the wreath, representing hope. Hope, because God is faithful and will keep the promises made to us.

As we light the candle, we ask God to fill our hearts and minds with hope.

***Light the first purple candle
– the candle of hope***



God of Hope, we enter your holy season of Advent giving thanks to You for the love You have for all of us.

We begin to prepare for the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Your Son, Jesus.

With the promise of Your Son, we live with great hope and anticipation; Hope in the knowledge of the love You continue to give us.

Hope in the knowledge that Jesus is coming into our lives and hearts to heal us and love us.

We are a people of hope, and no matter how difficult times sometimes are, we know that Your Son is coming and that you continue to shower us with Your love.

Amen.



Music suggestion

Scan this QR code with your mobile phone to listen to:

Hope for Everyone by Matt Maher

10th December 2023

2nd Sunday of Advent – Love

The second Advent candle is lit – Purple

Jesus In Our Midst

The Christmas tree brings great cheer to the family home. The tree reminds us of all that is beautiful, all that is filled with the gentleness and the promise of God. It stands in our midst as a tree of light, that we might promise the light of Christ to one another and to our world. It stands like that tree of paradise that God made into the tree of life, the cross of Jesus.

On the Feast of St Nicholas gather together around the Christmas tree with the lights off. Bless the star or angel from the top of the tree with Holy water, pray together and when you say Amen, turn the lights on.



Loving God, we pray through the intercession of St Nicholas that You will guide and protect our children. Keep them safe from all harm. Help them grow to become loving disciples of Jesus in Your sight. Give them strength to always mature into deeper faith with You, and to keep alive joy in Your creation.

We ask this through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Today's Reading

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

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark

(Mark 1:1-18)

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way.

A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptised by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptised you with water; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

Pause for Thought – Love

John the Baptist was an outrageous person. Not many of us would share his taste in clothes or food! However, he stands out most for his words, bravery and challenge. He calls us to look at our lives, our actions and to discover and confess our sins. He asks us to do this because it is the way to real, deep, Christian joy.

Take time to think about the things that you are sorry for. Think of one aspect of your life that you need to change that might bring you closer to God.

In the quiet of your own heart, pray an act of sorrow and ask that the Holy Spirit, given to each of us in Baptism, will strengthen and guide you on your path to Jesus.

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins because of thy just punishments, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin. **Amen.**

*Light the second purple candle
– the candle of love*



God of Love, during the Advent season, when life is busy and excitement is in the air, we take time to think about the awesome gift of the birth of Jesus.

We reflect on the great love you have for us that will be shown through your Son, Jesus.

May the light of this candle reflect the light that resides within each of us, the love that we can bring to this world, and the healing we can offer those who are suffering.

Amen.

Act of Sorrow

O my God, I thank you for loving me. I am sorry for all my sins, for not loving others and not loving you. Help me to live like Jesus and not sin again. **Amen.**

17th December 2023

3rd Sunday of Advent – Joy

The third Advent candle is lit – Rose

Jesus In Our Midst

Gaudete Sunday is the day when we light the pink candle, to represent joy.

For the time of prayer today why not wear something pink; a pink tie, pink hair clips, pink lipstick have some fun and spread some happiness!

Gaudete Sunday has for many years been the day when the children of Rome bring the figurines of Baby Jesus from their family cribs to St. Peter's Square to be blessed by the Pope during the Angelus. The day is affectionately known as 'Bambinelli Sunday'.



Today's Reading

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

A reading from the Gospel according to John

(John 1:6-8, 19-28)

A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light but came to testify to the light. And this is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, "Who are you?" He admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Christ." So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?" He said: "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'make straight the way of the Lord,'" as Isaiah the prophet said. "Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, "Why then do you baptise if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptise with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognise, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptising.

Pause for Thought - Joy

You may wish to sprinkle Holy water on the baby Jesus and your family members, and say this prayer together as the baby Jesus is cradled in someone's hands:

God our Father, you loved us so much that you sent us your only Son, Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, to save us and lead us back to you.

We pray that, with your blessing, this image of Jesus might be a sign of your presence and love in our homes.

Open our hearts, that we might receive Jesus in joy, do always what he asks of us, and see him in those who need our love.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, your beloved Son, who came to give peace to the world.

You, who live and reign forever and ever.

Amen.

You are invited to wrap the baby Jesus figurine in Christmas wrapping and place Him under the tree, to be opened on Christmas morning as the first gift of Christmas.

On Christmas morning place the baby Jesus in your crib with the rest of the Holy family.

Light the rose candle - the candle of joy



God of Hope, we enter your holy season of Advent giving thanks to You for the love You have for all of us.

We begin to prepare for the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Your Son, Jesus.

With the promise of Your Son, we live with great hope and anticipation; Hope in the knowledge of the love You continue to give us.

Hope in the knowledge that Jesus is coming into our lives and hearts to heal us and love us.

We are a people of hope, and no matter how difficult times sometimes are, we know that Your Son is coming and that you continue to shower us with Your love.

Amen.



Music suggestion

Scan this QR code with your mobile phone to listen to:

Come to us by Greg Watson

24th December 2023

4th Sunday of Advent – Peace

The fourth Advent candle is lit – Purple

Jesus In Our Midst

Our Advent journey is now drawing to a close and the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Saviour is imminent. The focus today is on Mary, our role model in faith. Mary is depicted in Scripture as a person of similar virtues to Joseph, dignified and exemplary in her total trust and faith in God's plan for her and for the world.

We pray today for all expectant mothers, that our Blessed Mother will watch over and protect them and their unborn children. We ask that the beauty and joy of the life that mothers bring into the world may always be cherished as a miraculous gift of God.

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.

Today's Reading

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

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke

(Luke 1:26-38)

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's



name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Pause for Thought – Peace

The words “Do not be afraid” are words for us too. In the quiet of your heart talk to God about the things you are frightened of. Now remember these words: “The Lord is with you.” Take time to acknowledge God’s presence and entrust your worries, fears and concerns to Him, for God has promised to be with us always to the end of time. “Nothing will be impossible for God.”

Today we light the fourth candle on our Advent wreath. The theme this week is peace. Jesus, Prince of Peace, brings healing to a broken world.

The Magnificat

My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.
The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!

His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him.

He puts forth his arm in strength and
scatters the proud-hearted.

He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly. He fills the starving
with good things, sends the rich away
empty.

He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy, the mercy
promised to our fathers, to Abraham and
his sons for ever.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the
beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

*Light the fourth purple candle
– the candle of peace*



God of Peace, in a troubled world where there is suffering and strife, conflict and war, we pray for peace.

We also pray for inner peace, that our minds and bodies will be calm and at peace in the knowledge that You are about to come to us.

Without inner peace, we know there can be no global peace, so we look to you, Lord, for your love and direction to calm ourselves and be instruments of peace in the world.

Amen.



SCAN ME

Music suggestion

Scan this QR code with your mobile phone to listen to:

Holy is Your Name Magnificat