

# Advent 2017

## Week 1 of Advent



**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup> - FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

### Prayer For The Advent Wreath

Lord, our God, we praise You for Your Son, Jesus Christ, for He is Emmanuel, the Hope of all people.

He is the Wisdom that teaches and guides us.

He is the Savior of us all.

O Lord,

let your blessing come upon us as we light the first (purple) candle of this wreath.

May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise of salvation.

May He come quickly and not delay.

We ask this in His holy name. Amen.

We light an **advent candle** today, a small dim light against a world that often seems forbidding and dark. But we light it because we are a people of hope, a people whose faith is marked by an expectation that we should always be ready for the coming of the Father. The joy and anticipation of this season is captured beautifully in the antiphons of hope from the liturgies:

See! The ruler of the earth shall come, the Lord who will take from us the heavy burden of our exile

The Lord will come soon, will not delay.

The Lord will make the darkest places bright.

We must capture that urgency today in the small flame of our candle. We light the candle because we know that the coming of Christ is tied to our building of the kingdom. Lighting the flame, feeding the hungry, comforting the sick, reconciling the divided, praying for the repentant, greeting the lonely and forgotten – doing all these works hastens His coming.

### Monday, December 4

Many peoples shall come and say: "Come, let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in His ways, and we may walk in His paths." For from Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:3)

**Reflection:** Christ is the ultimate center of meaning in the universe. It is through Christ that all people will be led to the Father. How can we hope to achieve a world

in which all will seek the path of God? Only when men and women are working to achieve the unity that Christ's redemption promises us.

**Advent Action:** Perform an act of kindness for someone you do not know.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me be at home with You, that I may listen to Your word and walk in Your way.

## Tuesday, December 5

Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; The calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. (Isaiah 11:6)

**Reflection:** The old joke about this passage is that the leopard might light down with the kid, but the kid won't get much sleep. We chuckle at this because Isaiah gives us an image that goes against all our experience and expectations. Take note: the kingdom of God will not be how we expect it! Assumptions about natural friends and enemies are not true in the kingdom of God. What is the modern, urban equivalent of Isaiah's pastoral image of lamb and wolf? Black and white folks breaking bread and worshipping together? A teenage delinquent and an older person sharing a cup of coffee? "The wolf shall be a guest of the lamb..."

**Advent Action:** Send a card to a friend or loved one who lost a family member during this year. Let them know you are praying for them and thinking of them this **Christmas**.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me welcome You once again and make room for You in my daily life, that You may make Your home in my heart.

## Wednesday, December 6

Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied. (Matthew 14: 19-20)

**Reflection:** During **Advent** we always consider the past, present, and future dimensions of Jesus' coming. Jesus came to us at Bethlehem; He is risen and present in the world today; we look forward to His second coming.

**Advent Action:** Multiply your own resources (however great or small) to help the poor. Make a gift of your time or money to a charitable organization that helps the poor/homeless.

**Prayer:** Lord, may I be generous with others from the richness You have shared with me through Your goodness.

## Thursday, December 7

A nation of firm purpose You keep in peace; in peace for its' trust in You. Trust in the Lord forever! For the Lord is an eternal Rock. (Isaiah 26: 3-4)

**Reflection:** We cannot eliminate upsets and anxiety from our lives, but Advent is a good time to slow down and remember where we should look for stability and peace. Throughout these weeks of preparation for the celebration of Jesus' birth, the scriptures for our liturgies tell us again and again to turn to God, to build our house on the rock of Jesus. Only there we will find peace.

**Advent Action:** Make a phone call. Call someone you have been meaning to speak to, but for some reason you have not done so.

**Prayer:** Lord, may I truly bring peace to others that I may be at peace with myself and one with You.

### Friday, December 8

And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed (Him), crying out, "Son of David, have pity on us!" When He entered the house, the blind men approached Him and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I can do this?" "Yes, Lord," they said to Him. Then He touched their eyes and said, "Let it be done for you according to your faith." And their eyes were opened. (Matthew 9:27-30)

**Reflection:** Many people scoff at the idea of miracles. Unwilling to believe that Jesus could restore the sight of the blind when He walked on earth, they are unwilling to see the miracles that Jesus continues to work today. If we are open to the guiding touch of God's hand and willing to discover His plan for our lives, miracles will happen. What prevents us from seeing and being a part of God's miracles? Would we rather be blind?

**Advent Action:** Send a get-well card to someone in the hospital.

**Prayer:** Lord, clarify my vision that I may see You in others and sense You within my own soul.

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9

The light of the moon will be like that of the sun and the light of the sun will be seven times greater (like the light of seven days). On the day the Lord binds up the wounds of His people, He will heal the bruises left by His blows. (Isaiah 30:26)

**Reflection:** God, while His ways are still mysterious to us, is not on the sidelines of our lives. Just as Isaiah predicted, He has come, in Jesus, to bind up the hurt of His people, and through Jesus' presence is still active in the world.

**Advent Action:** Find an opportunity today to be the hands of God, and "bind up" someone's hurt. Say a kind word and listen with compassion to someone who is suffering.

Before going to bed, say a decade of the rosary for your mother.

**Prayer:** Lord, flood me with Your light, and help me to brighten the lives of those whom I find most dark.

## *Week 2 of Advent*



### **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup> - SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

The light of the moon will be like that of the sun and the light of the sun will be seven times greater (like the light of seven days). On the day the Lord binds up the wounds of His people, He will heal the bruises left by His blows. (Isaiah 30:26)

**Reflection:** Many people scoff at the idea of miracles. Unwilling to believe that Jesus could restore the sight of the blind when He walked on earth, they are unwilling to see the miracles that Jesus continues to work today. If we are open to the guiding touch of God's hand and willing to discover His plan for our lives, miracles will happen. What prevents us from seeing and being a part of God's miracles? Would we rather be blind?

**Advent Action:** Send a "thinking of you" card to a friend.

**Prayer:** Lord, clarify my vision that I may see You in others and sense You within my own soul.

### **Monday, December 11**

Say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, He comes with vindication; With divine recompense He comes to save you. (Isaiah 35: 4)

**Reflection:** In a world where political instability threatens long established order, where crime in our country seems out of control and unstoppable, there seems to be plenty to be afraid of. Isaiah reminds us that God's power is beyond anything on this earth that could frighten us. "Be strong" and "fear not" this **Advent**. Is having a frightened heart different than just being afraid? The kind of fear we have in our hearts is usually fear for people we love. God's care encompasses them as well. Trust God's power.

**Advent Action:** Send a Christmas card to a young person you know and care about. Remind them that you are praying for them, and remind them of the faith significance of the upcoming holiday.

**Prayer:** Lord, You are my strength and with You here, my own fears fade right away.

## Tuesday, December 12

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the dumb will sing. Streams will burst forth in the desert, and rivers in the steppe. The burning sands will become pools, and the thirsty ground, springs of water; the abode where the jackals lurk will be a marsh for the reed and papyrus. (Isaiah 35: 5-7)

**Reflection:** In Advent we celebrate the miraculous transformations Isaiah talks about; the lame leaping and streams of water bursting forth in the desert. We also celebrate seemingly ordinary events, the birth of two babies, John the Baptist and Jesus, that are part of the unfolding of God's salvation plan. In every event of our lives, God is there, with His mercy and love and purpose. God desires that all should feel His mercy and love just as the desert sands would experience the overflowing spring.

**Advent Action:** Let God's mercy and love operate in your own life. Make up with a friend or family member you have had a disagreement with.

**Prayer:** Lord, may I joyfully overflow the confining boundaries I have set to my love.

## Wednesday, December 13

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is easy and My burden light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

**Reflection:** Are there burdens I can let go of? Sometimes we make other people's problems our own. What burdens that are not my own can I give to God? Remember the old phrase, "Let go and let God."

**Advent Action:** Send a card or call a friend or loved one who lost a family member during this past year. Let them know you are praying for them and thinking of them.

**Prayer:** Lord, I give over all my cares to Your most Sacred Heart that I may be at rest in You.

## Thursday, December 14

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force. (Matthew 11:12)

**Reflection:** Our world will never be bliss. We can say with Matthew, that from the days of John the Baptist until now, that God's kingdom suffers violence. That is why we celebrate **Advent** over and over. We reassert that the violence we suffer in this world is not the norm, but only a temporary condition. That mystery of our faith is

proclaimed each time we celebrate the Eucharist; Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. We are grounded in this present world, but look to the world to come.

**Advent Action:** Renew your commitment to a special time of **Advent** prayer each day throughout the season.

Say a prayer sometime today for Canada.

**Prayer:** Lord, may I refrain from all violent words and deeds, and help make my part of this world a more peaceful place.

### Friday, December 15

Thus says the Lord, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I, the Lord, your God, teach you what is for your good, and lead you on the way you should go. If you would hearken to my commandments, your prosperity would be like a river, and your vindication like the waves of the sea; your descendants would be like the sand, and those born of your stock like its grains, their name never cut off or blotted out from my presence. (Isaiah 48:17-19)

**Reflection:** The use of water as a metaphor of God, or for any good thing, is common in Hebrew Scriptures. Who should know more about the preciousness of water than a desert people like the Israelites?

Isaiah says our prosperity will be like a river. Have we let God's love flow over us like a river, or are we stingy when we imagine it? Do we imagine God's love as a trickle or a torrent?

**Advent Action:** Volunteer some time at a soup kitchen or food bank or other worthy organization.

**Prayer:** Lord, wash me and I shall be clean, bathe me in Your loving mercy and I shall be truly forgiven.

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16

Then the disciples asked Him, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" He said in reply, "Elijah will indeed come and restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also will the Son of Man suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that He was speaking to them of John the Baptist. (Matthew 17: 10-13)

**Reflection:** Some among those who followed Jesus would not believe that He was the Messiah. They were waiting for the reappearance of Elijah, who Scripture said must return before the coming of the Messiah. In the same way, many of us have set up obstacles that prevent us from living as if the Messiah has already come.

What are we waiting for? What obstacles have we set up to prevent us from living as if our Savior has already come?

**Advent Action:** Say a decade of the rosary for the spiritually homeless.

**Prayer:** Lord, in Your own way remove everything that makes it hard for me to see You clearly today.



### *Week 3 of Advent*

#### **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17 - 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul." It is a joy that cannot be bought or obtained from artificial highs. It is a joy that comes from our living faith in a living God.

It is the joy we feel as we approach the birth of our Saviour and remember the awesome beauty of what happened on that cold Bethlehem night. Rejoice!

#### **Monday, December 18**

When He had come into the temple area, the chief priests and the elders of the people approached Him as He was teaching and said, "By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?" (Matthew 21:23)

**Reflection:** The question of authority always followed Jesus. Different groups and individuals would try to ask Him difficult questions to trick Him and make Him look stupid in front of the crowds who listened to His teaching. It is clear that Jesus derived His authority from an unshakable inner knowledge of His relationship to the Father. Do we have confidence in our relationship with God so that we can speak the truth as we see it? Or do we expect the Church or some other authority to speak for us?

**Advent Action:** Make something (bake a cake, draw a picture, cut out a cartoon) to cheer someone up, as a means of sharing the spirit of the season.

**Prayer:** Lord, make me confident anew of Your great gift of faith that I may tell others of Your goodness.

#### **Tuesday, December 19**

For then I will change and purify the lips of the people, that they all may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord. (Zephaniah 3:9)

**Reflection:** Zephaniah's prophetic dream of unity seems no closer to reality today than when it was 2500 years ago. Even though our world enjoys many modern technological advantages over the world of Zephaniah, it seems that there is not technological "fix" for the human heart.

"Change" and "pure lips" require personal conversion. What have I done to promote "one accord" in the world? No matter how we might view ourselves, all people are equal in the sight of God. We are all His servants.

**Advent Action:** Examine your conscience. Are you continually turning towards God?

**Prayer:** Lord, purify me of everything, whether present or past, that hinders me from serving You.

### Wednesday, December 20

Turn to Me and be safe, all you ends of the earth, for I am God; there is no other! (Isaiah 45:22)

**Reflection:** We need to be reminded, just like the Israelite people in the desert who built a golden calf, that it is God who is God, not the idols we create. It seems that times are more subtle now. People melting down their jewelry to fashion an idol in a public place is not a common sight in our day. But we do, as a people, flock to certain places and events as if they were important; television sets, soap operas, celebrities. Do I live my day-to-day life as if a supernatural being is my God? Or do I live as if some earthly pleasure or diversion is? Where is my energy expended? Where is my time spent? Where do I turn?

**Advent Action:** Think of some possession you have that you can give away to the poor/homeless; give to the Catholic Missions in Canada or to some other charity, that works to help the homeless.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me turn to You and let nothing take me from You, for You alone are my God.

### Thursday, December 21

Though the mountains leave their place and the hills be shaken My love shall never leave you nor My covenant of peace be shaken, says the Lord, who has mercy on you. (Isaiah 54:10)

**Reflection:** Sometimes we take God's promises for granted. We have listened to them so many times that their meaning makes no impact on us. But consider: "Though the mountains leave their place..." God's love is so steadfast, there is no event that could diminish it. There is no action on our part by which He would consider us unworthy. Have we shared this good news with anyone lately?

**Advent Action:** Visit a friend you haven't seen in a while and spend time really listening to what they have to say.

Pray for those affected by war and natural disasters.

**Prayer:** Lord, Your wondrous good news of unshakable love for me, leaves me comforted and at peace.

## Friday, December 22

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord has said through the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall be with the child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel" which means, "God is with us," When Joseph awoke; he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took his wife into his home. (Matthew 1:22-24)

**Reflection:** Joseph's commitment to Mary and to the child in her womb caused confusion and pain. He was a devout and honourable man, determined to do what was right. He trusted what he heard God say in his dream and obeyed the command of the angel.

In our own lives our commitment to Jesus can cause discomfort, confusion, even pain. We must depend on God as did Mary and Joseph.

**Advent Action:** If you haven't already done so, put up a crèche or some other symbol to remind you of the coming feast.

**Prayer:** O come, O come, great Lord of Might, Who to your tribes on Sinai's height  
In ancient times one gave the Law In cloud and majesty and awe.

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of (the) Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb, and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers toward children, and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to prepare people fit for the Lord." (Luke 1:13-17)

**Reflection:** Luke tells the beautiful story of John the Baptist who came to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. Have I "prepared the way" in the heart of a loved one or acquaintance for Jesus' coming? Have I been a "John?"

**Advent Action:** In a card or letter, tell someone how much you care for them. Let them know they are loved by you – and God.

**Prayer:** O come, O Rod of Jesse's stem, from every foe deliver them that trust  
Your mighty power to save and give them victory o'er the grave.



**Week 4 of Advent**

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup> - 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and shall name Him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

**Reflection:** Sometimes the signs God gives are unmistakable. Sometimes the signs are not so obvious. What signs do we see when we look around us?

Sometimes it is hard to see God's signs because the signs of our world are so ever present and large. How many times this month have you seen this sign: "ONLY 20 (or 18, or 10, or 6 or...) MORE SHOPPING DAYS 'TIL CHRISTMAS." Do we ever stop to think, "How many praying days left until **Christmas?**"

**Advent Action:** Look around you for a sign of God's presence. When you find it, share it with someone.

**Prayer:** O come, O Key of David, come and open wide our heavenly home; Make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery.



John Cardinal O'Connor once marvelled that Jesus would have been born to save even *one* of us. (Think of that. Christ was born, in effect, just for *you!*) Advent prayers remind us that this is a joyful *and* a penitential time.

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