



Jesus.

WITNESS OF OUR  
FATHER'S PROMISE

ADVENT TO CHRISTMAS  
REFLECTION BOOKLET | YEAR B 2023 - 24

OFFICE FOR THE NEW EVANGELISATION



Inaugurated in September 2013, the **Office for the New Evangelisation (ONE)** is an office in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore working to realise the Archdiocese's vision of being a vibrant, evangelising and missionary Church.



As a catalyst for the New Evangelisation, ONE's mission is to facilitate processes and initiatives to move baptised Catholics into becoming missionary disciples.

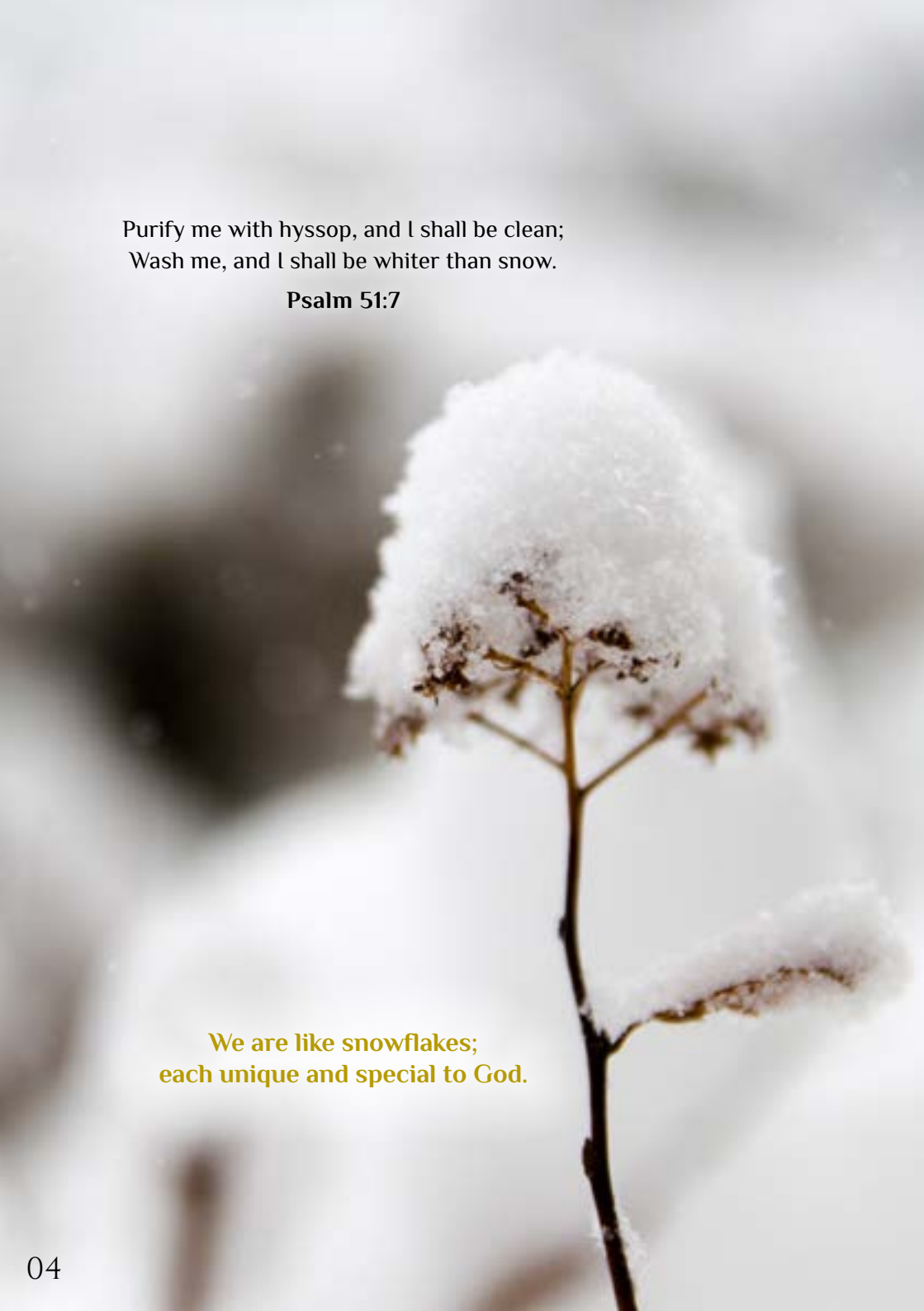
This initiative is supported by the GIFT Programme under the Catholic Foundation.

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Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

**Psalm 51:7**

**We are like snowflakes;  
each unique and special to God.**

# ADVENT TO CHRISTMAS MESSAGE



Dear sisters and brothers,

When a couple is expecting their first child, there will be much anticipation and some anxiety as well because they are to be first-time parents. The excitement is not just theirs alone but also that of all the loved ones around them. There will be much discussion as to what needs to be done, what can be done, and what not to do.

Now imagine that the same couple is expecting their 10<sup>th</sup> child. Yes, this is something rarely seen these days, but in the past, there were several families with 10 or more children. If it were your 10<sup>th</sup> child, would there be as much anticipation and excitement? Maybe yes, and maybe no. Some of us will be celebrating our first Christmas as Catholics because we were baptised at Easter. For some of us, it would be our 50<sup>th</sup> Christmas.

Has the anticipation dissipated over the years? Are we expecting the same thing every year? Preparation begins to lessen when the anticipation dissipates. When something is important, we spend quite a lot of time preparing for it. When something has become jaded, it is almost taken in a casual manner.

Our challenge is to think of every Christmas as though it were our first. When that happens, Advent will be pregnant with anticipation. Let us prepare ourselves to see Jesus as the sacrament of our Father's love. In Jesus, we should see that our Father makes a promise and keeps it. Jesus is waiting for us. When He came in the flesh, though the people were waiting for a Messiah, many totally missed Him because they were not ready. Jesus, witness of our Father's promise, makes our faith alive.

I wish you a pregnant time of preparation for Christmas.

Rev. Fr. Terence Pereira

Episcopal Vicar for the New Evangelisation

# THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOKLET

This resource is intended for families, RCIA groups, parish organisations, ministries, small Christian communities and neighbourhood Christian communities. It may also be used for individual reflection.

- To promote the Christian community in the neighbourhood as a place where we can hear the word of God and put it into practice.
- To give participants an experience of community and a sense of their mission by reaching out to neighbours and those in need.
- To gather parish organisations / ministries to pray together as one and put Christ back in the centre.
- To increase communication between family members. Love should be the main message in all communication, so the sessions are aimed at families sharing stories, doing meaningful activities together, sharing faith and being reconciled with one another.

# HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

These reflections may be used either

- (1) before participating in Sunday's liturgy, as a way of preparation to receive God's Word at Mass, or
- (2) after participating in the liturgy as a continuation of 'breaking open the Word of God' in our lives.

In the spirit of generosity, group members volunteer beforehand to read Scriptures and other parts of the text.

A different group facilitator can take the responsibility in each session to foster good interaction and to keep time.

Someone should record the discussion in general terms and then email it to the members who are absent.

The duration of each session is about two hours.

The time and place for the next meeting should be announced at the end of each session.

# SESSION FORMAT

## OPENING PRAYER

Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.

## READINGS

The three scripture texts should be read at least twice, allowing some time for a silent listening to the Word. Then the passages are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given write up. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior the meeting.

## THOUGHTS

Someone reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflection(s) on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection(s).

## REFLECTIONS

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context, i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

## TAKE HOME

Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).

## DOING YOUR BIT

Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.

## CLOSING PRAYER

The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.

## APPENDIX: ACTIVITIES

The appendix section contains activities that further enrich our spiritual journey with our fellow sisters and brothers in Christ.

# FACILITATING GROUP REFLECTION

**For where two or three meet in  
my name, I am there  
with them**

- Matthew 18:20

Be mindful of Christ's presence. Adopt a humble and reverent manner when speaking or acting within the group. Read the text meditatively and give your best attention to the words of the Scripture readings.

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**May they all be one, just as,  
Father, you are in me and  
I am in you**

- John 17:21

Help everyone to feel at home and take special care to welcome newcomers. Treat each person as a beloved member of the community and invite one another to participate in the session by taking turns to read the text. Use a language that everyone can understand so that no one feels left out.

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**... and their great men make  
their authority felt. Among you  
this is not to happen**

- Mark 10:42-43

Avoid being authoritative or domineering by acting aggressively, flaunting knowledge or telling others what to do. If there is advice to be given, do so after the reflection is done. Choose words that are easily understood by all when speaking. Avoid giving lengthy and verbose sharing that consume other people's opportunities to offer their sharing.

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**If anyone wants to be a follower  
of mine, let him renounce himself  
and take up his cross every day  
and follow me**

- Luke 9:23

At the core of these reflections is the Word of God, the teachings of the Church and the invitation for our conversion towards Christ. If the group wanders away from this during the session, gently invite one another to re-focus.

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**Because when the time comes,  
the Holy Spirit will teach you  
what you should say**

- Luke 12:12

There is no need to prepare sharing in advance or to appoint people to share. Wait patiently for God's Spirit to inspire generosity and remember to give thanks after someone volunteers to contribute their own faith experience.

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**...your light must shine in  
people's sight, so that, on seeing  
your good works, they may give  
praise to your Father in heaven**

- Matthew 5:16

These reflections challenge us to do the will of God – to reflect the love of Christ to others we meet. Spend some time at the start of the next group session sharing with one another how each one has tried to do this over the past week.





**CATHOLICSG RADIO** brings you the audio version of  
2023 – 2024 Advent to Christmas Reflection Booklet.

Join our presenters as they take you through the  
reflection via the CatholicSG Radio app.

**Broadcast times will be on  
every Thursday at 8am  
starting from 30 November 2023.**

Besides listening via a web browser: <https://radio.catholic.sg/>,  
the CatholicSG Radio app is available for downloading via  
the following app stores:



Apple App Store



Google Play Store



Huawei App Gallery

### **Podcast Versions**

The same reflections will be available as podcasts on the app itself.

ADVENT REFLECTIONS



Jesus.

WITNESS OF OUR  
FATHER'S PROMISE



# Jesus.

## WITNESS OF OUR FATHER'S PROMISE

### SUNDAYS OF ADVENT | YEAR B

Week	Readings	Theme
1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent	Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1, 3-8 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 Mark 13:33-37	Jesus, Witness of Our Father's Patience
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent	Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11 2 Peter 3:8-14 Mark 1:1-8	Jesus, Witness of Our Father's Way
3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent	Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 John 1:6-8, 19- 28	Jesus, Witness of Our Father's Mystery
4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent	2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16 Romans 16:25-27 Luke 1:26-38	Jesus, Witness of Our Father's Glory



# Jesus,

## WITNESS OF OUR FATHER'S PATIENCE

### OPENING PRAYER

*Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.*

Our Father in heaven, at the beginning of Advent, You are patient with us, and Your patience enables us to repent. During this Advent season, we dwell in Your patience for us, so that we can learn to take things day by day and appreciate all the little things in life. Everything we have in this life is from You, and the response You ask of us is our unconditional faith in You as we follow Jesus, who will lead us to eternal life. Amen.



# READINGS:

*The three readings and their accompanying commentaries will be read out loud, allowing some time for silent reflection.*

*Then the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.*

## COMMENTARIES FOR:

### 1ST READING:

Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1, 3-8

Isaiah led the people into feelings of desolation in hopes that God our Father would listen and respond. The Israelites longed for God our Father's intervention, which they once experienced when they were desperately enslaved in Egypt. The prophet stressed the powerlessness of the people because they are now helplessly enslaved by their sins. Without God, they were nothing. God was their only reason for existence, but He had seemingly deserted them. They lament that God's absence is due to their sin and an indication of His anger. In awareness of their sin, they longed for a return

to the covenant relationship they had broken.

### 2ND READING:

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

The diversity within the church of Corinth generated both richness and challenges. The Corinthian church is a diverse group of people with different lives, values, and experiences. Hence, St. Paul calls on the community in Corinth to remain steadfast in discipleship and united in diversity because each individual is called into fellowship with Jesus Christ. Therefore, he gives thanks that the Corinthian converts "*are not lacking in any spiritual gift*" as they "*wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" He reminds them that the spiritual gifts they had received were not just for their individual satisfaction but for the growth of the Church and for them to experience the Holy Spirit. These experiences of the Holy Spirit are to empower them to wait for "*the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*" and to be blameless on that day.



## GOSPEL: Mark 13:33-37

In this passage, Jesus is being questioned by His disciples about the destruction of the Temple, which He foretold at the start of the chapter. Jesus answers with many warnings about the difficulties that the disciples will face. In this short passage, almost every sentence is a warning to remain attentive. Mark's audience

consisted of Christians who were living in times of social and political conflict. They were likely beginning to face persecution as Jesus' disciples. The early Christians took courage from Jesus' warning to remain alert and watchful and to persevere through suffering as they shared in His passion.

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## REFLECTIONS

*Another person reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflections on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection.*

One of the aspects of Advent is that it is a penitential season in which we reflect on our need to prepare for the Saviour. Who or what do we need to be saved from? How is Jesus' coming a sign of God our Father's patience in saving us? The images in Isaiah 63 are meant to evoke a sense of loss, pain, and helplessness that we will feel when alienated from God. The "anger of God" is God our Father's passion to set things right, just as

Jesus was angry when the Temple was reduced to a marketplace (Mk 11:15-17). When we recognise our transgressions, it is truly God's mercy that we experience this 'anger' as His desire to restore our relationship with Him. When we numb our senses and harden our hearts, like the Israelites did, we set ourselves up on a path of "I am OK; we are OK; we do not need saving".

In our waiting to enter into the fullness of relationship with Jesus Christ at His second coming, we find out how patient God our



Father is with us. He wants to bring forth in us the desire to be shaped into His children. Otherwise, like the Israelites, we will be hopeless and alienated from God. We make our own plans and our own idols, which are shaped by the goals and successes the world offers. Jesus comes and shows us the way to His Father; all we have to do is cooperate with the Holy Spirit and be malleable like clay so that we can be formed by God our Father.

We cannot put ourselves together through our own efforts. As St. Paul pointed out, by recognising our helplessness, we allow the power of God to take over (2 Cor 12:9). In the 2nd reading, Jesus offers power through the revelation or unveiling of His death and rising in our everyday lives. Are we watchful servants who see our daily tasks or responsibilities as the means for our hearts to be shaped by God? While we wait, we fan the longing for our Father in our hearts by heeding St. Paul's exhortation to rejoice, give thanks, and give of ourselves in service of others. *"Rejoice, Rejoice! Immanuel shall*

*come to you, O Israel"*, our Father has shown His longing for us by giving us Jesus. How merciful that our Father waits for us to come to our own realisation and our own longing for Him!

We need our Father to appear among us so that He can help us straighten our lives. This way, we can understand more clearly where our lives should go and how we can restore our relationship with God our Father and with all His children around us. We need our Father since there is very little we can do on our own. *"... you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand."* The cry of Advent is this: *"Make us, mould us, heal us"*, and it will be answered in the manger at Bethlehem.





# SHARING QUESTIONS:

*This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context i.e., Small Christian Communities, Ministry, or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and also time for everyone to respond.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION & SHARING QUESTIONS

*Everyone to reflect silently on the below question(s). Then, share your reflections if you are in a group.*

*We talk about what struck you in the passages of scripture and how you can share the Word of God with others.*

- Recall a time when you needed to wait for someone. How did you find the experience?
- Did you have to wait for our Father to respond? How did you find the experience?
- What can I do to become more malleable so that I might bear witness to our Father's patience?

## GROUP CONTEXTUAL SHARING QUESTIONS

*You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.*

### For Small Christian Communities

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.*

- Recall a time when you had to show patience to another member. Was it a semblance of our Father's patience for you?
- Is the community a good witness of patience to others?

### For Ministry

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.*

- Recall the other passages of scripture that showed the patience of God our Father.
- How has the ministry used the charism that God our Father gives to them to be Jesus to others?





## For Family

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.*

- Recall a time when you experienced patience in your family.
- How are members of the family witnesses to our Father's patience towards those who took Him for granted?

## TAKE HOME

*Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).*

God our Father waits for us to look at Jesus as His witness so that we may turn to Him. Jesus is not taking His time coming but is giving us many opportunities to change.

## DOING YOUR BIT

*Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.*

Pay attention to the person who is struggling with his or her faith. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to inspire you with the Word of God to share with the person. Then, reach out to that person with gentleness and patience.



## CLOSING PRAYER

*The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.*

Our Father in heaven, we thank You for Your patience with a rebellious people. Thank you for Your unconditional love that does not waver and wants the best for us. Thank you that, despite our sins, You kept Your promise to all who believed and put their trust in You. Amen.

*Jesus.*

WITNESS OF OUR  
FATHER'S PATIENCE

*My Advent Reflection Journal .....*





2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Jesus.

## WITNESS OF OUR FATHER'S WAY

### OPENING PRAYER

*Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.*

Our Father in heaven, we gather in this second week of Advent as Your children to ponder on Your love for us, which was manifested in Your beloved Son, Your gift to us at Christmas. Your Word will enlighten us as we prepare our hearts to embrace Your ways as exemplified by Jesus. The scripture readings of today allow us to know how we can be Your witnesses in our world. We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen.





# READINGS:

*The three readings and their accompanying commentaries will be read out loud, allowing some time for silent reflection.*

*Then the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.*

## COMMENTARIES FOR:

### 1ST READING:

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

These words of the prophet were addressed to the Israelites exiled in Babylon. Well-aware of the people's desolate state, God our Father exhorted Isaiah to deliver the good news in ways that would reach everyone, impressing upon them that their ordeal was over and to look forward to His coming to be with them. For that to materialise, though, the community first needed to prepare themselves for His arrival. God Himself would then herald a transformation of their lives to one of peace and rest.

### 2ND READING:

2 Peter 3:8-14

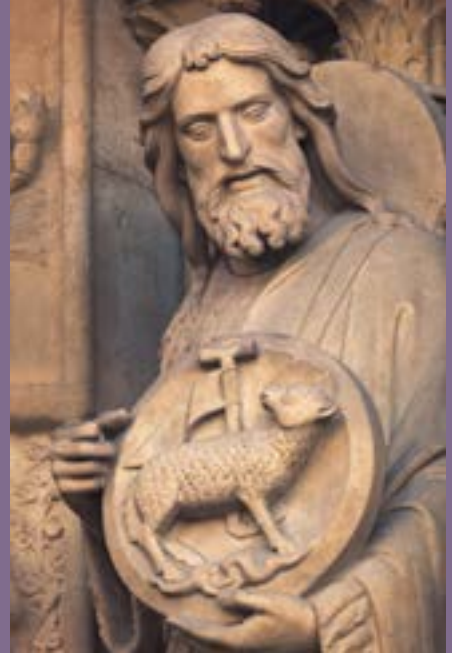
In his letter, St. Peter was writing to the gentile (non-Jewish) Christians. They were being misled by false teachings and erroneously focused on the second coming of Jesus at the end of time for judgement. Due to the long wait, the people were questioning whether God our Father's promise would be fulfilled. In response, St. Peter made it clear that God's perspective on time was different from theirs. More importantly, the community should be using this period to prepare themselves by repenting of their sins and living "*lives of holiness and godliness*".



## GOSPEL: Mark 1:1-8

The evangelist was unequivocal in naming and stating the identity of the person he was writing about. Making reference to the Old Testament, Mark identified St. John the Baptist as the forerunner mentioned by the prophet Isaiah who would lead the way to Jesus. The Jews heeded John's proclamation to repent of their sins so as to prepare themselves to receive the Messiah promised to them.

John fulfils the role of the forerunner, making known *"the Messiah, the Son of God"*, *"the Lord"*, and the one who *"will baptise with the Holy Spirit"*. By living an austere life, the forerunner showed by example by welcoming the Son of God, who is superior to any of them and would also be bringing a more powerful gift to purify and transform the people.





# REFLECTIONS

*Another person reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflections on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection.*

The US military has been credited with coining the acronym VUCA in the 1980s to describe the world we live in: volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. The intent was to help army leaders make sense of the environment they were in. Over 30 years later, it is still being applied by organisations in their strategic planning.

The landscape Jesus was born into was similarly fraught with its own set of challenges. He had to confront these not only as an individual but also in His roles as teacher and master, and most of all, as the Son of God. It must have pained Him to see the state of the world, especially since He had a hand in creating order from chaos at the beginning of time. Yet it was precisely this identity that made Christ the perfect gift. Not only did His presence

comfort the Jews, but He also showed them how to navigate their circumstances according to God the Father's ways and timings that defy conventional expectations. To those open to Him, Jesus represented good news that brought much joy, just like the experiences of the shepherds and wise men chosen as the first witnesses to God's presence at the manger. In turn, they proclaimed Christ to others and received newness of life.

Today, Jesus is collectively offered to all of humanity and remains the solution to our on-going mess. Through the Holy Spirit, He teaches us how to restore the sanctity of our relationships with God our Father, our neighbours, and nature. Otherwise, we end up reacting to the situations around us and doing more of the same, which fails to bring about positive change.



# SHARING QUESTIONS:

*This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context i.e., Small Christian Communities, Ministry, or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and also time for everyone to respond.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION & SHARING QUESTIONS

*Everyone to reflect silently on the below question(s). Then, share your reflections if you are in a group.*

*We talk about what struck you in the passages of scripture and how you can share the Word of God with others.*

- “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways are not your ways” (Isa 55:8). Recall and share an experience where God’s way turned out better than yours.
- How would you describe the current state of your pathway to God?

## GROUP CONTEXTUAL SHARING QUESTIONS

*You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.*

### For Small Christian Communities

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.*

- How does the community offer Jesus as the ‘Way’ to our Father in the neighbourhood?
- St. John the Baptist was undeterred from pointing the way. What is the determination and consistency of the community in pointing out that Jesus is the ‘Way’ to our Father?

### For Ministry

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.*

- Do we ponder the ‘Way’ of Jesus in our ministry?





- What sort of newness can be introduced into the ministry so that we align ourselves more closely to the 'Way' of Jesus to lead us to our Father?

## For Family

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.*

- Do we tend to deliver good news (the 'Way' of Jesus) or bad news (complaints) to each other?
- Does the family remember the 'Way' of Jesus, proclaim it, and live it?

## TAKE HOME

*Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).*

Jesus shows us the right (though not necessarily easy) way to live our lives in order to move towards God our Father.

## DOING YOUR BIT

*Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.*

Think of ways in which you can offer hope and joy to the person you reached out to last week. Invite the person to join a community, or you can journey with her or him as a community.



## CLOSING PRAYER

*The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.*

Our Father in heaven, we thank You for fulfilling Your promise to deliver us from our helplessness and desolation by giving us Your Son as Your witness and showing us how to respond to the messy circumstances surrounding us. His words and actions will always be our guide to experiencing the joy You intend for us. We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

*Jesus.*

WITNESS OF OUR  
FATHER'S WAY

*My Advent Reflection Journal .....*







# Jesus,

## WITNESS OF OUR FATHER'S MYSTERY

### OPENING PRAYER

*Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.*

Our Father in heaven, we thank You for gathering us on this third week of Advent to contemplate Your mysteries. As we reach this point in Advent and reflect on the readings for the third Sunday of Advent, the truths that You wish to reveal to us deepen the mystery of Your being. We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen.



# READINGS:

*The three readings and their accompanying commentaries will be read out loud, allowing some time for silent reflection.*

*Then the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.*

## COMMENTARIES FOR:

### 1ST READING:

Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11

Isaiah prophesied the coming of Christ, who was to proclaim a year of favour. What is this year of favour? Isaiah is referring to the Year of Jubilee (Lev 25), a time of mercy that occurred once every 50 years when prisoners were released and debtors were forgiven. Israel was to rest from labour.

Jesus comes to proclaim the Eternal Jubilee. He has come to set us free from the bonds of sin. He releases us from the debt we incur due to our trespasses. Through His passion, He has opened for us the way to find rest in the Lord. Thus, we “exult for joy in the Lord”!

### 2ND READING:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Though salvation is made possible through Jesus, we are required to respond to this grace. We have a choice to either use this wonderful gift or ignore it. As Jesus teaches us in the parable of the sheep and goats (Mat 25), we will be judged by our actions and how loving we are in our lives. Therefore, St. Paul exhorts us to *“hold on to what is good and avoid every form of evil.”*

Easier said than done, perhaps? Thankfully, we are not alone in this endeavour. God our Father desires our salvation (1 Tim 2:4), and He gives us His graces to help us live righteously. *“God has called [us], and He will not fail [us]”.*



## GOSPEL: JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

John the Baptist is described as a witness to speak for the light, that is, Jesus. We know from the Gospels that John was a popular preacher and had many followers. However, when given the chance to make a name for himself, John instead constantly defers to Jesus and compares himself to a lowly slave who was *not fit to undo [Jesus']*

*sandal strap*. He was comfortable with God's unique mission for him and sought only to glorify Jesus.

We are called to follow John's mission in unique ways in our lives and to help those around us *make a straight way for the Lord* in their hearts.





# REFLECTIONS

*Another person reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflections on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection.*

This week's theme is "*Jesus, Witness of Our Father's Mystery*". Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). He tells His Apostles, "*He who has seen me has seen the Father*" (Jn 14:9), and He gives us a glimpse of the immensity of our Father's love. Through His sacrifice on the cross, we come to understand that there is no greater love than for one to *lay down his life for his friends* (Jn 15:13). Through the Eucharist and Holy Communion, Jesus keeps His promise to be with us *always, to the close of the age* (Mat 28:20).

Therefore, we must be joyful! The 3rd Sunday of Advent is also called Gaudete Sunday. *Gaudete* is a Latin word that means "rejoice". This Sunday, the Church encourages us to rejoice, for Christmas and our Lord Jesus are close at hand. Our Father did not want to be a distant God, so He sent His Son to draw close to us and become like us in all ways but

sin (Heb 4:15). Our readings give us further reasons for joy: Jesus has rescued us from sin, and He will not abandon us. How blest we are!

So, what should we do in response? We are called to imitate John the Baptist, who understood his unique role in God our Father's plan and carried it out with joyful humility. To do so, God blesses us with gifts and charisms to carry out our mission. In this time of Advent, let us pray for the grace of humility to become witnesses of our Father's mystery to others!



# SHARING QUESTIONS:

*This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context i.e., Small Christian Communities, Ministry, or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and also time for everyone to respond.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION & SHARING QUESTIONS

*Everyone to reflect silently on the below question(s). Then, share your reflections if you are in a group.*

*We talk about what struck you in the passages of scripture and how you can share the Word of God with others.*

- In what ways have I further understood the mysteries of the Trinity through Jesus?
- Have I been instrumental in others finding Jesus as their Way, Truth and Life?

## GROUP CONTEXTUAL SHARING QUESTIONS

*You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.*

### For Small Christian Communities

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.*

- Is our community a place where we deepen our understanding of the mysteries of God our Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit?
- Has our community taken up the role of John the Baptist in pointing others to Jesus Christ?

### For Ministry

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.*

- Has the taking up of the role of John the Baptist among our members brought eventual joy to our ministry?





## TAKE HOME

*Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).*

Through Jesus, God our Father revealed His immense love for us. Therefore, let us rejoice!

- How can we ensure that we remain humble in our service to God's people?

### For Family

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.*

- What is our reaction to the 'John the Baptist' in the family? Do members of the family heed the call to conversion?
- Are we humble in our dealings with other family members, bringing them closer to the mystery of our Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit?

## DOING YOUR BIT

*Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.*

Continue to welcome that person into the community by acknowledging that person's gifts and uniqueness.



## CLOSING PRAYER

*The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.*

Our Father in heaven, we thank You for this time of contemplation and reflection on Your Word during our Advent journey. Your plan for salvation empowers us to partially see the mystery of Your love through Jesus. You reveal to us that it is through humility and obedience that we will gain some further understanding of this mystery. Like St. John the Baptist, we want to give You honour through the way we carry out this mission You entrust to us. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen.

*Jesus.*

WITNESS OF OUR  
FATHER'S MYSTERY

*My Advent Reflection Journal .....*



4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Jesus,

WITNESS OF OUR  
FATHER'S GLORY

### OPENING PRAYER

*Everyone will pray the opening prayer  
and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit  
of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.*

Our Father in heaven, as we prepare for the birth of Your Son in the fourth week of Advent, we are reminded of the times Your glory has shone in our lives. Jesus Christ, Your Son, was given freely and totally to the world to bear witness to Your love. It is through His Word that we see the glory of Your existence. Mother Mary willingly submitted herself to Your salvation plan, leaving us with an example to say, "May it be done to me according to Your Word." We glorify Your holy name through Christ our Lord. Amen.





# READINGS:

*The three readings and their accompanying commentaries will be read out loud, allowing some time for silent reflection.*

*Then the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.*

## COMMENTARIES FOR:

### 1ST READING:

2 Samuel 7: 1-5,8-12,14,16

It is interesting that King David is given the news that the Lord will establish David's line as King over His people forever as a result of his intention of building a house for God. Remember that David was originally a shepherd. He may have been anointed king, but there was no guarantee that the Lord would choose someone else to succeed him. His dedication to the Lord and his desire for the Lord to have his own house prompted this favourable response from the Lord.

### 2ND READING:

Romans 16: 25-27

In this letter to the Romans, St. Paul reminds them to continue spreading the good news of Jesus to the pagans. The congregation in Rome was not one that St. Paul had been able to visit, but he uses the letter to provide them with an in-depth outline of the faith. This passage is the final part of the letter, and it ends off with St. Paul giving a mission to the disciples reading the letter: to be witnesses to Jesus, proclaiming and giving glory to the Risen Lord.



## GOSPEL: LUKE 1: 26-38

Mother Mary's 'yes' to the angel is not just an individual agreement. It is a collective 'yes' on behalf of all of us. Just like Eve's action of agreeing with the snake and eating the fruit led to the original sin, it is the action of Mother

Mary that paves the way for our redemption. As such, Mother Mary shows us that by being a witness to the Father's promise, she, who bore Jesus, is the role model whom we can look to when we are working to carry out Jesus' Word.





# REFLECTIONS

*Another person reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflections on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection.*

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, we are given the stories of three different people whom we should emulate. There is David, a king chosen by God; Paul, who travelled from land to land to preach the Good News; and Mother Mary, the handmaid of the Lord.

Yet, we also need to recall that these three people struggled through life very much like us. David was persecuted by King Saul and had to take control of Israel from a divided people. However, once he united the kingdom, he was able to rebuild Jerusalem and bring the Ark of God to the city.

Paul persecuted Christians before his conversion and was struck blind on the road to Damascus. He was left blind for three days until the Lord sent Ananias to him. Once his sight was restored, he was baptised. His conversion was looked upon with suspicion even amongst the Christians, but his

passion and drive convinced those he preached to, and he became one of the greatest catalysts for the spread of our Catholic faith.

Mother Mary was a young woman who was thrust into a confusing choice: to say “Yes” to the Lord and to risk more than just her reputation. Remember that adultery in those times was punishable by death. Mary our Mother, not only chose God’s glory but was able to stand by Him, even up to His death on the cross.

Each of these three individuals was able to rise out of their individual struggles and continue to choose to stand for their faith in their own unique ways. Likewise, the role of being a witness to our Father is for each of us. We can rise to the role, even with our imperfections. As we approach the birth of our Lord next week, let us be reminded to set aside space in our hearts for Jesus and to be witnesses to our Father’s love and glory.



# SHARING QUESTIONS:

*This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context i.e., Small Christian Communities, Ministry, or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and also time for everyone to respond.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION & SHARING QUESTIONS

*Everyone to reflect silently on the below question(s). Then, share your reflections if you are in a group.*

*We talk about what struck you in the passages of scripture and how you can share the Word of God with others.*

- Has there ever been a situation where you have been required to choose between your faith and persecution? What was your response?
- In what ways can you be a witness of your faith to those around you?

## GROUP CONTEXTUAL SHARING QUESTIONS

*You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.*

### For Small Christian Communities

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.*

- What impression do people around you have of your community? Do your actions as a community reveal the glory of God our Father?
- Do you provide sufficient space within the community to encourage others to say 'yes' when the Father calls?

### For Ministry

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.*

- How has your ministry prepared to be witnesses to the glory of God our Father?





- Like St. Paul, do you share your experiences with those around you, fulfilling your mission of making disciples of all nations?

## For Family

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.*

- Is the glory of our Father revealed to you through the members of your family?
- In what ways can your family prepare to acknowledge the glory of God our Father in your home?

## TAKE HOME

*Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).*

We are all called and worthy to be witnesses of the Father's glory.

## DOING YOUR BIT

*Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.*

Think of the person you have been journeying with and think of some concrete ways in which you can show the person the promise of God our Father—the promise of peace, joy, and love.



## CLOSING PRAYER

*The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.*

Our Father in heaven, the celebration of the birth of Jesus is the ultimate sign to us of Your amazing love, and we thank You for being with us on this Advent journey. There is no greater promise fulfilled than Your promise of salvation. Through Jesus, we continue to see Your glory in our lives. Take our hands and our mouths to proclaim Your love through our words and actions. We make this prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

*Jesus.*

WITNESS OF OUR  
FATHER'S GLORY

*My Advent Reflection Journal .....*





CHRISTMAS REFLECTION



HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED

WONDERFUL COUNSELOR  
MIGHTY GOD

EVERLASTING FATHER  
PRINCE OF PEACE

ISAIAH 9:6



# Jesus.

## WITNESS OF OUR FATHER'S PROMISE

### CHRISTMAS REFLECTION | YEAR B

Week	Readings	Themew
Christmas, Nativity of the Lord	Isaiah 52:7-10 Hebrews 1:1-6 John 1:1-18	Jesus, Witness of our Father's Salvation
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God	Numbers 6:22-27 Galatians 4:4-7 Luke 2:16-21	Jesus, Witness of our Father's Promise
Epiphany of the Lord	Isaiah 60:1-6 Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6 Matthew 2:1-12	Jesus, Witness of our Father's Announcement

## CHRISTMAS – NATIVITY OF THE LORD



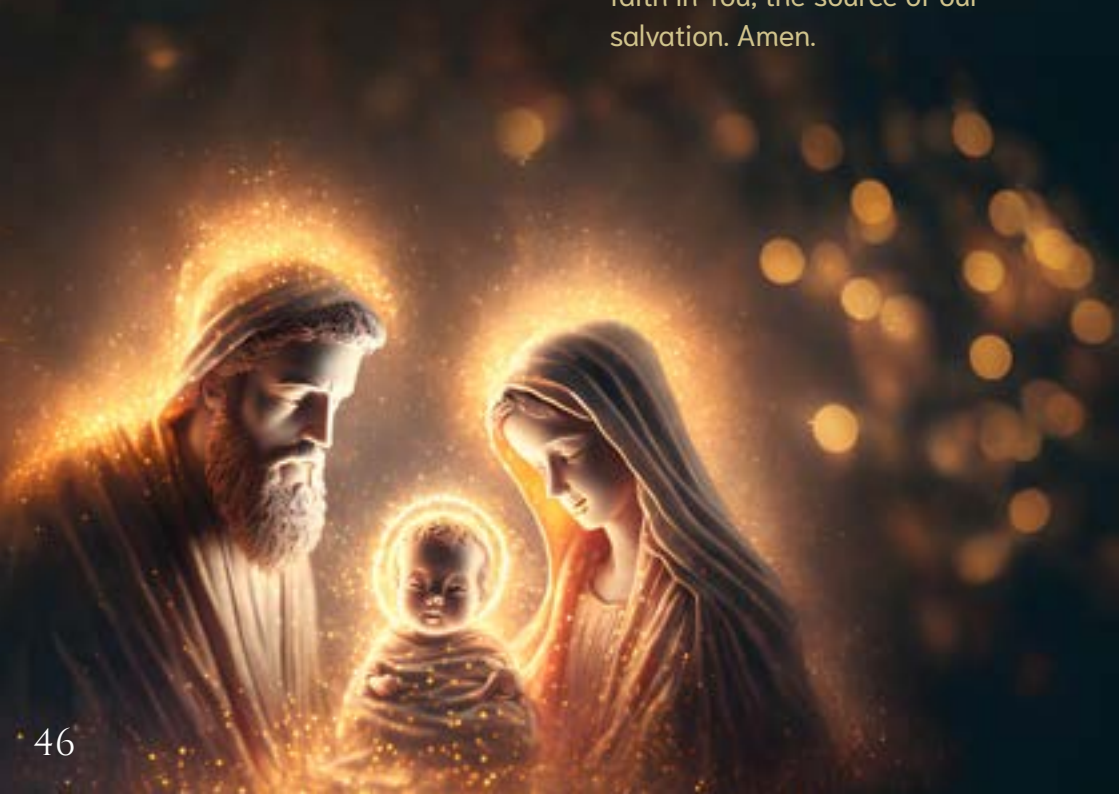
# Jesus.

WITNESS OF  
OUR FATHER'S  
SALVATION

### OPENING PRAYER

*Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.*

Our Father in heaven, we Celebrate the glorious birth of Your Son, Jesus, who gives witness to You, our loving Father. The Word of Scripture reflects Your love made flesh in our space and time. The sending of Your own Son reveals Your desire to save us from our own designs. It is our salvation to hope and have faith in You, the source of our salvation. Amen.



# READINGS:

*The three readings and their accompanying commentaries will be read out loud, allowing some time for silent reflection.*

*Then the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.*

## COMMENTARIES FOR:

### 1ST READING:

Isaiah 52:7-10

The joyful tone of this passage is hard to miss. In verse 9, a hint is given as to why this is so when it mentions the ruins of Jerusalem. It was only decades before this was written that Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and deported a large portion of the population to other Babylonian cities. Jerusalem became desolate, wasted, and devastated. What happened to the promise God our Father made to David? Where was God when Babylon ravaged Jerusalem and His temple? However, this exile was not meant to last. Babylon, in turn, was defeated, and the people of God could return. Jerusalem was about to be restored. God's love for His people does not mean that they will never suffer, but it

does mean that restoration and salvation will always come.

### 2ND READING:

Hebrews 1:1-6

The Letter to the Hebrews was a sermon written to encourage a Christian community to be faithful on the basis of Jesus' identity. How did the writer attempt to do this? This passage is an excellent example of showing that the Church never saw its faith as something that emerged out of the blue with the birth of Christ. Rather, God our Father has always acted in history, and the coming of Jesus is the climax of that salvation history. This is why the writer reminded his community that God our Father had always spoken through His prophets. He never abandoned His people. In fact, God our Father eventually speaks to us through His own Son. Out of love and from a place we cannot reach, God has come to us. The foundation of Christian faith, then, is not just some great angelic power that exists and comes to us. Instead, it is the Son, who shares in the divinity of God Himself, who comes to us. What greater assurance could God our Father give us?





## GOSPEL: John 1:1-18

The Prologue to the Gospel of John is one of the clearest passages in the New Testament on the divinity of Jesus. It confidently declared that the Word of God is God Himself and that the Word became man in the person of Jesus. While the New Testament has many writings on Jesus' identity, as we saw in the second reading, the Prologue contains unique imagery that is used throughout the Gospel of John: light vs. darkness. In this passage, Jesus, the Word of God, is the light. His enemy, the

darkness, cannot defeat him. Yet, while the prologue triumphantly declares Jesus as the light that came to save the world, it acknowledges a deep darkness that exists in the world. The world He came to save rejected Him. We are reminded here that faith is not automatic. Even if God is working to save us, we may still reject Him and His salvation. We should be ready to ask ourselves: have we inadvertently rejected Christ in the person of our neighbour?







# REFLECTIONS

*Another person reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflections on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection.*

In the first reading, we learned from Isaiah that God our Father is faithful to His people. Even if ruin and destruction come to wreck our lives, we can hope for restoration. In the second reading, we heard from the author of the Letter to the Hebrews that God our Father has always acted in history. The momentous event came about when He acted by sending His own Son, who is the foundation of our faith. In the Gospel, we read that there was darkness in the world and God our Father sent His own Son to save. This darkness is not only caused by the rejection of the Word of God but also by the sins of human beings that resist the establishment of God's reign on earth.

In his World Mission Day 2021 message, Pope Francis declared that the Church's mission in the proclamation of the good news finds "outward fulfillment in the

transformation of our world". The Holy Father recognises the darkness in our world today and God's desire to act through the Church, which is the Body of Christ, to transform our world. We, as the Church, are called to be the shining light that cannot be overcome by darkness, imitating Jesus Christ, the head of the Church.

Now, this invitation is a challenge to accept. How can we make any difference in a world filled with so much brokenness and darkness? It could cost us so much. It is so much easier to look the other way and reject this call. However, we learn from the readings that God our Father is faithful, and He has acted for us through His own Son. Thus, we must resist the temptation to despair and turn to hope. There is a reason why the Church, throughout the centuries, has celebrated the birth of Christ every year. The Christmas liturgy is a constant reminder that God, Jesus, has come down to us and that no darkness can overcome His light in the world. The question is, this Christmas, will we accept the invitation and bring the light into the world?



# SHARING QUESTIONS:

*This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context i.e., Small Christian Communities, Ministry, or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and also time for everyone to respond.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION & SHARING QUESTIONS

*Everyone to reflect silently on the below question(s). Then, share your reflections if you are in a group.*

*We talk about what struck you in the passages of scripture and how you can share the Word of God with others.*

- In whose life have I experienced the salvation of God our Father?
- Scripture tells us of God's promise: that salvation is for all. Have I received this salvation that has changed my life?

## GROUP CONTEXTUAL SHARING QUESTIONS

*You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.*

### For Small Christian Communities

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.*

- Was there a time when we experienced God's comfort amidst difficult times in our community? Share.
- Have I witnessed my salvation which was promised by our Father, and who brought it about in my life?

### For Ministry

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.*

- Have you witnessed a salvific moment in a ministry member's life?



- Do our ministries work to cooperate with the plan of God our Father for the salvation of all our members?

## For Family

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.*

- Have you witnessed to the conversion of a family member who put his or her trust in the Lord?
- What is the reality of our Father's salvation through Jesus and the Holy Spirit in your family life? Are you all more loving, joyful, and at peace with one another?

## TAKE HOME

*Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).*

Christmas should remind us to have hope amidst our difficulties because the Lord is the Light in the darkness of the world.

## DOING YOUR BIT

*Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.*

Consider a suffering person whom you have seen recently. Bring Christmas's joy to that person according to his or her needs.



## CLOSING PRAYER

*The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.*

Loving Father, words cannot describe our gratitude for the love You have shown us in the birth of Jesus Christ. You so loved the world that You gave Jesus, who bore our sufferings, to save us from eternal damnation. Through Your generosity and

unconditional love, we have become heirs to the Kingdom. Jesus, the witness of Your salvation, calls us to follow him in being a witness of Your salvation to all around us. The promised salvation that Christmas brings hope and joy in our hearts. Amen.

*Jesus.*

WITNESS OF OUR  
FATHER'S SALVATION



*My Christmas Reflection Journal .....*



SOLEMNITY OF MARY,  
THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD



Jesus.

WITNESS OF OUR  
FATHER'S PROMISE

OPENING PRAYER

*Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.*

Jesus, witness of our Father, we are grateful for Your Blessings in the year 2023. Thank you for walking with us through the year and for keeping us safe from evil and harm. As You have fulfilled Your promise of a saviour born of the virgin Mary, we are ever grateful that we can turn to her as our mother also. Your love knows no bounds, and so we enter 2024 with confidence, peace, and joy. Amen.







# READINGS:

*The three readings and their accompanying commentaries will be read out loud, allowing some time for silent reflection.*

*Then the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.*

## COMMENTARIES FOR:

### 1ST READING:

Numbers 6:22-27

Our first reading gives us the traditional blessing that the Levite priests (Aaron is the head of the tribe of Levi) pray for the people of Israel. This blessing, still used today, is a reward for the keeping of the covenant by the people and a guarantee that the blessing promised to all nations through Abraham will be fulfilled one day. The Jewish understanding of a name implies the whole essence of a person. Thus, God's promise of calling down His name on the sons of Israel as a blessing was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, God Himself.

This blessing is especially fitting for us today as we begin the new year.

### 2ND READING:

Galatians 4:4-7

What does St. Paul mean by “*the appointed time*”? It means that Jesus' coming into the world was the climactic and pivotal point in human history. Jesus was the witness and fulfilment of God the Father's covenantal promise. Thanks to Him, we are adopted into His family, and we can call God “*Abba, Father*”. This was important for St. Paul to clarify, as there were Christians in Galatia who still held that salvation could be attained purely through their own efforts by upholding the Jewish law. St. Paul wanted to emphasise that salvation was a grace from God, freely won by Jesus' death and resurrection. It could not be earned on our own merit.

In this new year, the Church is encouraging us to truly live as God's children in the fullness of Christ's light.



## GOSPEL: Luke 2:16-21

The Gospel passage accurately reflects where we are in the liturgical calendar: it is the 8th day since Jesus' birth. The passage is almost identical to the Gospel reading for Mass at dawn on Christmas day. It is a reminder that we are still in the Octave of Christmas!

In this passage, we also read

about the obedience of Mother Mary. She followed God our Father's instructions given by the angel Gabriel and named her Son "Jesus". As stated above, the Jewish understanding of a name is not simply a word to refer to a person; it is the very essence of a person. Jesus' name is a clear reflection of His mission; it means "God saves".





# REFLECTIONS

*Another person reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflections on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection.*

The Church dedicates the first day of each year to Mary, the Mother of God (Greek: *Theotokos*, literally “God-bearer”). This was the first Marian title, defined by the Church at the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD, and it still holds profound importance for us. While we are still in the Octave of Christmas, today we turn our focus onto Mother Mary.

In the Gospel, we get a glimpse into the interior life of Mother Mary. In Luke’s Gospel, we read that there were two incidents that Mother Mary pondered in her heart: once after the visit from the shepherds, and once after finding Jesus in the temple. Both moments were hints at the divinity of Christ. Mother Mary was likely unable to understand everything she was experiencing and learning about her Son. Instead of being flustered, she sat with her thoughts and emotions and contemplated all that was happening.

In 2007, a study determined that pedestrians in Singapore were the world’s fastest walkers. Another survey in 2021 revealed that Singapore had the second-most overworked population among 50 cities around the world. Busyness and productivity have become key values in our country; what impact do they have on our interior lives? Do we allow ourselves to get swept up in the doing, with our minds fixated on the next task at hand?

In Psalm 46:10, we are encouraged to “*be still and know that I am God*”, and we learn that God speaks not in the drama of earthquakes and fires but in the stillness of a gentle whisper (1 Kgs 19:11–13). God speaks to us constantly through our experiences, our emotions, and the people around us. Let us make it our new year’s resolution to still our hearts and minds and to take time to notice God’s gentle presence in our daily lives. Like Mother Mary, let us ponder all these things in our hearts.



# SHARING QUESTIONS:

*This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context i.e., Small Christian Communities, Ministry, or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and also time for everyone to respond.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION & SHARING QUESTIONS

*Everyone to reflect silently on the below question(s). Then, share your reflections if you are in a group.*

*We talk about what struck you in the passages of scripture and how you can share the Word of God with others.*

- Is being quiet important to me?
- Can we dwell in the promise of God our Father if we do not put aside time to ponder?

## GROUP CONTEXTUAL SHARING QUESTIONS

*You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.*

### For Small Christian Communities

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.*

- In our sharing, are we quick to jump to suggestions or explanations, or are we able to hold space for each other?
- How will we cultivate the practice of silent waiting in our community to understand the promise of our Father?

### For Ministry

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.*

- Do we put aside time as a ministry to keep our hearts and minds still amidst the busyness of our ministerial work?



- What is the promise of God our Father to our ministry?

## For Family

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.*

- Are we able to keep our hearts and minds still amidst the cooking, laundry, cleaning, and multitude of chores around the house?
- How can we set aside time to come together to ponder how God is moving in our family?

## TAKE HOME

*Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).*

Time set aside for our Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is time set aside to be with them.

## DOING YOUR BIT

*Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.*

In our interactions with others this week, be aware of those who seem flustered and offer to help him or her hold space. Buy a cup of coffee for him or her as we give them the simple gifts of our presence and an open ear.



## CLOSING PRAYER

*The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.*

Loving Father, we thank You for the gift of our Blessed Mother. How privileged we are to be able to call her our mother. She brought forth the witness of Your promise by being humble and obedient to Your call, even though she did not fully understand Your plan for salvation. As we turn to a new year, we are confident of Your love and care, and so we move with confidence to obey Your call for us. May our lives glorify You always. Amen.



*Jesus.*

WITNESS OF OUR  
FATHER'S PROMISE



*My Christmas Reflection Journal .....*



EPIPHANY OF THE LORD



*Jesus.*

WITNESS OF OUR  
FATHER'S  
ANNOUNCEMENT





## READINGS:

*The three readings and their accompanying commentaries will be read out loud, allowing some time for silent reflection.*

*Then the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.*

## OPENING PRAYER

*Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.*

Jesus, witness of our Father, we are drawn to You in worship, laying bare our hearts to let Your light illuminate our darkness. We come before You wanting to pay homage. As the star guided the Magi, the Holy Spirit guides us through the darkness of our times to see Jesus everywhere in our lives as the announcement of Your promise made flesh. You are our only light and source of joy. Amen.

## COMMENTARIES FOR:

### 1ST READING: Isaiah 60:1-6

It is a curious case for the prophet Isaiah to exhort the Israelites to “*arise*” and “*shine out*” when things were not looking rosy. This was the period after the Babylonian Exile, and the Israelites felt insignificant compared to the powers around them. They, as a people, were also not getting along with each other. To hear the prophet exhorting them to rise above must have felt strange when people were more inclined to despair! Yet this is what the prophet wanted to communicate to the people: God our Father had promised salvation, and He will rise among them so that God’s glory will be shown to all. Nations, in turn, will seek the light of God to get relief from the darkness and oppression being experienced.



## 2ND READING: Ephesians 3:2-3,5-6

St. Paul is entrusted with the grace to announce the mystery of God our Father's salvific plan. This plan is not just for Jews but also includes the gentiles. St. Paul is the servant of this mystery and will work to herald the Good News to the gentiles: they are also heirs to the same Messianic inheritance! For this, St. Paul was imprisoned and went to great lengths for the message to be heard, earning him the name of Apostle to the Gentiles.

## GOSPEL: Matthew 2:1-12

The place of Jesus' birth was where David was anointed king, alluding to Jesus' Davidic identity as the real "King of the Jews". The magi who visited the child Jesus were not kings and were likely to be astrologers who had knowledge of the movement of the stars. They represented the gentiles who responded better to Jesus than Herod, supposedly the king of the Jews. It is also a foreshadowing of the gentiles being included in Jesus' mission and the rejection of Jesus by the Jews.

## REFLECTIONS

*Another person reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflections on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection.*

Images of the Magi, camels, and gifts come to mind when it comes to Epiphany for most people. For others, it marks the end of the Christmas Octave. Apart from the celebration of the revealing of the child Jesus to the magi from the East, what is the significance of

this celebration?

Epiphany is the revelation of the mystery of salvation from God our Father. To have a clearer understanding of this feast, we must first have a better understanding of what the mystery of God is. God is the Creator, almighty, omnipotent, and fully spirit. In other words, He is totally different from us. Therefore, we will



never be able to fully comprehend and experience the reality of God our Father on our own. Thus, understanding the mystery cannot be achieved through our own means. Yet, this does not mean that God our Father will not reveal Himself progressively to us.

Our Father's salvific plan for humanity has been communicated over the ages through the prophets, the meditative experiences of particular persons, phenomenal events, and a mystical sense of a divine presence. These were recorded in the Old Testament. Eventually, the mystery of our Father's saving plan for humanity is revealed and fully communicated in Jesus Christ. This is the key point in the Feast of Epiphany: that the mystery of the Trinity is revealed and communicated by God our Father through God the Son as the mediator and in the Holy Spirit. In and through Jesus Christ, who witnesses the message from God our Father, we come closer to experiencing the reality of God our Father and His plan of salvation.

The Magi from the East who followed the star to pay homage

to the child Jesus showed that Our Father's plan is indeed for the whole human race, first to the Jews and then extended to all mankind. This means that all of us are included in Our Father's saving plan and will have a place in Our Father's presence. This is made possible by Jesus Christ becoming the witness of Our Father's plan. He was revealed at the Nativity event and further at Epiphany.

Epiphany can be understood fuller with the Baptism of the Lord, where God the Father revealed Him as *'...my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased'*. (Mat 3:17) This announcement teaches us that all who listen and follow Jesus Christ will have eternal life. Just as Jesus witnessed Our Father's plan to us, we too, as the Body of Christ, can progress in our knowledge of God our Father and become better witnesses. In turn, we will attract others to know that they too are in Our Father's saving plan and have a place in God's heart.



# SHARING QUESTIONS:

*This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context i.e., Small Christian Communities, Ministry, or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and also time for everyone to respond.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION & SHARING QUESTIONS

*Everyone to reflect silently on the below question(s). Then, share your reflections if you are in a group.*

*We talk about what struck you in the passages of scripture and how you can share the Word of God with others.*

- What does it mean for me to truly acknowledge Jesus as my king?
- What feelings arise when I realise that God the Father wants everyone to know about His promise?

## GROUP CONTEXTUAL SHARING QUESTIONS

*You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.*

### For Small Christian Communities

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.*

- Epiphany is the announcement to the whole world about our Father's love for all. In what ways will this community make this announcement to the neighbours?
- How may we become more like Jesus, witnessing the Father's love to all as a community?

### For Ministry

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.*

- Does serving in my ministry enable me to make the announcement that our Father's plan of salvation is for all the world?





## TAKE HOME

*Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).*

It is only the beginning to realise that I am baptised into Jesus Christ, and through Him, I have a place in God's salvation plan. I need to grow in this relationship and tell others about it because I love our Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

- Is it part of my ministry's plan to go out as a ministry and announce the Gospel to all around in Singapore?

### For Family

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.*

- Is there a need to announce Jesus as the promised Messiah to the members of my family?
- What more can we do to become better witnesses to our Father's announcement?

## DOING YOUR BIT

*Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.*

Just as Jesus witnessed God's plan for us, this week, invite those you have been with since the beginning of Advent to a convenient place – church, your home or a coffee shop – and share your “good news” experience that makes you believe that Jesus is truly the promised One of our Father.



Jesus.

WITNESS OF OUR  
FATHER'S PROMISE

## CLOSING PRAYER

*The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.*

Loving Father, Jesus, the witness of Your promise, who was moved by the Holy Spirit and did all things perfectly, is a true witness of our Father's justice. We are ever grateful for such an example of human form living in our broken world. You invite us to be witnesses to others Your message of salvation so as to journey together to our common destiny. We praise You and glorify You through the most precious name of Jesus. Amen.

*My Christmas Reflection Journal .....*









## WHAT COULD WE HAVE DONE BETTER?

Thanks for using this booklet! We hope that the reflections have helped you and your community grow in faith. Did this booklet meet your expectations? What else would you like to see in future booklets? Your feedback is important to us. Let us know!



[one.org.sg/feedback](https://one.org.sg/feedback)



# APPENDIX

## ADVENT & CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES

The Advent season is a time of waiting and preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ that sometimes gets lost in the frantic season of parties, shopping, and holiday noise of the Christmas season it precedes.

The first day of Advent is the first day of a new Liturgical (or church) calendar and begins a four-week period of preparation for the nativity of Jesus Christ at Christmas.

The Advent Season is all about reflecting on how we can prepare our hearts and homes for Christ's birth in the world as it is today. It is a time for faith communities and families to remember, through prayer, reflection, music, and good deeds, what the true meaning of Jesus' birth is. It is also a time to contemplate Jesus' triumphant return at His second coming.

Consider how your family, community, or ministry can get ready to receive Jesus, the wonderful "Gift" of our Father—to live the Father's Word every day and share it with others. In doing so, we give glory to Jesus, our Saviour, the faithful and true witness.

Here are some suggestions that you can witness as a family, community, or ministry:

- Choose a day when you can come together for a Day of Recollection. You may want to go to the following websites for resources:
- <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/advent>
- <https://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/online.html>



- Decide together to do an ‘Advent fast’. You can choose to ‘fast’ from talking by listening more. First of all, we can learn to listen to God our Father more during our prayer time and during our reading of the daily Scripture. Then, we listen to each other in our families, in the community, at the work and also in the neighbourhood around us. Discover the needs of others, bring them to prayer, and ask God our Father to guide our actions to serve the needs of others.
- Decide together how you are to be ‘gift’ to others. You may want to do outreach to the poor in your area. You can also consider doing home visits to the sick and homebound neighbours, the elderly who are staying on their own, or the foreign workers. You can do this together with other NCCs around you or with the ministries in your parish. Joy is greatly experienced when it is shared and given to others. Use the period of Advent to prepare for your outreach or visits. Do not forget to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and be His witnesses with your outreach activities.

**You can also witness as an individual:**

- Call a friend you haven’t spoken with for a long time. Share with your friend the good news of Jesus that you have heard and received.
- Visit a neighbour who lives alone.
- Bring something special to your local homeless shelter.
- Say a prayer for a different person each day.





## THE “O ANTIPHONS” OF ADVENT

The “O Antiphons” refer to the seven antiphons, which are prayers that come from the Breviary’s Vespers during the Octave before Christmas Eve. They are magnificent theology that uses ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament to proclaim the coming Christ as fulfilment not only of Old Testament hopes but of present ones as well. Their repeated use of the imperative ‘Come!’ signifies the anticipation of the long-awaited Divine Messiah.

Each Antiphon begins with “O” and addresses Jesus with a unique title, which comes from the prophecies of Isaiah:

- December 17 : O Sapientia (*O Wisdom*) Isaiah 11:2–3
- December 18 : O Adonai (*O Lord*) Isaiah 11:4–5
- December 19 : O Radix Jesse (*O Root of Jesse*) Isaiah 11:1
- December 20 : O Clavis David (*O Key of David*) Isaiah 22:22
- December 21 : O Oriens (*O Dayspring*) Isaiah 9:2
- December 22 : O Rex Gentium (*O King of the Nations*) Isaiah 9:7
- December 23 : O Emmanuel (*O With Us Is God*) Isaiah 7:14



To pray the O Antiphons as they are prayed in the Divine Office, begin with the Antiphon, then pray the Magnificat, and then repeat the Antiphon.

### December 17

O Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love:  
Come to teach us the path of knowledge!

### December 18

O Leader of the House of Israel, giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai:  
Come to rescue us with Your mighty power!

### December 19

O Root of Jesse's stem, sign of God's love for all His people:  
Come to save us without delay!

### December 20

O Key of David, opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom:  
Come and free the prisoners of darkness!

### December 21

O Radiant Dawn, splendour of eternal light, sun of justice:  
Come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death.

### December 22

O King of all nations and keystone of the Church:  
Come and save man, whom You formed from the dust!

### December 23

O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law:  
Come to save us, Lord our God!





# ADVENT WREATH

You may wish to prepare an Advent wreath in advance as you use this booklet to pray with your ministry, community, family, or even as an individual.

The symbolism of the Advent wreath lies in the tension between light and darkness, waiting for the coming of the Messiah, the light of the world. The progressive lighting of the candles each week symbolises the expectation and hope surrounding our Lord's first coming into the world and the anticipation of His second coming to judge the living and the dead. As the candle is lit each week, light increases and darkness decreases as we are reminded that Jesus Christ is the Light of the world and has overcome darkness.

## PRAYING WITH THE ADVENT WREATH

*(4 weeks of Advent wreath prayers  
are adapted from Catholic Household  
Blessings and Prayer (NCCB, 1988))*





# FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

*All make the sign of the cross as the leader says:*

**Leader:** Our help is in the name of the Lord.

**Response:** Who made heaven and earth.

## SCRIPTURE IS READ

Isaiah 9:1-2

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who lived in a land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at harvest, as they exult when dividing the spoils.*

**Reader:** The Word of the Lord

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

*After a time of silence, all join in prayers of intercession and the Lord's Prayers. Then the leader invites:*

**Leader:** Let us now pray for God's blessing upon us and this wreath.

*All place their palms face-down over the Advent wreath, and the leader prays:*

**Leader:** Lord our God, we praise You for your Son, Jesus Christ. He is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples; He is the wisdom that teaches and guides us; He is the Saviour of every nation. Lord God, let Your blessing come upon us as we light the candles in this wreath. May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation. May He come quickly and not delay. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**Response:** Amen.



*The first purple candle is then lit.*

**Leader:** Let us bless the Lord.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

*The blessing may conclude with a verse from “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”:*

O come, desire of nations, bind in  
one the hearts of humankind;  
bid ev’ry sad division cease and  
be Thyself our Prince of peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall  
come to Thee, O Israel.

## SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

*The first and second purple candles are lit as the leader says:*

**Leader:** Blessed are You Lord God of all creation: in the darkness and in the light. Blessed are You as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**Response:** For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours now and forever.

**Leader:** Come, Lord Jesus!

**Response:** Come quickly!

**Leader:** Let us live soberly, justly, and devoutly in this world as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**Response:** For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours now and forever.



## THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

*The first and second purple candles and the pink candle are lighted as the leaders says:*

**Leader:** Blessed are You Lord God of all creation: in the darkness and in the light. Blessed are You as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**Leader:** Come, Lord Jesus!

**Response:** Come quickly!

**Leader:** Let us live soberly, justly, and devoutly in this world as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**Response:** For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours now and forever.

## FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

*The first, second, and third purple candles and the pink candle are lit as the leader says:*

**Leader:** Blessed are You Lord God of all creation: in the darkness and in the light. Blessed are You as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**Response:** For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours now and forever.

**Leader:** Come, Lord Jesus!

**Response:** Come quickly!

**Leader:** Let us live soberly, justly, and devoutly in this world as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**Response:** For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours now and forever.





# CHRISTMAS EVE OR CHRISTMAS DAY

**Leader:** We have come to the eve of our Christmas celebration, Jesus' birthday. We have spent a long time preparing for His coming. Let us listen to the words of the prophets who foretold His coming.

**Reader 1:** The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined.

**Reader 2:** For a Child has been born for us, a Son given to us; authority rests upon His shoulders; and He is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

**Reader 3:** But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.

**Leader:** Let us live soberly, justly, and devoutly in this world as we wait in joyful. Today, we celebrate the great fulfilment of all these promises. Scripture proclaims that “*to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.*” And so, we light all the candles of the Advent Wreath.

*First, we light the candle for **HOPE** because Jesus is our hope.*  
(First purple candle lighted)

*Second, we light the candle for **PEACE** because Jesus is our hope and peace.*  
(Second purple candle lighted)

*Third, we light the candle for **JOY** because Jesus brings joy.*  
(Pink candle lighted)

*Fourth, we light the candle for **LOVE** because Jesus is love.*  
(Third purple candle lighted)

# Merry Christmas!

*Finally, we light the centre candle. This is the CHRIST candle. We light this candle to celebrate that Jesus is born. He has come into our lives forever.*

*(White candle lighted)*

**Leader:** Loving Father, we thank You for Your great gift of Jesus Christ, Your son. God of love, Father of all, the darkness that

covered the earth has given way to the bright dawn of Your Word made flesh. Make us a people of this light. Make us faithful to Your Word so that we may bring Your Good News to the waiting world. Grant this through Christ our Lord.

**Response:** Amen.



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