

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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The Word was made flesh, He lived among us

JOHN 1:14

Advent to Christmas Message

Here we are once again at a challenging time: Advent. Challenging because there is much distraction around us; the distraction to shop for the clothes that we want to wear for Christmas, the food that we want to order for the Christmas festivities, to join in the office celebration of Christmas even before 25 December, just to name a few. The reason for Christmas is the love of the Trinity. They were one in Their plan for our salvation. The Father's love was manifested through the visible presence of Jesus and made possible through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The challenge is for us to keep in mind the reason for the celebration. It is the love of the Trinity. The desire of our Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit to connect so intimately with us should compel us to turn to Them and reciprocate, as much as we can, the love we have received. The more we prepare, the more we will be able to reciprocate this love. The depth of the love can only be understood by spending time to dwell in the mystery of this love.

There is also the challenge to bring along and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with those who are dear to us. Filled with joy, we are to announce the good news of the birth of our Lord so that, they too, may have the joy of the Lord. If we have received much, we should share much.

Lastly, it is also challenging to prepare for Christmas during these uncertain times. We learn about the ongoing wars and disasters due to climate change. We deal with the rising cost of living, the ongoing effects of COVID-19 and the numerous disruptions to the fragile ordinary way of life. However, as Christians, we should be filled with hope as we anticipate Christmas, recalling that God our Father loves us and cares for us.

I wish you a meaningful time preparing for the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Rev. Fr Terence Pereira

Episcopal Vicar for the New Evangelisation



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.

Reflections

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

Sharing Questions

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharings. The latter is meant to prompt sharings 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.

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.

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.

...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.

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.

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.

...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 2024-25 Advent to Christmas Reflection Booklet.

Join our presenters as they take you through the reflection via the CatholicSG Radio app, starting from 28 November 2024.

Live broadcast: Thursdays at 8am Same day encore at 9pm

Repeat broadcasts:

8am, 11.45am, 3.45pm, and 9pm each day from Friday to Monday

Besides listening via a web browser: https://radio.catholic.sg/, the CatholicSG Radio app is available for downloading by scanning the following QR code:



Podcast Versions

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

The people who walked in darkness has seen a greatlight;

ISAIAH 9:2



SUNDAYS OF ADVENT

WEEK READINGS

1st Sunday of Advent Jeremiah 33:14-16

1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2 Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

2nd Sunday of Advent Baruch 5:1-9

Philippians 1:4-6,8-11

Luke 3:1-6

3rd Sunday of Advent Zephaniah 3:14-18

Philippians 4:4-7 Luke 3:10-18

4th Sunday of Advent Micah 5:1-4

Hebrews 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-45



Ist Gunday of Advent

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.

Heavenly Father, as we celebrate the new liturgical year, we know that You will give us new eyes to value the ways of life that pleases You. As our hearts are strengthened by Your Word and our sharings with each other, You give us creativity and courage to improve our relationships as we patiently await the coming of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

READINGS:

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

Next, 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:

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Jeremiah delivers a prophecy of God our Father to the broken people of Israel in Babylon. Due to their infidelity, Our Father had allowed them to be overrun by their enemies. Their sacred temple was destroyed, their beloved nation was torn apart, and its people were scattered into exile. It must have seemed a tall promise that Our Father would restore the shattered city of Jerusalem and the Davidic kingship. This was especially so in the aftermath of their most bitter defeat. Yet, beyond Israel's God imagination, our Father's promise would be fulfilled in Jesus over five hundred years later.

2nd Reading:

1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

St. Paul prays for the Thessalonians in the first part of this passage. He wants them to keep emulating his example of Christian love until the Lord returns on the last day. In the second part of this reading, St. Paul exhorts his readers to rely on what they have received from him. He challenges them to strengthen their hearts by living in ways pleasing to God. St. Paul had confidence in the Christians of Thessalonika, not due to his own merits as their teacher, but by the grace of Christ's teaching itself.

Gospel:

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

Jesus, of the royal House of David, had gathered a new Israel under a new covenant. This fulfilled the oracle given in the first reading. Today's Gospel issues а prophecy promising the return of the Son of Man on the last day. Disciples who are vigilant and brave stand unafraid amid the turbulence of the end times. For those distracted by worldly things, the end will seem disastrous. Christ will come in judgement and those who remain will recognise the end as liberation. Even if it takes a millennia, God our Father's promises are followed through.

REFLECTIONS

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

Our Father is involved in our history. When Israel fell into hard times, they called out to Our Father for rescue. God our Father promised, through the prophets, a saviour to Israel. This saviour would fulfil all the good things He intended. When Jesus began His ministry, people who viewed the Messiah in a worldly way were unimpressed, but

those who recognised Jesus as the fulfilment of Our Father's promises saw the start of a new era. They saw it as the next phase of the eternal plan. The community would live in faith and await the second coming of Christ in judgement – symbolised as "that day".

We may picture "that day" as a moment of great upheaval, pain, suffering, and those terrible images associated with the apocalypse. The world is rarely imagined as having a pretty end. A feeling of anxiety takes hold when people realise that, on "that day", everything will vanish. Their achievements and possessions will be lost. Jesus assures His disciples in this Sunday's Gospel: don't panic! Ours is not to question when "that day" will come, nor even how it will happen. The only thing that matters is why: history itself will pass away into eternity.

It is God's time we are spending. It is within Our Father's mysterious plan for creation that all our lives unfold. We are destined to find our final home with Him. However, we stray because of sin, and God will rescue us. The trials of life and the

pains of "that day" are not meant to destroy us. They are meant to purify us. Christians who persist in living Christ's way of love need not fear – we will not end; we will be perfected. This is the great hope we celebrate during Advent, which is truly Good News to be shared!

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 time for everyone to respond.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & SHARING QUESTIONS

Everyone to reflect silently on the below question(s). You may wish to 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.

- 1. How will I strengthen my own heart to prepare for "that day"?
- 2. What do I hope will happen to my community and those I love on "that day"?

GROUP CONTEXTUAL SHARING QUESTIONS

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

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

For Small Christian Communities

- 1. What are the fears and anxieties we notice in those around us?
- 2. How can we strengthen hearts with Christ's good news of hope?

For Ministry

How does the work of our group help prepare those we serve for "that day"?

For Family

How will our family perfect one another in love and prepare to face "that day" together?

DOING YOUR BIT

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

Christmas has been claimed by the world as a universal celebration filled with joy, peace, and profits—a time of parties and material focus. As Christians, we recognise that Christmas goes much deeper: it is the arrival of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Gather with your community, ministry, or family and plan a meaningful Christmas Day celebration that focuses on this deeper truth. For example, instead of just exchanging gifts, plan to read the Nativity story, sing hymns like "O Holy Night," and reflect on what Jesus' birth means for our lives.

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.

Heavenly Father, You have called us to love perfectly. Your Son's teachings and example of giving Himself for us in His great love strengthens us to do the same. Your love moves us, sustains us, and gives us hope. When Jesus Christ comes again to judge the world, may we be found steadfast in faith, and able to proclaim, "Lord, I am yours; I am ready." Amen.



Zunday Sunday Advent



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.

O Lord, there is goodness present in our lives because of Your love for us. This goodness enables us to transform ourselves according to Your will. We will face obstacles which prevent us from growing closer to You. However, we trust in Your Word that You will bring salvation to all. Thus, we make this Advent journey with hope. Amen.

READINGS:

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

Next, 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:

Baruch 5:1-9

The author addressed this passage to the exiled Jews in Babylon. Living away from their homeland, they were miserable for being separated from loved ones. The author was reminding them that their situation

was not God our Father's intent. In fact, the community ought to be paying attention to His presence amidst the gloom. He would initiate the removal of obstacles, allowing them to return home and joyfully reunite with their families. These will be the signs of His deliverance.

2nd Reading:

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

In this passage, we hear St. Paul addressing the Philippians with much affection and fondness. He praises and thanks them for their evangelisation efforts since their conversion. At the same time, he makes it clear that their ability to do so is through God our Father's initiative and on-going assistance. St. Paul encourages the community to strengthen their bonds. He urges them to deepen their faith and sharpen their discernment. In this way, they can be assured of attaining the potential that God our Father intended for them.

Gospel:

Luke 3: 1-6

St. Luke chose to situate the call of John the Baptist against a secular landscape by naming various political and religious leaders like Tiberius Caesar and Pontius Pilate. This historical grounding emphasises that John's mission was a real event in a specific time and place, giving credibility to the Gospel narrative. The mention of these figures contrasts the worldly powers with the divine calling of John, who prepares the way for Christ.

By citing Isaiah 40:3-5, Luke connects John to Old Testament prophecy, highlighting his role in preparing the way for the Messiah. The prophecy emphasises repentance and salvation, proclaiming that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" pointing to the universality of Christ's mission

REFLECTIONS

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

A vehicle's blind spot refers to areas around it that the driver cannot see when looking in the mirrors. We too have blind spots, areas we're unaware of, either by ignorance or choice.

These blind spots led to many not recognising Jesus at His birth. The

Gospel passage shows this: the religious leaders rejected John's call to repent. Their pride made them blind to the fulfilment of God our Father's promise in John's ministry. Pride can blind us to our own faults and make us unreceptive to God our Father's grace. We may then believe we are self-sufficient and superior to others.

Ignorance stems from a lack of knowledge or understanding of God our Father's will. The exiled Jews in the 1st Reading faced difficulties in recognising the presence and deliverance of God our Father during their suffering. The prophet's message reminded them of God our Father's promise and urged them to pay attention to His works. In the 2nd Reading, St. Paul encourages the Philippians to deepen their faith, strengthen their bonds, and discern God our Father's will together. This focus helps us recognise God's love and others' needs, fostering support and shared spiritual growth.

To ensure safety, drivers know that they must adjust their seats, mirrors, and check their blind spots. Similarly, as Christians, we must know God's Word, be selfless to overcome vices, and grow in humility to depend on God our Father. Through prayer,

reflection, and our faith community, we can find and fix our blind spots. This will bring us closer to the life God our Father intends for us.

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 time for everyone to respond.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & SHARING QUESTIONS

Everyone to reflect silently on the below question(s). You may wish to 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.

- 1. How did God our Father reveal a blind spot to you? What did you do with this discovery?
- 2. What challenges are preventing you from overcoming this blind spot?

GROUP CONTEXTUAL SHARING QUESTIONS

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

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

For Small Christian Communities

How can the community help you see the blind spots in your life?

For Ministry

What are our blind spots when we are ministering to the community?

For Family

How can our family cultivate humility, recognise each other's blind spots, and avoid being self-centred?

DOING YOUR BIT

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

This week, reflect with your group on who you might invite to your Christmas celebration. Think of someone who may not often attend church or who might need to feel the warmth of community. Perhaps it's a neighbour, colleague, or relative. Pray together as a group, asking God to open their hearts and minds to accept the invitation. Extend your invitation personally—either through a card, a phone call, or face-to-face, letting them know they are welcome to share in the love and joy of Christ's birth.

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 know that we are inadequate in many ways because of our blind spots. Yet, You have never left our side, patiently moulding us through humility so that we can grow into the children You intended for us to be. We hope to make You proud of us by being able to reflect Your image and likeness to all we meet. Thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus. Amen.



Sunday Sunday Advent

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 rejoice and give You thanks as we gather today to ponder on Your Word this 3rd week of Advent. As we continue to contemplate the mystery of our salvation through the incarnation, the spirit of joy fills our anticipation, always ready to give You praise and thanks in all circumstances. We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

READINGS:

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

Next, 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:

Zephaniah 3:14-18

Zephaniah is one of the twelve minor prophets in the Old Testament. His ministry focused on urging the Jews to repent, warning them of God our Father's judgement for their idolatry and immoral lives. However, the text from this chapter shifts from harsh warnings to a message of joy. He assures the people of God our Father's unwavering love despite their unfaithfulness and sinful ways. This prefigures the coming of Christ. He is our eternal hope and salvation who would redeem us of our sins. Zephaniah's message also encourages us to joyfully wait for the Lord as we look forward to celebrating the incarnation this Christmas.

2nd Reading:

Philippians 4:4-7

St. Paul wrote the letter to the **Philippians** while imprisoned. Despite this, many know the letter as one of St. Paul's most joyful letters. His message is clear: as followers of Christ, we ought to always be joyful, regardless of our circumstances. His practical advice to the community in Philippi is timeless and applies even to us today. As we get into the thick of preparing for Christmas, let us remember: "There is no need to worry about anything; instead, pray about everything, giving thanks as you make your requests to God. Then God's peace, which exceeds all understanding, will protect your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus"

Gospel:

Luke 3:10-18

John the Baptist had preached a baptism of repentance and the hope of a coming Messiah. The people felt a strong conviction and enthusiasm as they asked, "What must we do?" John the Baptist instructs the people to restore social justice towards their neighbours. They were to share with the needy, for tax collectors to collect only what is prescribed, and for soldiers to avoid extortion and be content with their wages. The Gospel encourages us to be joyfully expectant of Christ's arrival. Let us live out God our Father's justice and love in our daily lives.

REFLECTIONS

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

The Advent season invites us to contemplate the mystery of our salvation. It is found in our Lord Jesus Christ, the One True God who comes to dwell amongst us. This promise of salvation should make us shout for joy (Zephaniah 3:14) and be always happy in the Lord (Philippians 4:4). This is an apt call for us on the 3rd Sunday of Advent, also known as Gaudete Sunday.

"Gaudete" is a Latin word meaning "rejoice". We should celebrate not just Christ's birth in the manger 2,000 years ago, but also in anticipation of His second coming.

As we reflect on the past year, we are invited to recall when God our Father was faithful to us. We acknowledge with a heart of gratitude and humility that the Lord God is a victorious warrior. He is ever in our midst and will never abandon us (Zephaniah 3:17). Zephaniah's prophecy reassures us of God our Father's constant presence and protection. It also points to the ultimate salvation of all humanity through Christ.

We can be certain that God our Father is faithful. Therefore, as we approach this Sunday with joyful hearts, let us mirror the sincere eagerness of those who responded to John the Baptist's call for repentance. We have received the Good News. Thus, the joy that springs from our conviction of the Gospel propel us to evangelise through our actions. Let us love our neighbour, act justly with others, and find contentment in what we

have. Let us always point others towards Christ, our Saviour.

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 time for everyone to respond.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & SHARING QUESTIONS

Everyone to reflect silently on the below question(s). You may wish to 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.

- 1. In what ways have you seen God our Father's guidance and provision in your moments of uncertainty or disappointment in the past year?
- 2. How has the joy of knowing God our Father's faithfulness encouraged you to evangelise through your actions?

GROUP CONTEXTUAL SHARING OUESTIONS

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

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

For Small Christian Communities

Recall a memory when we invited the Lord to help us restore joy and unity in our community during conflicts and challenges. As a community, how would you like to share this Good News to others?

For Ministry

How has our ministry reached out to serve and support those in need, to bring the joy of the Gospel to others, both towards members within and outside our group?

For Family

- 1. How can we be more aware of the sacrifices of our family members?
- 2. How can we better express our gratitude and joy towards them?

DOING YOUR BIT

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

Now is the time for practical preparations. Make sure your plans

for the Christmas celebration are in place. If you are hosting a gathering, finalise the logistics—prepare any decorations or meals, set up a space for prayer or reflection, and arrange how you will share the Nativity story. Involve everyone in these tasks, so they feel part of bringing this celebration to life. For example, children can help with simple tasks like setting up the nativity scene, while others can prepare a special prayer or reflection to be shared.

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, Thank You for all the "John the Baptists" You have brought into our lives to point us to Jesus and the way of repentance. Your faithfulness to us throughout this past year fills us with gratitude and humility as we remember Your saving help, knowing that You are always with us. May the joy of Your presence propel us to evangelise through our actions: loving our neighbour, acting justly, and finding contentment in what we have, all because of Your constant care for us. Amen.

4th Sunday of Advent

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.

Heavenly Father, in this final week of Advent, we intensify our preparation to celebrate Christmas. You have been in our midst as we broke the Word, and revealed to us the messages that You intend for us to receive. Help us to be attentive to the movements of the Holy Spirit. We want to glorify You for Your great gift of love, Jesus. Amen.

READINGS:

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

Next, 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:

Micah 5:1-4

Micah 5:1 sets the contextual backdrop for this reading: the enemies of God our Father's people have surrounded them and have struck their leader. These are the consequences for not heeding the

warnings of the prophets whom God our Father had sent. His chosen people had wantonly oppressed the weak among them. Now, their enemies would oppress them in turn. Yet, all is not lost because a promised leader is to come who will bring about a restoration of Israel. When the time is right, He will arise to save His people and bring peace to them.

2nd Reading:

Hebrews 10:5-10

The sacred author of the Letter to the Hebrews shows us the startling nature of the arrival of Jesus, the Promised One. The letter also expressed the expected restoration of the people of God our Father. God will restore His people only on His terms. "He is abolishing the first sort to replace it with the second." God our Father will not restore Israel's past glory and worship. He seeks an offering of obedience from His people. This is a reality that would be discomforting for the majority of Israel. However, when seen with the eyes of faith, the practices of the Old Law find their fulfilment and perfection in the "offering of [Jesus'] body". This offering is renewed and re-presented at every Eucharistic Celebration

Gospel:

Luke 1:39-45

The glorious Messiah, whom all of Israel eagerly awaits, is hidden complete normalcy in this Gospel passage. To all external appearances, it is two unassuming women having a casual chat in a hill country town. However, residing in the wombs of these two women is John the Baptist, of whom it is said that there is "no one greater" (Matt 11:11), and Jesus, the Word made Flesh, God Himself. Despite this normalcy, Jesus is recognised and acknowledged by John the Baptist. Hidden in the womb of Elizabeth, his task had begun. He would prepare the world for Jesus Christ's coming.

REFLECTIONS

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

With our New Testament perspective of events and the eyes of faith, the readings presented to us speak of expectation and fulfilment. However, for the majority of Israel, it was a case of "unmet expectations". Jesus Christ and His message did not live up to the expectations of the Jewish people. Therefore, they

still await the arrival of the Messiah to this day.

expectation This continued is something that we Christians can learn from. After each Christmas that has come and gone, has expectation" "Christmas diminished? Is it now just another day of religious observance? Do we show up for Christmas events because it is something we have become accustomed to? So, while our Jewish brothers and sisters may be suffering from a case of "unmet expectations", we Christians may be suffering from a case of "met expectations", and ask if there is more to Christmas than what we experience each year. In other words, the tedium, routine, and normalcy of the Christian life has gotten to us.

How, then, do we overcome this? We need to continually encounter our Living Lord. We describe God our Father as a "personal being" because each of us can have a personal relationship with Him. We can encounter Him in Sacred

Scripture, receive Him in the Sacraments, and connect through personal prayer. When we meet Him and develop a relationship with Him, our faith will no longer be mundane. God our Father is an ever-creative God who cannot wait to excite and surprise us. In turn, Christmas will be a time of great anticipation and celebration: Joy to the world, the Lord has come!

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 time for everyone to respond.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & SHARING QUESTIONS

Everyone to reflect silently on the below question(s). You may wish to 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.

- 1. What is the "new" in Christmas this year, for you?
- 2. How may God our Father be calling me to encounter Him this Christmas?

GROUP CONTEXTUAL SHARING QUESTIONS

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

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

For Small Christian Communities

What concrete new steps can we implement in our community sessions to see the "more" in our personal relationship with God our Father?

For Ministry

How can we help those whom we serve to have a new encounter with Jesus this Christmas?

For Family

How can we make this Christmas different from the previous ones?

DOING YOUR BIT

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

In the final days before Christmas, focus on spiritual preparation.

Spend time in prayer as a family or community, asking God to help you receive Jesus more fully into your heart this Christmas. You could organise a prayer vigil or a short family retreat, meditating on the themes of love, hope, and peace. Pray not only for yourselves but also for those you have invited, that they too may encounter the true meaning of Christmas.

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.

Heavenly Father, we need to continually encounter You in the Sacred Scripture, by participation of the Sacraments and through the relationships we build with others. As John the Baptist pointed Jesus to others, we want to do the same, so that in all our actions we may glorify You. Amen.



Today in the town of Pavid a saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.

LUKE 2:11

SOLEMNITIES OF CHRISTMAS (YEAR C)

WEEK

READINGS

Christmas Day,

Isaiah 52:7-10

Nativity of the Lord Hebrews 1:1-6

John 1:1-18

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Numbers 6:22-27

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:16-21

Epiphany of the Lord

Isaiah 60:1-6

Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12



Christmas Day Nativity of The Lond



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, You became man to fulfil our Father's promise. You wanted to bring all creation back to Him for us to share eternal life with You. We are grateful for the gift of life that You bring to all. Thank You for the gift of Your presence. We pray that all peoples experience Your presence in their lives. You who live and reign, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.

READINGS:

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

Next, 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 prophet Isaiah has been everpresent throughout Advent and now, on Christmas Day. His writings not only predict the coming of the Messiah, but also expresses the hope that people had for redemption and liberation from oppression. This passage is from a time when the Israelites experienced one of the great redemptive acts of God our Father: their return to the Promised Land after fifty-nine years of exile in Babylon. Yet, they longed for a deeper redemption for all people. "All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." Today, we celebrate the coming of Christ who brings this plentiful redemption to all.

2nd Reading:

Hebrews 1:1-6

The Letter to the Hebrews is one of the most eloquent texts of the New Testament. It exhorts readers to persevere in faith and hope. One of the key messages of the letter is that Christ is the fullness of God our Father's revelation. This is summarised in the beautiful prologue: "God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our time, He has spoken to us through His Son." In Jesus, we see God in human form, speaking to us directly.

Gospel:

John 1:1-18

What can we say about one of the most beautiful passages in all of Scripture - John's prologue? A line that is also used in the Angelus prayer is from v. 14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." A more direct translation from the original Greek text would be "and the Word pitched His tent among us." What would make Jesus want to give up that divine state to pitch a tent among lowly nomads? Love. God our Father loves us so much that He wants us to see Him, to know Him. He pitches His tent among us, that He may be with us.

REFLECTIONS

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

What is the ultimate act of love that we can show someone? We may have had the experience of being with a family through bereavement, visiting a homebound person during Christmas, or listening to a friend whose marriage had failed. When the person expresses their thanks, we often do not realise the significance of our actions.

We are not going through what the other is experiencing, and we may never have had that experience ourselves. Yet we simply chose to sit with that person in their grief or loneliness. That is one way of understanding the Incarnation. The Son of God took on our human nature and became like one of us. He did so to sit with us in our grief and loneliness, to simply be there with us.

The story of Christmas is one of the greatest ever told. It tells of a poor young couple who, with nowhere else to go, welcome their baby in a humble manger. But beyond its simplicity, it is a profound story—a story of God becoming human, choosing to share in our lives and our suffering. Ultimately, it is a story of our Father's deep love for us. St. Alphonsus' popular Christmas hymn sums up the magnitude, mystery, and beauty of Incarnation: "You come down from the stars, O King of Heaven, You come into a cave of cold and frost. How much it cost You to love us?"

How much did it cost Jesus to love us? He let go of His very divinity to become one of us. This is the measure of God's love.

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 auestions and time for everyone to respond.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & SHARING QUESTIONS

Everyone to reflect silently on the below question(s). You may wish to 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.

- Remember a time when you sat with someone who was having a difficult time. What was it like sharing another person's difficult experience?
- 2. The Incarnation is the great mystery of the Christian faith. What does it mean to you to know that God became one of us and shared our human existence?



GROUP CONTEXTUAL SHARING QUESTIONS

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

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

For Small Christian Communities

Inspired by Christ's presence among us, who are the people I feel called to share the meaning of Christmas with?

For Ministry

In my ministry, how do I share my experience of Christmas as I serve?

For Family

Joseph and Mary supported each other and cared for Jesus during a difficult time. Share, as a family, a time when you supported each other as a family.

DOING YOUR BIT

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

On Christmas Day, come together to celebrate the deeper meaning

of the season. Begin your gathering by sharing the Gospel reading of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:1-14). Reflect on the mystery of the Incarnation and offer prayers of thanksgiving. Afterward, enjoy the fellowship, meals, and time together, but make sure the central focus remains on Christ. Encourage each person to share what the birth of Jesus means to them personally.

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, You sent Your Son to share in our lives and to show us Your love. We want to show our gratitude to You. Let us be bearers of Your love, especially to those who are suffering, or who are feeling lonely, excluded, and abandoned. Christmas is a time of great rejoicing for our salvation has come. It is also a time of sharing this joy. Your sharing of Jesus with us has taught us this, and so we will follow Your example. Amen.

Solemnity of Many, Mother of God

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.

Good and gracious Father, thank You for all the things in our lives this past year, both the joyful and the challenging. We need You in every moment of our lives because only You have the message of eternal life. We seek to follow the example of our Blessed Mother's steadfast and faithful heart, which responded to You every day. We give You glory and praise, as our Mother did. Amen.

READINGS:

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

Next, 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

This text is commonly termed as the "priestly blessing", and it has been

used from antiquity until the present day. It is found in the book of Numbers, where the Israelites are preparing to leave Sinai to journey towards the Promised Land. Hence, it is a blessing for the journey to see the Israelites arrive in Canaan as promised by God. This blessing, instructed to Aaron by God, signifies a sharing in God our Father's life and power. It flows from the covenantal relationship that God has with the Israelites. In return, the Israelites are called to recognise and make a commitment of their status as God's people.

2nd Reading:

Galatians 4:4-7

God our Father desires for us to become His sons and daughters. "When the time had fully come" is when Jesus Christ, born of a woman, shares fully the human condition, except sin. It also refers to Jesus Christ being born under the Law of Moses. He who came to completely fulfil the Law according to God's plan. In Jesus Christ, along with the Holy Spirit, we are made whole as children of God our Father. Those who believe in this can then rightfully, as adopted children, cry out: "Abba Father".

Gospel:

Luke 2:16-21

The shepherds hurried to see the angels' signs. They found a baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. The sharp contrast in the narration is clear. The glorious angels brought the message of a saviour's birth. Yet, Jesus Christ was born into a poor environment. It may be Luke's way of reminding us of God's promise of salvation, even when things seem impossible. A helpless child lies in a manger, surrounded by His parents. He today's resembles transient, homeless migrants. It is no surprise that Mother Mary pondered these things. She sought to understand and place her trust in God our **Father**

REFLECTIONS

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

We often see blessings as things going according to our wishes. The Christian view of blessing is based on a relationship with God our Father. His greatest desire is for all creation to live in perfect love. To understand this better, we can look to Mother Mary.

Elizabeth greeted Mother Mary with, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" (Lk 1:42), acknowledging her special role in God's plan. On the first day of the year, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. We honour her as the one blessed by God the Father with the fullness of grace, making her an essential part of our salvation.

Despite facing possible punishment of death for being pregnant outside of marriage, Mother Mary trusted in God's blessings. She embraced her role as Mother of God with obedience and faith, even without fully understanding the child she would bear. Mary teaches us that blessings aren't about getting our way. They are about participating in God's eternal plan.

Furthermore, blessings require a response. Like Mother Mary's fiat, her "yes" to God our Father, we too are called to accept His will in our lives. Though Mary didn't fully understand her situation, she trusted in God's plan and pondered everything in her heart. When we don't understand God's plan, do we trust Him enough to accept it? Do we ponder on it or rely on our own understanding?

While we can't physically "birth" Jesus like Mother Mary, we can bring His love to others. Every act of love allows us to share God our Father's blessings with the world. Mother Mary always points us to Jesus, reminding us to "Do whatever He tells you" (Jn 2:5). In the same way, let's point others to Jesus, who desires to draw all people to Him. By responding like Mother Mary, we give glory to God our Father and participate in His great plan.

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 time for everyone to respond.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & SHARING OUESTIONS

Everyone to reflect silently on the below question(s). You may wish to 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.

1. What did you learn about God our Father's plans from the example of Mother Mary? 2. How would you respond to the invitations you have been given from God our Father?

GROUP CONTEXTUAL SHARING OUESTIONS

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

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

For Small Christian Communities

In the life of our community, how do we, like Mother Mary, bring forth Jesus to others?

For Ministry

In our ministerial work, are we accepting the plan of God our Father consciously and intentionally as Mother Mary did?

For Family

When we encounter challenging situations in our family life, what steps can we take to follow Mother Mary's example instead of reacting with our own thoughts?

DOING YOUR BIT

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

Follow up with those you invited to your Christmas celebration. Reach out to them and share your thoughts on the new year and the importance of this feast day, which honours Mary, the Mother of God. Use this opportunity to reflect on how Mary's "yes" to God is a model for all of us and encourage your invitee to embrace the journey of faith in the coming year.

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.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for Your choice of Mary as the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we rejoice in her humility and openness to Your plan of salvation. As we honour her as our Mother, we also honour Your divine choice in her, whom we deeply love. She offers us a beautiful example of how to live as Your chosen ones. Through her guidance, may our lives bring glory to Your name. Amen.

Epiphany The Lord



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.

Heavenly Father, on this day of Epiphany, we celebrate the revelation that Your plan of salvation includes everyone, as shown by the journey of the Magi. Help us encounter You in the Word we hear today, inspiring us to discover Your love and purpose for all people. Your message is eternal and meant for the good of all. Amen.

READINGS:

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

Next, 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 60:1-6

This psalm from the book of Isaiah is written from the point of view of a person after the Babylonian exile. Though the Israelites can return to their homeland, they are no longer the strong nation they once were.

The psalm tells the Israelites that the Lord will shine on the foreign nations, inspiring them to bring riches to God's people. This is an early precursor to the idea of Jesus opening the faith to the gentiles in His time.

2nd Reading:

Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

The letter to the Ephesians has St. Paul preaching about the new unity between gentiles and Jews. These verses establish that concept very clearly, using the word "coheirs". This shows that gentiles have as much claim as Jews to the inheritance our Father promised: eternal life. In the same way, we are called not to dismiss those around us who do not share the same faith. The Father shares His love with all in the world.

Gospel:

Matthew 2:1-12

The appearance of the Magi is foreshadowed in the first reading as similar gifts of gold and frankincense are mentioned in both passages. This parallel shows the change that Jesus' birth brings: the start of the strengthening of God's people.

However, He no longer sees only the people of Israel as His own; now He includes believers from every race and nation. This is further emphasised in the second reading. There, St. Paul encourages the Jews to unite with the gentiles to embrace their new identity as Christians.

REFLECTIONS

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

It is important to remember that the Magi were not Jews. They came from the east to pay homage to Jesus, not as a Saviour, but as a King. Yet, the Father still led them to Jesus through the star. Our King does not discriminate between those who are of the faith, and those who have yet to know Him.

This mission of revealing Jesus Christ to all the world now falls onto us. The Catholic Church is missionary by nature. As members of the Church, we must be missionary disciples in our own unique ways. Our actions must show God our Father at work in us: Are we patient when facing difficult co-workers or family members? Do we carry out acts of mercy to those in need? Can

we outdo one another in showing love (Rom 12:10)? In our lives, we will meet those who do not know God our Father. Our actions will reveal Christ to them.

Finally, as St. Paul says in the second reading, we must remember that those without our faith are still co-heirs to God's inheritance. They are no less deserving of His transformative love. Let us, then, in ways both big and small, help all come to know this love and enable them to embrace their identity as children of God, our Father.

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 time for everyone to respond.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & SHARING QUESTIONS

Everyone to reflect silently on the below question(s). You may wish to 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.

- 1. In your previous celebrations of Christmas, how have you shown non-Christians that they are not outside His salvation?
- 2. How would you like to change the way you celebrate Christmas and bring across the message that salvation is for all?



GROUP CONTEXTUAL SHARING QUESTIONS

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

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

For Small Christian Communities

How can we, as a small Christian community, bring the love of Christ to those who have yet to know Him?

For Ministry

In what ways can we be the messengers of His salvation to all non-believers and believers alike?

For Family

In what ways can our family give witness to the love of Christ to our neighbours?

DOING YOUR BIT

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

Gather once again with your community, ministry, or family and

share one message or insight that God revealed to you during the Christmas season. Like the Magi who travelled to meet Jesus, reflect on the journey you've made through Advent and Christmas. Consider how the experience of welcoming Christ has touched your life and how you might carry that forward into the new year.

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.

Heavenly Father, with Your wisdom and understanding, the Magi recognised Jesus as King and Lord. Our ears are opened by Your word and our hearts to Your love. Open our eyes so that we may see You in all that we meet. It is upon us to spread Your message of salvation to all the world, and we thank You for this commission. We pray in Your most Holy name, Amen.



ADVENT & CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES

During Advent, Jesus' coming is emphasised:

- · His coming in the past at Bethlehem, the first Christmas;
- His coming in the present in the Mass and Sacraments; and in grace as we go about our prayers and works during the day. He comes to us in our neighbours, who are the instruments of His will for us and He comes to our neighbours through us, when we live God our Father's life and make Christ present to those we meet; and
- His coming in the future the Parousia.

As a family, community or ministry, think of how you can prepare to receive Jesus - the wonderful "Gift" of our Father. To receive this gift and to discover the depth of this love the Father has for us, we need to live the Father's Word in our daily lives and to share it with others.



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



Choose a day when you can come together for a Day of Recollection (this can be done online also). Put aside all the frenzied activities of shopping and cooking for a day of praying, reflecting and sharing. You may want to go to the following websites for resources.

- ▶ http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/advent
- ► http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/ CollaborativeMinistry/Advent/



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 the families, in the community, at the workplace and also in the neighbourhood around you. Discover the needs of others and 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 an 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 work with the ministries from 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.

PRAYING WITH THE ADVENT WREATH

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 overcame darkness.

(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

Reader: 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.'

The Word of the Lord.

Response: Thanks be to God.

After a time of silence, all join in prayers of intercessions and in the Lord's Prayer.

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 of 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 lighted.

Leader: Let us bless the Lord.

Response: Thanks be to God.

The blessing may conclude with a verse from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel":

All: O come, desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of humankind;

bid every sad division cease and be thyself our Prince of peace.

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

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

First and Second purple candles 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.

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

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.

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.

FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

First, Second and the Third 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.

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

First, Second and the Third purple candles and the pink candle are lighted as the leaders says:

Leader: We have come to the eve of our Christmas celebration, Jesus' birthday. (Or: Today, we celebrate 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, 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: 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. (1st purple candle lighted)

Second, we light the candle for PEACE because Jesus is our hope and peace. (2nd 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. (3rd purple candle lighted)

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 that we may bring Your life to the waiting world. Grant this through Christ our Lord.

Response: Amen.

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 present ones as well. Their repeated use of the imperative 'Come!" signify 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,

- 1. begin with the Antiphon,
- 2. then pray the Magnificat,
- 3. 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, splendor 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!

What could we have done better?

Thanks for using this booklet! We hope that the reflections have helped you and your community to 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!



Acknowledgments

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