

# Prepare the Way



Weekly Advent Prayer Service  
for Families

Prepared by Fr. Matthew Sawyer

# At-Home Advent Prayer Service

**To be prayed at home with an Advent Wreath, or some other way of marking the Sundays of Advent**  
*(Please assign the different roles to different members of the family)*

## Week 1 – Hope

### Introduction:

Advent is the season of expectation and of growth, a time for preparation and a time for waiting.

As we begin this new liturgical year, we are filled with the hope that the Lord will come. That He will dwell with us and lead us to the eternal Father in Heaven.

During this time of year, it is easy to blow-by Advent and focus on Christmas. The Church however invites us into this special season to prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus. During these 4 weeks, we will focus on the themes of hope, of peace, of joy, and of love.

This week, we focus on **hope**. Hope is not mere wishful thinking or a strong desire. It is not based on chance or crossing our fingers. Hope is a confident and certain expectation. Our hope is a living hope given to us through the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God. God promised his people a savior and sent his own Son to be born into this world by a virgin mother. As the Israelites awaited the coming of their savior all those years ago, so too do we remain in hopeful preparation for Christ to come again.

## Opening Prayer:

God of Hope,

As we enter into this time of waiting and preparation,  
be with us as we wait for the coming of your Son.  
Fill our hearts with hope as we remember your  
promise to us,  
the promise of a savior, the promise of Jesus.

Protect us during this week,  
and keep us watchful in prayer.  
So that we may be ready to receive Christ into our  
homes and our hearts.

In Jesus' name we pray,  
**Amen.**

## Lighting of the Advent Wreath

[Light the first purple candle]

Heavenly Father,

As we begin this Advent, fill our hearts with the hope  
and love your Son brings. You brought hope to your  
chosen people when you lead them from Egypt and  
gave hope through your prophets for the coming of  
one who was anointed by you to rebuild your  
Kingdom and You gave us hope incarnate in the birth  
of your Son. Fill us with that hope now as we await  
the coming of your Son.

We pray in Jesus' name,

**Amen.**

## Reading from Scripture: Romans 15.12–13

and again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse shall come,  
the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;  
in him the Gentiles shall hope.”

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### Reflection:

Throughout the Old Testament, the Prophets spoke of the coming of the one anointed by God, a Messiah to come and restore the Kingdom of Israel. We know now that God had a different plan in mind. He sent his Son, not just to restore the old kingdom, but to build a new one. A kingdom made of living stones, built on the chief cornerstone that is Christ.

The Gentiles were not just on the outside looking in on the covenant between God and his chosen people, but they were invited into it. Not just to join a contract, but to join a family. That is the hope the season of Advent proclaims. That we are no longer alone, but we are beloved children of God. That the Lord of the Universe loved us so much that he sent his Word to become flesh, sent his own Son to be with us. Our hope was not in some distant desire or abstract thought, but in a real person, the God who became man, Jesus Christ.

In these unprecedented times, in dealing with the loneliness a pandemic can bring, it is important to remember that the hope of Christ is always with us. Even in our darkest times, when we cannot be with friends and family, Christ reminds us that he is our family, that we belong to a great family, the

family of the Church. With all of our fellow parishioners and all the saints in heaven and the holy souls in purgatory. As we begin this season of Advent, let us thank God for the gift of being welcomed into his family and to ask him to bless our own as we await the birth of his Son on that holy night.

## **Prayers of the Faithful:**

That the Church may grow in hope through this season of Advent as we prepare to greet the Lord Jesus when he returns. We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

That we may prepare for the new heaven and new earth by fostering respect and protection for all human life, including the unborn. We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our prayer**

That those who have separated themselves from the grace of God may find this season a time of hope, reconciliation and peace. We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our prayer**

That the sick, the lonely, and the depressed may find strength and hope in the love that God has for his wounded children. We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

## Closing prayer:

Lord God source of hope,

We thank you for the blessings you continue to bestow upon us.

As Advent begins let our lives reflect the burning candle before us,

so that the hope of Christ that we carry may be a beacon for others.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. God forever and ever.

**Amen.**

## Week 2 – Peace

### Introduction:

When we gather for Holy Mass, a defining moment within the liturgy is the sign of peace. The priest, extending the **peace** of Christ, invites his parishioners to do the same to one another.

This isn't because Father needs time to get to the tabernacle or because the Church thinks we needed a break at this moment, but just as Christ invited Peter and his apostles to forgive 70 times 7 times, to find peace within themselves, we are called to be at peace with ourselves and our neighbour before we approach the altar of the Lord and receive him in the Eucharist.

To know Christ intimately, as the Eucharist allows us to do, is to have his peace within us. That is what the season of Advent calls us to reflect on this week as we light the second candle.

Christ became man to show us that even though our lives get messy sometimes and we are filled with doubt, anxiety and fear, that God is stronger than all those things. That through the peace of God, we can embrace Christ fully into our lives and be transformed by him.

### Opening Prayer:

God of Peace,

We come before you as humble children,  
praising you with all of our being.

We thank you for the peace you give us  
through your Son, Jesus Christ.

Help us to continue to prepare to receive him into our  
hearts.

In Jesus' name we pray,  
**Amen.**

## Lighting of the Advent Wreath

[Light the first purple candle, and a second]

Heavenly Father,

As we light this second candle of Advent,  
fill us with the peace of Christ, our Saviour.

Let this candle be a burning reminder of the light and  
peace you share with us, even on our darkest day.

Help us share that peace with everyone we meet,  
especially those who need it most.

We pray in Jesus' name,

**Amen.**

## Reading from Scripture: Philippians 4.4–7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.  
Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord  
is near.

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by  
prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your  
requests be made known to God. And the peace of

God, which surpasses all understanding,  
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

## **Reflection:**

In this passage from scripture, Saint Paul makes a very bold claim; “Do not worry about anything.”

That statement seems out of touch with reality. Our lives are full of worry and they tend to get chaotic. Our families, our jobs, our homes, school, our relationships, the list sometimes seems endless. However, I don't believe that Saint Paul was writing this is a way to overlook the many things that cause us stress and worry. Saint Paul wasn't saying that our fears and worries were unfounded, but that there is someone far more powerful than the worries we cling to.

Christ himself is the remedy to this worry and chaos. God became man to not only win the war on sin and death in the world, but also to save us from our own internal battles as well. No matter what obstacles or worries come our way, Jesus is there to walk with us. He taught us that it is okay to bring these feelings and thoughts before God, because He is not some distant being, but He is our heavenly Father. That, brothers and sisters is the message of peace this week. That no matter what is going on in our lives, Christ has come to be with us to lead us to God, a Father, who loves us. As the week of peace begins, we ask our Father to bless us with peace, so that instead of focusing on the worries and the mess our lives may sometimes bring, we may focus on the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

## Prayers of the Faithful:

Let us pray for the Church. That all followers of Jesus might welcome one another as brothers and sisters, as we prepare to celebrate the Lord's coming as the Prince of Peace. We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

Let us pray for peace in the world. That all Christians and people of good will might become peace-makers in their actions and words, so that everyone living where there is war and fighting will know the peace of Christ's coming. We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our prayer**

That those who have separated themselves from the grace of God may find this season a time of hope, reconciliation and peace. We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our prayer**

That the sick, the lonely, and the depressed may find peace and hope in the love that God has for his wounded children. We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

## Closing prayer:

Prince of Peace,

We long to see you.

You came to bring peace and comfort to the world  
and to each one of us.

In this season of Advent, bless us and strengthen us,  
So that we may keep our eyes solely on you.

Help us to be your hands and feet here in the world,  
so that we may offer comfort and peace to a world  
desperately seeking it.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives  
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. God forever  
and ever. **Amen.**

## Week 3 – Joy

### Introduction:

The third Sunday of Advent is slightly different than all of the others. Where the other 3 weeks are marked with purple candles, the third Sunday is marked with lighting a rose-coloured one.

The Church calls the third Sunday of Advent, *Gaudete*, which means rejoice. The Church is telling us that our waiting is almost over, the Lord is coming, Christmas is almost here!

**Joy** is so much more than feeling good or being happy.

The truth is, no amount of material things or comforts can satisfy the longing in our hearts. The source of our Joy doesn't lie in a thing, but in a person. He is *Emmanuel*, which means "God with us."

### Opening Prayer:

God of joy,

Let us remember that the good news of Christ's birth has the power to bring us great joy this season. Help us come to know that our joy doesn't come from the world, but comes as a gift from you, our heavenly Father.

As we come together to reflect on your word, flood our hearts with the joy only you can bring, so that we can come to know you more deeply.

In Jesus' name we pray,  
**Amen.**

## Lighting of the Advent Wreath

[Light the first-two purple candles, and the pink (rose)]

Loving God,

We thank you the blessings you bestow upon us.  
As we light this candle,  
let it be a symbol of the Joy that shines in each one of  
us and remind us to seek God in everything that we  
do.

So that we too can share in the joy of Christ's coming.

We pray in Jesus' name,

**Amen.**

## Reading from Scripture: Luke 1.39–45

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a  
Judean town in the hill country, where she entered  
the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child  
leaped in her womb.

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and  
exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among  
women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And  
why has this happened to me, that the mother of my  
Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound  
of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy.

And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

## Reflection:

Why did Saint John respond so passionately inside of Elizabeth’s womb when the Blessed Virgin approached them? Mary travelled after giving the angel Gabriel her yes to God’s request, to be the mother of his Son, to Elizabeth to help her in her final months of pregnancy. Saint John was still in the womb, but through the power of the Holy Spirit inhabiting his mother at the time, he was able to recognize the close proximity of the Lord, hence his joyful reaction. St. John was close to God in that moment in a spiritual and literal sense.

We have a tendency to call joy an elevated happiness or a positive feeling in a particular moment. True joy, brothers and sisters, is so much more than a quick moment in time. Joy cannot be contained in material things, but is shared through a person, the person of Jesus.

Living for joy allows us all to experience Christ in a much more dynamic way. That does not mean we have to be happy all the time, but even in the moments of pain and sadness, we can see God working. We are filled with joy at the knowledge that Christ is always close to us and that the more we try to live for Christ, the more we try to love those around us, by serving them, talking with them, listening to them and even praying with them, the more we become like him.

As we celebrate this week of joy, let us ask the Lord to help us to see him at work in our lives, so that we may share in the joy of his work and better share that joy with the world around us.

## Prayers of the Faithful:

Let us pray for the Church. That all who follow Jesus will be filled with the joy of his coming.

We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

Let us pray for those suffering from isolation and loneliness. That they will receive the healing presence of Christ in their lives this advent season.

We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our prayer**

Let us ask the Lord to open our hearts to welcome Jesus in our neighbour, as we joyfully get ready to celebrate his birth at Christmas.

We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our prayer**

Let us pray for the lost. That those who have separated themselves from the grace of God may find this season a time of hope, reconciliation and peace.

We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

## Closing prayer:

Father in Heaven,

May your joy fill our hearts  
and as we strive to be with you in all things,  
let us reflect your joy to all the world.

So that the Good News of your Son  
may spread to the places that need it most.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives  
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. God forever  
and ever. **Amen.**

## Week 4 – Love

### Introduction:

The season of Advent ends with a focus on **love**.

The story of Jesus is the story of God who loves us so much, that God pushes through the boundary between divinity and humanity and comes into the world as a baby to love us in person.

As Christmas draws closer, we pause to thank God for the amazing gift of His Son, that although the times we live in may be confusing and worrisome we have a God who loves us.

God who is stronger than our doubts and fears, and wants to be with us forever.

### Opening Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for loving us so much that you gave us your only Son.

In this time of waiting,  
help us prepare our hearts to love like you do,  
so that we may see our neighbour as you see them,  
as your beloved children.

In Jesus' name we pray,

**Amen.**

## Lighting of the Advent Wreath

[Light all four candles]

Loving God,

As we complete the lighting of the candles on our  
Advent Wreath,  
let this wreath be a sign of your burning love for us  
that has no end and no beginning.

Let our hearts be like the manger in Bethlehem,  
a safe space for Christ to dwell.  
So that we too can share in the love your Son brings.

We pray in Jesus' name,

**Amen.**

## Reading from Scripture: Isaiah 7.10-14

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying,

Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as  
Sheol or high as heaven.

But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the  
LORD to the test.

Then Isaiah said: “Hear then, O house of David! Is it  
too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my  
God also? Therefore, the Lord himself will give  
you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and  
shall bear a son, and shall name him *Immanuel*.”

## Reflection:

This week we enter into the final stages of our preparation for the coming of the Lord, are we ready for him? Are we able to put our trust in Him? It was something Ahaz seemed to struggle with in our reading this week.

The Lord gave permission to Ahaz to ask for a sign, as small or as large as he wanted, but Ahaz did not want to test the Lord in such a way. Isaiah then foretold of a sign of the Lord's choosing. That sign would be a baby, born of a woman, who would be named "God with us" or Immanuel.

We call the conception of Christ the incarnation. That God so loved the world, that He sent His only Son, not to condemn a fallen world, but in order that it might be saved. This is the greatest miracle we have ever received. The fullness of God's love, made tangible by the tiny form of Jesus Christ, laying in a manger on that holy night.

He didn't want to spend eternity without us, so He came to rescue us Himself. He showed us day by day how to live and love like Him throughout His life, as He healed the sick, fed the hungry, when He ate with the crowds, when He laughed and even cried with them. As we await His coming let us thank the Lord for the example He has shown us throughout His life and pray that we follow in His footsteps and be a sign of God's love in the world today.

## Prayers of the Faithful:

Let us pray for our local Church, that although physically separated, we may all be spiritually unified and share in the love of Christ this Christmas season.  
We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

Let us pray for all Christians. that we all may carry the light of Christ inside of us, so as to share it with those trapped in their own personal darkness.  
We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our prayer**

Let us pray for those who are ill at this time. That they be wrapped in the healing presence of Lord.  
We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our prayer**

Let us pray for the lost. That they may experience the love of Christ this Christmas. We pray to the Lord...

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

## Closing prayer:

Loving God,

We thank you for the many gifts and blessings you have given us this Advent.

As Christmas approaches,  
remind us constantly of your love for us,  
so that even when we struggle most,  
we know that you are there.

Let us always walk in your love,  
so that we may share the message of Christ with a  
world who needs it.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives  
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. God forever  
and ever. **Amen.**

**Notes:**

## **Family Traditions:**

We invite you to join  
us this Advent and  
Christmas!



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