

Something Different for Advent 2025

A Do-It-Yourself Retreat for Real Life Faith



The Advent Pause

#SDFA2025



A collection of short prayers, reflections and exercises based on the Gospel of each Sunday for **BUSY PEOPLE** to help you pause on your Journey through Advent

May God's blessings this season, light your way!

This is collection of short prayers, reflections and exercises based on the Gospel of each Sunday for busy people to help you pause on your Journey through Advent.

The season of Advent has always been deeply significant - a sacred invitation to pause, breathe, and make room for Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. After another challenging year, our world still aches for meaning, still hungers for light. The message of Christmas is that God is near, right in the middle of our messy, busy, noisy lives. God walks with us through it all - our families, work, exhaustion, laughter, and longing.

This retreat is your gentle invitation to stop and notice: **God is already here.**

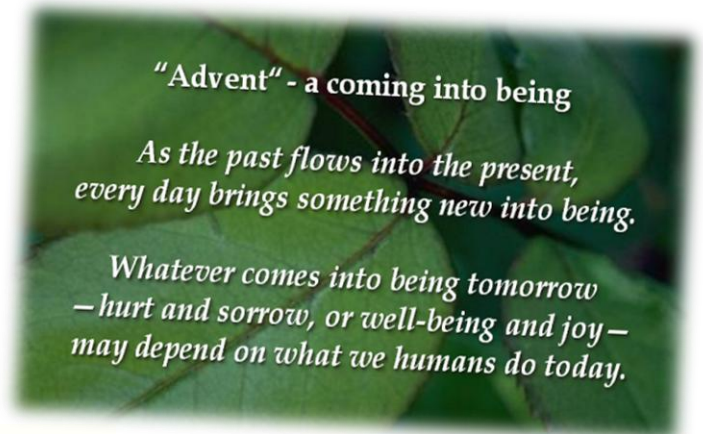
Each week offers short reflections, simple prayers, and hands-on exercises to help you rediscover stillness, gratitude, and connection with God.

You don't have to do everything - just what fits.
Go slowly. Make a little space for yourself each day.

Be gentle with yourself and remember –
as pilgrims, we are assured we never journey alone.

Prayer in the Days before Advent

Lord,
Advent is here, but so is family tension.
Advent is here, but so are endless to-do lists.
Advent is here, but so are the memories and absences that ache.
You see all that, and still You come.
You whisper, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you."
Remind me that what feels unmanageable is not impossible for You.
Teach me to lay down my guard so You may guard me.
Amen.



Look at your Advent Calendar – just a few days until you can open the first door! Give a jump for joy or fist bump your family at the excitement of looking forward to the journey to Christmas.

That first Christmas, you gave us the gift of hope wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Thank you, loving God, for your immeasurable gift!!

First Sunday of Advent ~ 30th November

'Be Alert at All Times' (Matthew 24:37-44)



Our focus for this first Sunday of Advent is 'Learning to Wait'.

Advent begins with waiting — not passive or impatient waiting, but hopeful, awake, faithful waiting. Our world runs on instant results and notifications, but Advent invites us to slow down and notice God's quiet arrival in the ordinary.

Welcome to the **first week** of this Advent. Each week these reflections and suggestions will be a guide for you to spend some more time in prayer and reflection throughout Advent.

It is also an opportunity to focus in on the Advent themes each week and to take some 'time out' to pause each day.

We begin our Advent by allowing ourselves to take stock of our busy-ness. The season seems to shorten every year – Halloween is over and the very next day the Christmas ads are on television and Santa is on his way to the local supermarket. The pressure is put on as predictably as drawing up a shopping list, stressing over presents and finances, decorating the tree and planning the Christmas Dinner. We need to gift ourselves a few minutes out from our hectic world each day and to give ourselves a little space and time. Let these 5-10 mins each day be your gift to yourself as you prepare for Christmas. In the Gospels we are told that Jesus frequently goes away to a quiet place to pray, to escape the crowds, to spend time with God. This is a good place to start.

Tasks ~ Week 1

Firstly you are invited to create a simple sacred space in your home. This could be in the corner of your bedroom or sitting room. It should be somewhere that you can go for some quiet time each day. You may use some symbols in your space – such as a cross, candles, a bible or some significant symbol for you. The colour for Advent is **Purple**, a symbol of hope, so you may like to use that colour in your sacred space. **Evergreens** speak of the hope that we have in God, the hope of newness, of renewal. **Candles** symbolize the light of God coming into the world, the light still burning in our world & hearts today. Maybe make your own Advent wreath? *Be creative yet keep it simple.*



Secondly some people like to carry something with them during the weeks of Advent, like a little piece of purple string or ribbon. This is a reminder of the things that tie you down, preventing you from living as freely and as fully as you can. Also, the tradition of *string on the finger* was designed to "keep" the thought there, to be remembered later when it was needed. Let it be a reminder for you this Advent of God's love for you. Make a point of taking it out at least once every day and hold it in your hand. By the end of the four weeks, you will know every part of it as you will know your inner self. You can place the string/ribbon in the sacred space each night as a symbol of giving your burdens to God and as an expression of thanks for your day.



Thirdly it's always good to journey with a companion. Pick a friend, colleague, or family member that you will make a special effort to call to mind and remember in prayer as you go through this Advent journey. Don't tell them (*unless the two of you have decided to make this journey together*) but let them be your prayer companion. Let your piece of ribbon remind you to bring them to prayer each day.



ARE YOU READY?

The reflections and suggestions on these pages are meant as a guide.

*You can do some of them or all of them.
Take your time, go at your own pace.
you have a full week!*

Prayer suggestions for the week

1. **Breathing exercise:** Try to do this at least once a day. Be still. To start take three deep breaths... inhale for a count of four, then exhale for a count of four (*all through your nose, which adds a natural resistance to the breath*). Then, close your eyes and focus on your normal breathing. On the in-breath be aware that it is life-giving, nurturing; a gift from God. On the out-breath be aware that you are feeding the plants and trees around you; you are blessing the world around you. Stay with that for a while: The in-breath as a gift from God; the out-breath as your gift to the world. Repeat the following - as you breathe in, whisper, "*Come, Lord Jesus.*", as you breathe out, 'Be born in me today.' Let your breathing become prayer and be aware of God who is with you always.
2. Read **Sunday's Gospel**, two or three times (**Matthew 24:37-44**). Come back to it a few times during the week.

[Jesus said] For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.



- Sit with the text and pick a word or phrase that stands out to you. In the stillness repeat that word or phrase in your mind.
- Why is that word or phrase relevant to you at this moment? **What feelings does it evoke?**
- Is there something that puzzles or disturbs you? Why? -**What is it calling you to do?**

Consider this

Waiting. We're not very good at that anymore. Maybe we never were. We get frustrated if we have to wait for any length of time. But waiting isn't wasted time - it's sacred space. Every pause can become prayer if we let it. Try turning daily waits - at traffic lights, in queues, on hold - into mini Advent pauses. Use those moments to whisper gratitude or to notice someone nearby who may also be waiting for kindness.

Serenity and inner beauty come when we wait upon God. 'Waiting' like that is not merely wasting time.

1. Waiting reminds us that we are not the centre of the universe. Waiting gives us the opportunity to remember that other people have plans and priorities as well. We are not the focal point of the universe. That doesn't make our plans unimportant, but it does put them in perspective.

2. Waiting reminds us that God is in control. At the very least, waiting forces us to realize that we are not in control. And that can be a valuable opportunity to reflect on who is.

3. Waiting reminds us that life is a gift. Forced to sit at a stop light for several precious minutes, I have a choice. I can choose to grumble and gripe about the loss of my precious time, or I can remember that those very minutes were a gift God gave me. Sure, this wasn't how I'd planned to use them. But that doesn't change the gift.

4. Waiting reminds us that the present matters. Sometimes we can be too future-oriented, always focused on what comes next. But what about now? Next is in God's hands. Now is what we have.

5: Waiting reminds us that we are all connected in Hope. Often we can feel isolated, on a journey alone. But waiting brings into focus the plight, the situation of the other. With their best in mind... there is always hope.

6. Waiting reminds us that the future is bigger than we think. We have a finite amount of time, why waste any of it waiting for things to happen? Waiting can remind us that this life is part of something much larger and teach us to value the time, relationships that we have. Waiting can teach us to be involved and not a spectator in life!!

waiting is not just something we have to do until we get what we want. waiting is part of the process of becoming who God wants us to be.

Prayer for the week

Lord teach me to wait. May I wait in hope and may my hope be in you, amen.



Second Sunday of Advent ~ 7th December

'Prepare the Way of the Lord' (Matthew 3:1-12)

Our focus for this second week of Advent this year is 'Preparing with Peace'.

Welcome to **Week 2** of Advent. How are you doing? Did you manage to create a sacred space for yourself last week? If not, don't worry, you can still do it with some candles, symbols, evergreens, the colour purple for Advent! How is your piece of string/ribbon holding up?

This week's **task** is to **make space and time each day** to be quiet and reflective. **Gift** yourself some time! Five minutes in the morning or evening? While out walking? You decide what's best for you. In the Gospel this week we are encouraged to be prepared ~ John the Baptist's voice still echoes through the noise: *prepare the way*. Real peace begins when we make room for God. This week, prepare inwardly - clear space in your heart as you might tidy a cluttered room. Forgive someone. Let go of a worry. Offer a small act of reconciliation. Take five minutes each evening to review your day - what brought peace, what disturbed it, and how God was present in both? Be aware of God who walks with you always.

Prayer suggestions for the week

3. **Breathing exercise:** When you come to prayer - *Be still*. Take three deep slow breaths, hold... then let go. Then, focus on your normal breathing. This is the breath of life. Thank God for this gift of breath and life. Repeat the following: *In you, oh Lord, I rest my soul*, for as long as you are comfortable and be aware of the God whose love envelops you.
4. Read **Sunday's Gospel**, two or three times (**Matthew 3:1-12**). Come back to it a few times during the week

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. "I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."



- Sit with the text, and pick a word or phrase that stands out to you. In the stillness repeat that word or phrase in your mind. Why is that word or phrase relevant to you at this moment? What feelings does it evoke?
- Is there something that puzzles or disturbs you? Why? -**What is it calling you to do?**
- John the Baptist came to bear witness to Jesus. Who have been the people who have borne witness to us of the good news of the gospel that God loves us—a friend, a parent, a teacher, etc.? **To whom have we borne that witness?**
- John was "the voice of one crying out in the wilderness"—announcing confidently to those in the wilderness that they must not despair because God's grace may come to them at any moment. Have you had the experience of being in the wilderness, feeling lost? From whom did you hear a voice that gave you hope? **Have you been able to give hope to other people when they were in the wilderness?**

Maybe as these weeks progress, keep a **Diary/Journal** of your significant thoughts, prayers, feelings & inspirations and come back to these. You'll find yourself encouraged as you see your expectation, relationship & trust in God increase.



Consider this

What if this Advent, we allow ourselves to imagine a life that is different? A life that recognises God at work in all aspects. How different would our life be? Advent peace isn't the absence of noise but the presence of God amid it. When you feel overwhelmed, pause and pray slowly: 'In You, O Lord, I rest my soul.' Then listen for the quiet beneath the noise - that's where peace begins.

We might squirm at that and stammer all of the excuses we know: *Not now. I'm really busy. I've presents to buy and bills to pay. I'm not a very holy person. God's good for Sundays. God's only for the older generation. I'm going to get to a serious relationship with God as soon as my kids are gone... when I don't have to care for my parents; when I get the promotion at work; when we move to a new house; when there is more time...* There are dozens of ways we can evade the issue, but still, that longing is there for something more. Maybe that longing in the most hidden corners of our hearts is something holy, a desire for a deeper relationship with God.

Advent is a time to recognise both our holy longing and the healing love God has for us, despite the many barriers we put up between ourselves and God. We can start simply and just rest at the edge of our beds in the mornings, open our hands and whisper, "**Come, Lord Jesus!**" If we let ourselves feel what is in our hearts, we know they are filled with love. We can carry that experience with us as we go through even the busiest of our days. We may not know exactly where to begin or how to fill this longing in our hearts but it is simple. God waits with infinite love and with arms outstretched to meet us. The words we say don't matter. We can speak as if God is a friend we have not seen in a long time, but one with whom we can sit in a comfortable silence. If we took time to recognise God at work in our lives, what difference would our Faith then make to our everyday lives; How better our world would be? How much more would we feel, understand and be agents of real peace. *(Adapted from Creighton University's Online Ministries Praying Advent)*

Suggestions for the Week

At the end of each day, before you close your eyes, give a few minutes of loving attention, making yourself present to the Lord as someone who was graced by him during the day.



- **Thank** God for everything that was good for you, for your family and for your community.
- **Invoke** the power of the Holy Spirit, asking for light to discern how to make the right choices, how to decide wisely.
- **Be Aware** of the situations, circumstances, and events of your day in which you allowed God to act, to be present in your life. Review your actions that were signs of God's presence and love for others.
- **Ask for forgiveness** for wrong choices made, opportunities missed and for chances lost.
- **Entrust yourself**, the day gone and the coming day to the Lord and experience the joy and hope that come from putting all these matters into God's hands.

Dress for Advent: *Why not make a conscious choice to wear Advent colours at least one day this week?*



Thought for the week

Peace is so much needed in our world today; it is so much envied and sought after. Am I a peaceful person? Does peace begin with me? How do we lift the burden for others and bring hope to victims of conflict? Peace with others begins as we understand that God has called us to be peacemakers in our world. Is there somewhere in your own world where you can be a peacemaker this Christmas? Is there an invitation that needs to be extended to smooth over a fractured family relationship? Is there an apology to be made or a silence to be broken that has stood as a barrier for too long? Don't miss the blessing God promises in your life as you respond to his call to be a peacemaker in your own circle.

We can help bring peace to our world one heart at a time. Beginning with our own!

Prayer for the Week

Bless our hearts with the peace that comes in meeting You in Your Word every day and deflecting to Your voice over ours. May we tune into Your volume over our own and hear You above all other noise. Help us to remain focused on You, and Your love, and extend that love to all who witness our lives. Amen

Third Sunday of Advent ~12th December 'What Should We Do?' (Matthew 11:2-11)

Our focus our 3rd week of Advent this year is 'Waiting in Hope'.

You are now on **Week 3** of Advent. How did you get on last week? Did you wear your Advent colours? Did you notice anyone else wearing theirs? If not maybe try to do so this week and remember today is *Gaudete Sunday* so the colour this week is **Rose** for JOY! This Sunday of Joy reminds us that hope is active. Hope looks for light even when life feels heavy. If your heart feels tired, let this week's invitation be simple: notice joy where it hides - in laughter, in music, in shared coffee, in quiet courage.

How is your piece of string/ribbon holding up? Have you been writing thoughts, inspirations in your journal?

This week's task is to Notice – Take 10 minutes at the end of the day to see the signs of Hope all around you.

Each night, write down three moments of hope or kindness you witnessed or received today. In prayer ask God to bring to mind experiences that day, whether large or small, through which you have sensed genuine love, genuine care, genuine compassion, genuine hope. People might come into your memory, or places where you felt welcomed and restored, or particular events. Write down a word or sentence in your journal/notepad that captures that time, without going into details; as the next memory comes write something down about that and so on, so that you end up with a long list of moments or memories. Most of these points of connection will be ordinary, everyday things. When you've finished spend some time looking at your completed list. Reflect with God about the shape love takes: how love practically expresses itself and brings Hope. **Be open to be surprised!**



Prayer suggestions for the week

1. **Breathing exercise:** As you have been doing for the past two weeks, focusing on your breathing: take three deep slow breaths, then focus on your normal breathing. Do this for as long as you can. Build up the time each day to reach 5 mins (or more). This is the breath of life. Thank God for this gift. Repeat the following slowly:
"Be with me Lord, clothe me in your presence", for as long as you are comfortable and be aware of God who is with you and loves you always.
2. Read **Sunday's Gospel**, two or three times (**Matthew 11:2-11**). Read it a few times – come back to it again during the week parts can be tough!! **Is there a word, phrase, idea that strikes you? In the stillness repeat that word or phrase in your mind. Stay with this for a few moments.**

When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: "'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

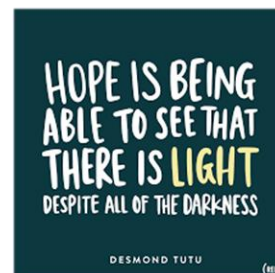


- What then should we do? ... What then should you do? **What is the Gospel asking of you?**
- What is holding back, blocking God's love for you? **What do you need to let go off?**
- Is there a fire burning within you? **How can you ignite this flame in others?**
- What change does this passage call you to do today? **What is the Good News you proclaim?**

Consider this

Sometimes life just hurts. I wish there were a more delicate way to say that. I wish there were a clever way to explain this fact away – maybe some whimsical cliché that we can all have a chuckle over? But I've got nothing. The truth is there are days when the burdens of life can weigh on us so heavy that we're not sure how we'll lift it, much less carry it around. Around the middle of December it can be easy to be swept up in the holly, jolly tide of Christmas cheer. If life has dealt you a good hand, it's a quite enjoyable time of the year. But if life has dealt you a bad hand, if you have lost a love one during the year then that tide of Christmas joy can feel like it's drowning you. What do we do with this? For starters, we can call to mind that Advent is a season for people who are in darkness waiting for the sort of light that will save them. You can't commercialize or turn a profit on this sort of thing. Living in darkness and waiting for a great light isn't very easy to market either. Maybe that's why it's so easy to forget (or avoid) this reality when we're rushing through the season's numerous to-do lists. Author Taylor Caldwell writes, "I am not alone at all, I thought. I was never alone at all, and that, of course, is the message of Christmas. We are never alone. Not when the night is darkest, the wind coldest, the world seemingly most indifferent, for this is still the time God chooses." This season is still the time God chooses to bring the world's greatest hope into the very darkness of life that can seemingly weigh us down every day. There is, indeed, hope for those who live in darkness. May we stand in solidarity with those for whom darkness is an all too familiar reality this season. May we experience and share this light together. And maybe, just maybe if we look through the chaos, the pain and the struggle we see our true hope, the child in a manger.

Hope doesn't deny the darkness; it declares that the light is still coming. If you're struggling this season, remember: God chose to come as light into a world that was already dark. You don't have to manufacture joy - just stay open to grace.



Suggestions for the week:

- **Hope is an action more than a feeling.** We remember the works of God in the past and so anticipate the work of God in the future, leading us to act purposefully in the present. Ask God to show you an action you can take as an expression of hope, whether this in relation to your own circumstances, or someone you care for or the community or the church you are part of. Do at least one *Act of Random Kindness* each day!
- Sometimes it helps to physically act out the walk of faith, a walk of hope. - Fix a point in the near distance that symbolically represents a place you sense God is inviting you to move to in faith. Now walk slowly to that point noting the fears, hopes and energy that arise as you do so. At your arrival point, talk with God about what it feels like to be there. Now retrace your steps to where you began. This time turn away from your destination and walk slowly in the other direction. What do you feel as you do so? Talk with God about this. Now repeat your journey back to your faith destination for a second time. What do you feel? What do you learn from this exercise?



Thought for the week

Plug into your School/Parish/Faith Community. We draw strength and hope from our community of faith! Every parish/faith community & School has Advent and Christmas liturgies and celebrations (*like the daily Mass liturgies, Services, Worship, Advent Reconciliation services, etc*), and they also have other seasonal activities.

Engaging in them as a family (*if possible*) will help you keep Christ in the centre, and it will also help you to help others to keep Christ in the centre. Never underestimate the support you give to others. You are building up your community of faith by participating in these liturgies and activities!! Why not see how you can get more involved?

Find out if there is a group or ministry you could bring your gifts to. Take the risk!

Prayer for the Week

*Lord, I put my trust in you, I rest my hope in you. My joy comes from you alone.
Keep my mind focused on you, my heart filled with you & outstretched to you, Amen*

*The reflections and suggestions on these pages are meant as a guide. You can do some of them or all of them.
Take your time, go at your own pace – you have a full week.*

Fourth Sunday of Advent ~ 21st December

'The Child Within Me Leapt for Joy' (Matthew 1:18-24)



Our theme for our last week of Advent is 'Waiting with Joy'.

You are now on our final few days of Advent; Christmas is nearly here. Well done! How did you find get on last week? Did you notice the many shapes God's love for you takes throughout each day? Any surprises? Did you find out more about the events, ministries in your parish, community or school? Hopefully your piece of string/ribbon is not too ragged by now, remember to say a small prayer of thanks each time you hold it. Are you remembering your prayer companion? How is your prayer space looking; what have you added to it over the weeks?

This week's task is to complete a simple Action each day –

We draw close to Christmas now - joy is no longer distant; it's being born among us. Like Mary and Joseph, joy grows in quiet trust and daily faithfulness. This week, your task is simple: do one small act of kindness or joy each day - for someone else, for creation, or for yourself.. Maybe do something special for your prayer companion?

Suggestions could be - *Light a candle and say a prayer for a loved one far away; to take a special treat to a neighbour; Make a card for a loved one and send it in the mail; Recycle some toys to share with others; Read a Christmas book to your child; Make a small stocking and drop it off on someone's door as a surprise;*

*Write a Thank You letter to someone; Take food to a local food bank; Write a list of **10 things** you are thankful for this year and share it with a loved one...* If you find it easier make a list of things that you would like to do in your journal, put it in your prayer space and tick them off and bring them to prayer as you do them. Bring that joy to others. *Be creative!*

Listen with your heart Visit a sick friend
Clean a neighbor's walk **Offer a hug**
Give an unexpected gift Make a new friend
Pick up litter **Say "hello"** **Open a door**
Plant a tree Help carry a load **Share a snack**
Cheer up a friend **Thank a teacher or mentor**
Read to a young child **Lend a hand** Do a kind act daily
Leave a thank you note Offer your seat
Cycle courteously **BE TOLERANT** Let another go first
Bake cookies to share **Give a compliment**
Help a student make friends **Donate your gently used items**
Give a balloon away **Lend a pencil** Respect others

Prayer suggestions for the week

1. **Breathing exercise:** Hopefully by this stage you have worked up to 5 minutes or maybe 10 minutes with the breathing exercise. Continue this week to take some time each day to be still.
 - Take three deep slow breaths and then focus on your normal breathing. This is the breath of life. Thank God for this gift. When you breathe in you are bringing energy and life to your body. When you breathe out, you are giving a gift to the world, feeding the plants and the trees, playing your part in nature. Stay with these thoughts as you breathe.
 - Repeat "*Come, Lord Jesus, my Joy rests in you*", for as long as you are comfortable and be aware of God who is with you and loves you always.
2. Read **Sunday's Gospel**, two or three times (**Matthew 1:18-24**). It's one we know very well. Read it a few times – come back to it again over the next few days. ***Is there something about the story that maybe you never noticed before? Is there a word, phrase, idea that strikes you? In the stillness repeat that word or phrase in your mind. Stay with this for a few moments and let its meaning sink into your heart.***

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife.



Think of things you are thankful for...

- Is there something that puzzles or disturbs you about the gospel reading? Why? -**What does it ask of you?**
- Everything is possible to God. **Where have you seen God at work in your own life?**
- Not all decisions are black and white, there are many where we will be misunderstood no matter what choice we make. Think of one such decision. **What guided you? Where did you place your trust?**

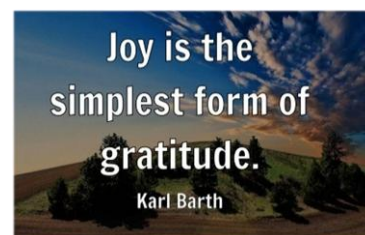
Consider this

It was once said "there has been only one Christmas. The rest are anniversaries."

It's a time for keeping the memory of God's greatest gift alive in our hearts... In recent years many people have expressed concern that Christmas has drifted far from its religious roots. We have also witnessed an attack on religious displays in public places while watching the corporate world hijack the Christmas celebration as an excuse to sell their latest wares. Massive traffic jams, packed shopping centres, and lines stretching around the block have become hallmarks of today's Christmas activities. Ad campaigns for holiday sales can lead to pandemonium as shoppers are knocked down and trampled in their frantic efforts to buy the latest gadget. However, I suggest this is a good time to reflect upon the distinction between what we want and what we need or what we give instead of what we get.

The true value of a gift isn't necessarily measured by its price tag. In fact, some of the most precious gifts cost nothing at all... and can be life changing. Many people simply need to be loved, listened to, or appreciated. Some gifts, such as taking time to listen to someone who is hurting emotionally or giving a word of encouragement, can make a tremendous difference in a person's life and bring joy to the giver. This holiday season consider how our community would be affected if everyone looked for opportunities to give someone a life-changing gift for Christmas. How would your life change if YOU realised and accepted the transformative gift you have been freely given? As Helen Steiner Rice wrote, "Bless us Lord, this Christmas, with quietness of mind; teach us to be patient and always to be kind." May we receive this most precious of gifts ourselves and be that gift for others! May we allow the fullness of this most precious gift transform our lives, relationships, community and world!

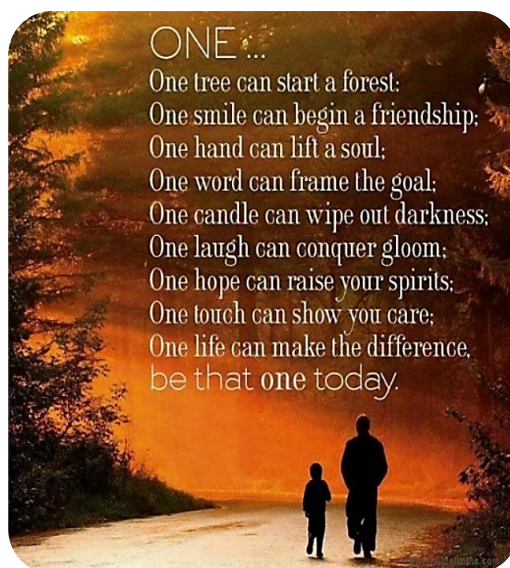
Joy isn't loud or flashy - it's deep and contagious. It grows when shared. Take time to remember that the greatest gift isn't under a tree but within your own heart: God-with-us. Receive this joy and pass it on!!



A Reflection - The Power of One

Mary – her yes, our yes

One song can spark a moment,
One flower can wake the dream.
One tree can start a forest,
One bird can herald spring.
One smile begins a friendship,
One handclasp lifts a soul.
One star can guide a ship at sea,
One word can frame the goal.
One vote can change a nation,



One sunbeam lights a room.
One candle wipes out darkness,
One laugh will conquer gloom.
One step must start each journey,
One word must start each prayer.
One hope will raise our spirits,
One touch can show you care.
One voice can speak with wisdom,
One heart can know what's true,
One life can make the difference,
You see, it's up to you.

A few thoughts going forward – Hopefully you have found this simple Advent resource helpful, enjoyable and useful I hope it gave you time to pause. After the busyness of Christmas is over **Gift** yourself a New Year's resolution to continue or carry on at least one aspect of this retreat. It may be the 10 mins reflecting on each day and bringing it to prayer, carrying a reminder in your pocket, spending time with scripture, continuing to write in and come back to your prayer journal, getting involved in your parish, school, community, writing and sending a gratitude note... These small practices become pathways to ongoing transformation.

Be aware of God who is with you and loves you always!

Prayer for the next few Days

**Lord, this Christmas, let my heart be touched by your gift of love
and my life be your witness.**

With joy and confidence, I pray, 'Come Lord Jesus Come.' Amen



Merry Christmas



Something Different for Advent 2025



The light of the
Christmas star to you.
The warmth of home
and hearth to you.
The cheer and goodwill
of friends to you.
The hope of childlike
heart to you.
The joy of a thousand
angels to you.
The love of the Son and
God's peace to you.
— Irish Blessing



Something Different for Advent 2025 – 'A DIY retreat for real life Faith'

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