

It is not true that our hopes for liberation of humankind, of justice, of human dignity of peace are not meant for this earth and for this history—

This is true: The hour comes, and it is now, that the true worshippers shall worship God in spirit and in truth.

So let us enter Advent in hope, even hope against hope. Let us see visions of love and peace and justice. Let us affirm with humility, with joy, with faith, with courage: Jesus Christ—the life of the world.

Allan Boesak, from *Walking on Thorns*

EXAMEN

Did I offer peace today?

Did I bring a smile to someone's face?

Did I say words of healing?

Did I let go of my anger and resentment?

Did I forgive?

Did I love?

These are the real questions.

I must trust that the little bit of love that I sow now will bear many fruits, here in this world and the life to come.

Henri Nouwen

PRAYER

Lord...Transform the hearts of those who fuel hatred, silence the din of weapons that generate death, extinguish the violence that brews in the heart of humanity, and inspire projects for peace in the actions of those who govern nations.

Pope Francis, 7 October, 2024



CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, fill my heart with your goodness.

Dwell in me and let me know your peace.

Enter into the dark places of my life

that I may overflow with your love

and reflect your forgiveness,

bringing forth the fruits of love, hope, joy and peace.

Henri Nouwen, from *The Little Book of Advent*



LET US PRAY ADVENT

WEEK 2: PEACE

INTRODUCTION

The theme of our second session is Peace.

We hope that you will find this a welcoming oasis of peace for us to pray, to imagine, to rest and to dream as we contemplate the meaning of peace as God wants us to understand it, how we experience peace in our own lives and how we can be the bearers of peace to others as we engage with the wider world.

PEACE ON EARTH

The angels proclaimed “Peace on Earth” when the Baby Jesus was born. Today we wonder as we listen to the news, is peace possible? We all need two kinds of peace in our lives. We need inner peace, but we also need peace with others.

If you are finding inner peace elusive amid the busyness of Advent and the seemingly endless news reports of conflict and war across the world, this session is an opportunity to step back and consider how God invites us to be peacemakers here and now, confident in the knowledge that he is walking with us every step of the way.

INNER PEACE

Inner peace begins with a relationship with God, and it continues as we focus on His strength and trust Him to guide us at all times. We can choose to trust God; choose to put our hands in His and draw from His patience and wisdom as we take each step. He will guide us through the maze of life if we ask Him. Choosing to trust God with those blind corners in our lives will take us down the road to inner peace. Choosing not to trust Him will take us down the road to stress and worry. Inner peace is there for the choosing.

The prophet Isaiah (26:3) says, “You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is focused on You because he trusts in You”. Let’s personalise that: “God will keep me in perfect peace as my mind focuses on Him and trusts Him.” Inner peace hinges on our trust in God.

PEACE WITH OTHERS

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.

Matthew 5:9

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.

BE STILL

Lord, teach me to be still,
When I am angry, troubled, tempted.
Lord, teach me to be still,
In disappointment, pain, sorrow.
As I enter into your presence
in stillness and silence
may I hear your voice
and respond to your call.

Henri Nouwen

READING AND REFLECTION

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. Not as the world gives peace do I give it to you. Do not be troubled; do not be afraid (John 14:27).

The peace of Jesus does not mean the absence of warfare, or freedom from psychological tension, or a sentimental feeling of well-being. The peace of Jesus is an inner reality that cannot be disturbed by any of the sufferings in this world. It arises from the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, giving us the strength to trust that God is with us, loves us unconditionally and endures everything with us.

I never tire of repeating that war is a defeat, that weapons do not build the future but destroy it, that violence never brings peace. History proves this, yet years and years of conflict seem to have taught us nothing

Just as a seed, apparently pressed down by the earth that covers it, is always able to find its way upwards, towards the light, in order to bear fruit and give life, do not let yourselves be engulfed by the darkness that surrounds you. Planted in your sacred lands, become sprouts of hope, because the light of faith leads you to testify to love amid words of hatred, to encounter amid growing confrontation, to unity amid increasing hostility.

Pope Francis, letter to Catholics of the Middle East, 7 October 2024

Advent invites new hope for a world in despair, light for a world in darkness, and peace for a world at war. It calls us to prepare anew for the coming of the God of peace and God's reign of peace on earth. May this poem, and this holy season, give us new hope and inspire us to show ourselves to be "children of God" seeking to make peace in the workplace, in the community, in our homes, and in the world.

Heather Kiernan

ADVENT CREDO

It is not true that creation and the human family are doomed to destruction and loss—

This is true: For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life;

It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction—

This is true: I have come that they may have life, and that abundantly.

It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war and destruction rule forever—

This is true: Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, his name shall be called wonderful counsellor, mighty God, the Everlasting, the Prince of peace.

It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil who seek to rule the world—

This is true: To me is given authority in heaven and on earth, and lo I am with you, even until the end of the world.

It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the Church before we can be peacemakers—

This is true: I will pour out my spirit on all flesh and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions and your old men shall have dreams.