

PRAY AND REFLECT: ADVENT



WEEK TWO
PEACE



*The fruit of silence is prayer. The fruit of prayer is faith.
The fruit of faith is love. The fruit of love is service.
The fruit of service is peace.*

Saint Teresa of Calcutta



*He is like a shepherd feeding his flock,
gathering lambs in his arms.*

Isaiah 40:10

INTRODUCTION

In the first book of Kings God speaks to the prophet Elijah but His voice is not to be found in the power of the hurricane, in the roar of the earthquake or in the heat of the fire. Instead, God reveals Himself in the gentle whisper of the breeze. It is here, in the quiet, that God speaks to Elijah in a small, still voice. Elijah meets God in the silence and this is where we too can encounter Him in moments of quiet contemplation.

Anne O'Connor

MAKING PEACE

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 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

pause for silent prayer and reflection

THE BIRTH OF A CHILD

Advent is a season of waiting. The leaves have all fallen; the weather is cold, the trees are barren.

It is a good time to remember the Holy Spirit moving across the waters at the moment of creation, being breathed into Adam's inert clay, coming upon Mary in Nazareth, entering our own lives in conception and baptism.

We are all called to conceive God's Child in this world; this is our vocation as Christians.

May we all find strength in the memories of those who have come before us, and in the companionship of those with us, offering us, in this time of waiting, the taste of liberation made possible in the birth of a child.

Sabra McKenzie-Hamilton *Catholic Worker*, December 1996

pause for silent prayer and reflection

PRAYER *(we say together)*

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.

Fr Henri Nouwen from *The Little Book of Advent*

PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH *(we say together)*

Dear Father, pour out your Holy Spirit on our parish
that we may grow ever closer to you,
showing your loving kindness to others.
May our parish be a place of welcome for all,
offering companionship to the lonely,
shelter to the stranger
and comfort to the broken.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Saviour.
Amen.

Anne O'Connor

BLESSING *(we say together)*

Hold your light out to the world
and let people of all nations
feel the warmth of God's love
as they encounter the Word made Flesh
through Christ our Lord.

Follow, where the Spirit of Hope leads us
Listen, as the Child of Peace cries for us
Rejoice, as the Love of God embraces us
and let us go with Hope, Peace and Love in our hearts
and the blessing of Creator, Child and Spirit for ever within us.

Richard Becher

MUSIC: *I arise today* Shaun Davey, sung by Lisa Kelly

MAY WE BE YOUR PEACE

We ask, Lord, for your peace,
that we may *be* your peace
in a world that so urgently needs it.

In this season of Advent,
as we remember your birth among us,
lead us to our own self-emptying,
that we may be filled with your Spirit
and reach out to our fellow travellers
with the gentle hands of Jesus,
bringing his loving acceptance to our every encounter.

Help us remember, God,
that no act is too small to matter.
Every smile, every prayer,
every practical offer of aid,
every major leap of faith –
all count, all are used,
all add power to the groundswell
of goodness and justice and mercy
that is your Spirit moving in the world today.

Fill us with your peace, O God.
Peace be in our hands.
Peace be in our voices.
Peace be in our action.
Peace be in our stillness.

As one flame, shared candle to candle,
can fill a sanctuary with light,
so be it with your peace,
from one heart to another,
one interaction at a time,
until no place in the world
is without your light.
Amen.



Lindy Thompson

MUSIC: *Be thou my vision* Audrey Assad

A TIME OF EXPECTATION, HOPE AND QUIET

For the past several years, I've found myself returning to Rowan Williams's poem aptly titled "Advent Calendar." This poem is so evocative of the Advent season — with its sense of waiting, a time of expectation and a time of hope for the coming of Christ as a child. It is also a time of quiet.

As late autumn passes into mid-winter and the sun sinks to its lowest point in the sky, the days are short and cold. The earth seems somehow alien, and yet still beautiful in its shrunken, misty, deadened form.

Heather Kiernan

POEM: ADVENT CALENDAR

He will come like last leaf's fall.
One night when the November wind
has flayed the trees to the bone, and earth
wakes choking on the mould,
the soft shroud's folding.

He will come like frost.
One morning when the shrinking earth
opens on mist, to find itself
arrested in the net
of alien, sword-set beauty.

He will come like dark.
One evening when the bursting red
December sun draws up the sheet
and penny-masks its eye to yield
the star-snowed fields of sky.

He will come, will come,
will come like crying in the night,
like blood, like breaking,
as the earth writhes to toss him free.
He will come like child.

Rowan Williams

pause for silent prayer and reflection

A READING FROM PSALM 84

I will hear what the Lord God has to say;
a voice that speaks of peace, peace for his people.

His help is near for those who fear him
and his glory will dwell in our land.

Mercy and faithfulness have met,
justice and peace have embraced.

Faithfulness shall spring from the earth
and justice look down from heaven.

pause for silent prayer and reflection

MUSIC: A Gaelic Blessing John Rutter

Deep peace of the running wave to you
Deep peace of the flowing air to you
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
Deep peace of the shining stars to you
Deep peace of the gentle night to you
Moon and stars pour their healing light on you
Deep peace of Christ the light of the world to you

A LITANY FOR ADVENT

Reader: Holy God, this is earth's quiet season, the season of waiting.

All: We rest in the shelter of your love.

R: This is the season of darkness, when we seek stars to guide us.

All: We trust in the light of your promise.

R: This is the season of solitude, when we listen for our own heart's rhythm.

All: We find warmth in the signs of your presence.

R: This is our season to make room, a time to make ready.

All: For we shall join in the angels' chorus.

R: Peace on earth, goodwill to all.

All: Peace on earth, goodwill to all.

Keri Wehlander *Shine on, Star of Bethlehem*, an anthology

pause for silent prayer and reflection

FINDING WHOLENESS AND PEACE

The human heart continues to dream of a state of wholeness,
a place where everything comes together,
where loss will be made good,
where blindness will transform into vision,
where damage will be made whole,
where the clenched question will open in the house of surprise,
where the travails of a life's journey will enjoy a homecoming.

John O'Donohue from *Benedictus: A Book of Blessings*

pause for silent prayer and reflection

BLESSING IN THE CHAOS

To all that is chaotic
in you,
let there come silence.

Let there be
a calming
of the clamouring,
a stilling
of the voices that
have laid their claim
on you,
that have made their
home in you,

that go with you
even to the
holy places
but will not
let you rest,
will not let you
hear your life
with wholeness
or feel the grace
that fashioned you.

Let what distracts you
cease.
Let what divides you
cease.
Let there come an end
to what diminishes
and demeans,
and let depart
all that keeps you
in its cage.

Let there be
an opening
into the quiet
that lies beneath
the chaos,
where you find
the peace
you did not think
possible
and see what shimmers
within the storm.

Jan Richardson from *The Cure for Sorrow* www.janrichardson.com

pause for silent prayer and reflection