



Self-Guided Advent Retreat

Reflection, Anticipation & Hope

Prepare Ye the Way....

Advent is the time of year when Catholics focus not only on the historical coming of Christ in His Nativity, but also on the future, His Second Coming. The liturgical season is marked by subdued joy that is transformed into joyful anticipation as we near Christmas.

This personal self-guided retreat is designed around the theme of preparation and waiting. It has at its core the Gospel passages for each Sunday of Advent. May it be a source of reflection, anticipation and hope as we await the coming of Our Lord, Jesus Christ!

Getting started....

As with most aspects of our lives, we're more likely to commit to something that we have put on the calendar. Do your best to keep sacred the time you set aside for this retreat.

- * Set aside 30 to 60 minutes each week, devoted to reading and reflecting.
- * Find a quiet, comfortable place to take your retreat—at home, outside, or even at the church if it is open for prayer.
- * You may want to have a journal with you to write down your thoughts.
- * Settle yourself and prepare to be with Jesus.

Commit....

- * To offering this retreat for a certain charity or special intention.
- * To an additional 10 minutes of silent prayer each day of Advent.
- * To reading and reflecting on the Scripture passage each week.
- * To praying the O' Antiphons each evening from December 17 through December 23.
- * To sharing your new insights with a family member each week of Advent.
- * To giving the gift of yourself in some special way this Christmas.



First Sunday of Advent

Advent Prayer....



To You I lift up my soul, O my God. In You, I have trusted; let me not be put to shame. Nor let my enemies exult over me; and let none who hope in You be put to shame. Amen.

Entrance Antiphon First Sunday of Advent

Scripture Reading & Reflection....

Mark 13:33-37

Jesus said to His disciples: "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. Watch, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May He not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"

Am I alert and watchful or do I tend to be inattentive?

What am I waiting for? Am I waiting passively or actively? Am I prepared to take this time to grow in my faith, hope and love?

Why did Jesus enter the world in such a humble way?

In what ways will the second coming of Christ be different from the first one?

Custom ~ The Advent Wreath....

Place the wreath in a place of prominence in the house. Gather around it for a special evening blessing and prayer, and light the first purple candle. *Make the Sign of the Cross.*

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R/. Who made heaven and earth.

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 Savior of every nation. Lord God, let Your blessing come upon us as we light 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.

R/. Amen. *Make the Sign of the Cross.*

You may continue with this prayer each evening of the first week of Advent.

Second Sunday of Advent

Advent Prayer....



O people of Sion, behold, the Lord will come to save the nations,
and the Lord will make the glory of His voice heard in the joy of
your heart. Amen.

Entrance Antiphon Second Sunday of Advent

Scripture Reading & Reflection....

Mark 1:1-8

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of His sandals. I have baptized you with water; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

What does it mean to be a messenger of God?

How will I prepare the way for Jesus to enter my heart this Christmas?

What does this passage teach me about my relationship with others in my family, the parish or the community at large?

Custom ~ The Advent Wreath....

Gather around the wreath and light the first and second purple candles. *Make the Sign of the Cross.*

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R/. Who made heaven and earth.

Leader: Heavenly Father, set our hearts ablaze to follow in the steps of John the Baptist. May we bring light and love to all we meet, that the darkness of sin and fear may be overcome. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R/. Amen. *Make the Sign of the Cross.*

You may continue with this prayer each evening of the second week of Advent.

Third Sunday of Advent ~ Gaudete Sunday

Advent Prayer....



Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near. Amen.

Entrance Antiphon Third Sunday of Advent

Scripture Reading & Reflection....

John 1:6-8, 19-28

A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. And this is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, "Who are you?" He admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Christ." So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?" He said: "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'make straight the way of the Lord,'" as Isaiah the prophet said." Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

What does it mean to make straight the way of the Lord?

John the Baptist was humble. How do I define humility? Have I practiced humility today? When?

John the Baptist was the voice; Jesus is the Word. How have I opened my heart today to hear His word?

Custom ~ The Advent Wreath....

Gather around the wreath. Light the first two purple candles and the pink candle. *Make the Sign of the Cross.*

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R/. Who made heaven and earth.

Leader: As we draw near to You Lord God, keep us aware of Your presence in all we do. Come with power to enlighten us by Your grace that we may live in joy and peace all our days. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R/. Amen. *Make the Sign of the Cross.*

You may continue with this prayer during the third week of Advent.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Advent Prayer....



Drop down dew from above, you heavens, and let the clouds rain down the Just One; let the earth be opened and bring forth a Savior. Amen.

Entrance Antiphon Fourth Sunday of Advent

Scripture Reading & Reflection....

Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

How does Mary relate to the Word of God during the visit of the angel?

Do I say "yes" to God in the small daily situations of my life?

When it is difficult to say "yes" do I ask God for the grace to respond to His call?

Custom ~ The Advent Wreath....

Gather around the wreath. Light the all of the candles. *Make the Sign of the Cross.*

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R/. Who made heaven and earth.

Leader: Lord Jesus, Infant of hope, make our souls leap at the sound of Your name. Help us to see You in the burdens we carry, that we might trust in the promise of Your life. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R/. Amen. *Make the Sign of the Cross.*

You may continue with this prayer each evening of the fourth week of Advent.

The O' Antiphons....



These ancient antiphons are prayed

each evening from December 17th through December 23rd. They precede the Magnificat canticle of Mary during Evening Prayer.

Each antiphon addresses our Lord by a different title or name given to Him in Old Testament prophecies, imploring Him to come and save his people. *Make the Sign of the Cross, recite the antiphon and the canticle.*

December 17

O Wisdom who came forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end and ordering all things mightily and sweetly: come, and teach us the way of prudence. Amen.

December 18

O Lord and Ruler of the house of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the flame of the burning bush and gave him the law on Sinai: come, and redeem us with outstretched arms. Amen.

December 19

O Root of Jesse, which stands as an ensign of the people, at Whom the kings shall shut their mouths, Whom the Gentiles shall seek: come to deliver us, do not tarry. Amen.

December 20

O Key of David and Sceptre of the House of Israel, Who opens and no man shuts, Who shuts and no man opens: come, and bring forth the captive from his prison, he who sits in darkness and in the shadow of death. Amen.

December 21

O Dawn of the East, brightness of light eternal, and Sun of Justice: come, and enlighten those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. Amen.

December 22

O King of the Gentiles and their desired One, the Cornerstone that makes both one: come, and deliver man, whom You formed out of the dust of the earth. Amen.

December 23

O Emmanuel, God with us, our King and Lawgiver, the expected of the nations and their Savior: come, to save us, O Lord our God. Amen.

The Magnificat....

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for He has looked with favor on His lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is His Name.

He has mercy on those who fear Him in every generation. He has shown the strength of His arm, He has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of His servant Israel for He has remembered His promise of mercy, the promise He made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.