

# Something Different for Advent 2018

First Sunday of Advent ~ 2<sup>nd</sup> December

Welcome to the **first week** of our Advent retreat. Each week these reflection sheets 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' each day.



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

Advent is marked by a spirit of expectation, of anticipation, of preparation, of longing.

**We begin** our Advent retreat 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 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 the retreat 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 – you have a full week.*

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## 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: "*Come, Lord Jesus, Come*", for as long as you are comfortable and be aware of God who is with you always.
2. Read **Sunday's Gospel**, two or three times (**LK 21:25-28, 34-36**). Come back to it a few times during the week.

*Jesus said to his disciples: "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand. "Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth. Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man"*

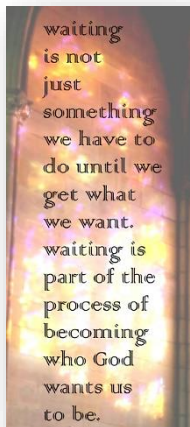


- Sit with the text, and pick a word or phrase that stands out to you. In the stillness repeat that word or phrase in your mind.
- Why is that word or phrase relevant to you at this moment? What feelings does it evoke?
- Is there something that puzzles or disturbs you? Why? -What is it calling you to 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. Waiting feels like time wasted and who can afford to waste time these days? But maybe a little waiting is a good thing. Here are five things we can get from waiting that are worth reflecting on.

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 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!!

(Adpt from Mark Cortez)

## Prayer for the week

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