

Something Different for Advent 2018

Second Sunday of Advent ~ 9th December

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight



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

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

Welcome to **Week 2** of our Advent Retreat. 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. It is only when you stand back from the daily busy-ness that you can see things more clearly. **Gift** yourself some time! In the Gospel this week we are encouraged to be prepared ~ So take time to prepare yourself for the busy day ahead or maybe take time at night to prepare yourself for a restful sleep giving thanks for the day. Be aware of God who walks with you always. Decide what is best for you – ten minutes in the morning or evening? While out walking? If you have time to do that at least one day this week, great!

Prayer suggestions for the week

1. **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.
2. Read **Sunday's Gospel**, two or three times (**Luke 3:1-6**). *Come back to it a few times during the week*

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah:

A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

- 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?
- Who is preparing the way of the Lord in our community, our world today? How are you preparing?
- Who are the voices crying out in our communities, in our church, in our world today?
- What hope does this passage awaken in you today? How is it calling you to prepare?

*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.*

*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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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? If love was the first principle we lived by how would our community, our world be different? The prophet always points to a better time. Maybe that longing in the most hidden corners of our hearts is something holy, a desire for a deeper relationship with God.

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.

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.

Dear God ♥
I've tried my best, but
if today I lose my hope
Please tell me
that Your plans are better
than my dreams

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

Thoughts for the week

While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart. — Francis of Assisi

If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner. — Nelson Mandela

When the power of love overcomes the love of power the world will know peace. — Jimi Hendrix

Prayer for the Week

*I believe in God, but do I believe in God-in-me? I believe in God in heaven, but do I believe in God-on-earth? I believe in God out there, but do I believe in God-with-us?
Lord, be born in my heart. Come alive in me this Christmas! Amen*