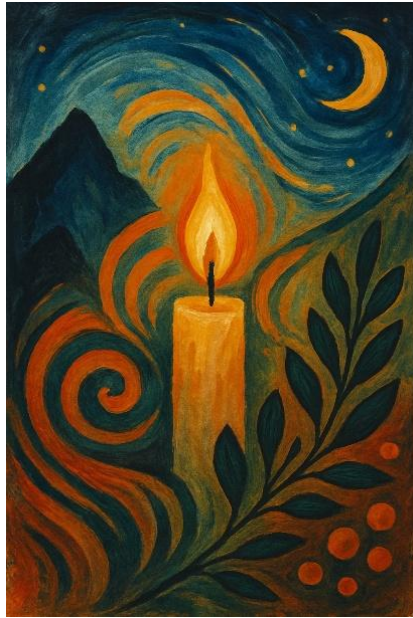


PRAY AND REFLECT ADVENT 2026



HOPE, PEACE, JOY, LOVE

INTRODUCTION

Advent is a season for stillness, for quiet, for discernment. It is a season of active waiting, straining forward, listening, attentive and finely tuned. It's good to keep a quiet space, a sacred time, an untrammelled sanctuary away from the pressures, to be still and hear again one's deepest yearnings for a saviour.

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REFLECTION

The people we find in the scriptures of Advent help us see that keeping vigil is not about constant alertness, nor is Advent about exhausting ourselves in looking for Christ or “doing” the season correctly. Instead, Advent asks us to be open to how Christ comes to us, not only in our ardent seeking but also in our resting, our sleeping, our dreaming, our creating, our playing – in whatever practices and habits enable a sacred gap in our attention: a space that leaves room for Christ to enter in.

©Jan Richardson from *Illuminating the Threshold*
A Women's Christmas Retreat 2015

REFLECTION

In our busy, stressful world, we have to consciously seek out silence and stillness. God speaks in all sorts of ways – through scripture, through nature, through other people.

However, unless we slow down and listen, we miss his promptings and his voice. Only then can we truly appreciate the value of the journey, as well as the destination; the value of slowing down, looking and listening; learning from the rhythms of nature; from the formation of community along the way, and from times of stillness and rest.

So often we rush through life at breakneck speed, never pausing to reflect and be still. It is only when we slow down and look that we really see. By slowing down, and being more present to each moment, all sorts of lessons are learned. For some people, this might involve the healing of painful memories. For others, it could be time to discern the next stage in life. For many, it is a chance to really get away and listen to God. For me, it is an invitation to a whole way of being – one that recognises that God is not ‘out there’ to be sought, but already ‘in here’ to be found.

©Annie O'Connor *The Camino: Finding Stillness and Presence*, 2019

PRAYER

Be still and know.

Be still and look.

Abandon yourself to God in longing love, simply,
holding on to nothing but God.

God's silence is the silence of love.

It is good to wait in silence for God's coming.

Source unknown

REFLECTION

Advent begins in the dark, not empty, just quiet.

A season of waiting and getting ready without rushing the ending.

Like a bulb under the soil, hidden
from view, held in cold ground,
doing the work of becoming long
before anything shows. No colour yet.
No proof. Just trust and time and
patience learned the hard way.

Peace settles.

Not everything sorted,

just enough calm to keep us steady.

A reminder that God's already at work
even when we can't see it.



Hope small but stubborn, stretching in the dark, refusing to believe that
waiting is wasted or that God's forgotten us.

Joy waits its turn.

Not surface happiness but deep-rooted joy, growing quietly
as we prepare room for Christ to come close again.

Advent doesn't hurry us. It teaches us to wait well. To trust the slow
work of God. To believe that what's planted now will bloom in time.
All of it given and grown in love.

©Eleanor Hamilton *Whispers of Grace*, Advent 2025

WEEK 1: HOPE

SCRIPTURE

*Restore us, O Lord God of hosts!
Let your face shine, that we may be saved!*

Psalm 79:19

REFLECTION

Advent begins with a whisper that God has always been a God of promise. Long before we knew what we were waiting for, God was already calling us forward.

Promise isn't a tidy word. It's wild with movement. It asks us to trust the road even when we can't see the finish. It asks us to lift our feet when the ground feels uncertain.

God speaks into ordinary lives and says there's more than this. More than fear. More than the empty places. More than the stories we think are finished.

Advent is the reminder that God's promise keeps unfolding. It still rises in the dark. It still calls us to step out. It still holds us when we're unsure.

We carry the promise from then
into this moment now.
We carry hope like a lantern.

We keep listening for the God
who always speaks future into present
and brings blessing into the waiting.

So, we light another small flame
and remember
God's promise hasn't dimmed.
Not then.
Not now.
Not ever.



WEEK 2: PEACE

SCRIPTURE

In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

2 Peter 3:13-14

REFLECTION

Peace arrives quietly in a world that's anything but.

A green shoot pushing through old wood, a small warm breath in a cold waiting room, a whisper in the wilderness that won't go away.

Prepare the way, the voice says, not with trumpets or tidy hearts but with honesty and the courage to clear a bit of space. Clear a corner of your mind. Clear a path through your cluttered days. Clear a tiny place inside you where hope can take root. Because peace rarely starts big. It begins like a sprout that shouldn't have survived. It begins like a hand offered when the easier choice was turning away. It begins in the wondering about what could grow from what feels cut down.

Some days the world feels stretched thin, like the sky might crack under the weight of everything. Headlines crowd our minds, worry sits too close, and we wonder if calm is still possible. Into this unsettled place Advent breathes. A small steady breath that reaches us before we even know we need it.

Peace slips in quiet as morning frost,
soft as a hand on a tired shoulder.
Not pretending the trouble isn't real, just
reminding us it doesn't have the final word.

Peace gathers us gently, picking up the
pieces we've scattered across the week.

It settles our heartbeat, loosens our clenched thoughts,
and lets us rest for a moment longer in the presence of God.

This Advent we listen for it. We welcome it. We let it shape us until
peace grows deep roots right where we stand.



WEEK 3: JOY

SCRIPTURE

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation.

For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.

Isaiah 61: 10a-11



REFLECTION

Joy doesn't arrive wrapped in ease. It doesn't wait for everything to settle down or fall into place. Joy shows up in ordinary places with ordinary people and somehow makes them extra-ordinary. A kitchen table. A borrowed room. A young woman trusting God with more questions than answers. Mary's song rises not from comfort but from courage. From believing that God sees what the world overlooks. From knowing that mercy has a way of turning everything upside down.

This joy isn't loud happiness. It's not pretending things are fine. It's deeper than that. Stronger. Rooted in the faithfulness of God who keeps promises even when the road ahead isn't clear.

Joy grows where God draws near. Where the lowly are lifted. Where love interrupts the ordinary and fills it with purpose. Where life is changed, not by power but by grace. This Advent we make space for joy that doesn't depend on circumstances. Joy that holds steady in the waiting. Joy that trusts the Lord to keep working quietly through ordinary lives to bring extraordinary hope into the world.

Advent reminds us that good news is meant to be told, sung, lived. Joy grows when it's shared, when glad tidings are trusted, when love is allowed to travel from heart to heart. This is the news worth carrying. This is the joy worth spreading.

WEEK 4: LOVE

SCRIPTURE

*The heavens praise your wonders, Lord,
your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones.*

Psalm 88:5

REFLECTION

Advent finds us in locked places.

Some with bars and keys, some with memories
that won't loosen their grip, some with grief
that keeps the door shut, some with loneliness
that echoes too loud.

There are cells you can see and cells you carry
inside. Fear. Regret. Absence. Names we don't
say out loud but feel every day.

Into all of that, Christ comes.

Not standing at a distance. Not asking for explanations. But he comes
close to the ones the world forgets, to the ones who feel stuck in a story
they can't rewrite.

Advent reminds us that no door is too heavy for love. No life too far
gone for hope. No night too long for peace to find its way in.

We can't fix everything. We can't undo the past. But we can and must
carry Christ's love and light into places that ache. A visit. A prayer.
A letter. A listening ear. A kindness that says you're still seen.

And where love goes, hope follows. Peace settles. Joy flickers even in the
dark. This is Advent work. Waiting with those who wait. Standing beside
those who feel trapped. Trusting that God is already at work unlocking
hearts and making room for new beginnings.

Christ is coming. Even here. Especially here.



Weekly reflections ©Eleanor Hamilton *Whispers of Grace*, Advent 2025

REFLECTION

Loving is never just about opening our heart. It is about being willing to have our heart become larger as we make room for people and stories and experiences we never imagined holding.

It is about being willing to have our heart become deeper as we move beyond the surface layers of our assumptions, prejudices, and habits in order to truly see and receive what—and who—is before us.

It is about being willing to have our heart continually shattered and remade as we take in not only the brokenness of the world but also the beauty of it, the astounding wonder that will not allow us to remain the same.

©Jan Richardson *Blessing That Meets You in Love*,
The Painted Prayerbook, 2016

PRAYER

God, teach us how to love as You love.
Make us generous in spirit and gentle in heart.
Fill our community with compassion.
May Your love guide us on and shape our living.

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BLESSING

May you sink the roots of your soul
deep and deeper still into the love of God,
who encompasses and encircles you
without beginning, without end.

© Jan Richardson
The Map you make yourself,
A Women's Christmas Retreat 2013



Leaflet compiled by Anne O'Connor 2026

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