

Resources for Advent 2012



Kildare and Leighlin Faith Development Services

Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin

Advent 2012

Resources for Advent in this Year of Faith....

We pray

- Advent Family Prayer Card page 3

We celebrate

- Lighting of Advent Wreath page 4
- Gifts of Advent page 5
- Gathering with Hope – a Prayer Service for this time page 7
- Reconciliation Service – with Guided Meditation page 8

We believe

- Bulletin Inserts on the meaning of Advent & the Nativity page 13

We live

- St Vincent de Paul page 15
- Trócaire Gifts of Change page 15

We Pray - Gift of Advent Card

The Purpose of the Card

In this Year of Faith we want to give people of the diocese a very simple way of engaging with the spirit of the Advent Season.

On the First Sunday of Advent parishioners will be invited to take home an Advent Card from the diocese. This card contains a greeting from Mons Brendan Byrne as well as a short prayer for each week of Advent for use by families. It also contains a reminder of the meaning of “Advent” and a quote from Pope Benedict.

The card is both a gift and an invitation to families to do something very manageable for Advent, i.e. to take a moment to pray together.

The Prayer of the Card

The short prayer for each week of Advent is a prayer of blessing for family members, seeking in turn the Advent gifts of hope, peace, joy & love for heart, mind and home as we prepare for the coming of Christ. These Advent gifts are taken up in a Sunday suggestion for Advent later in these resources.

Making the most of the Advent Card

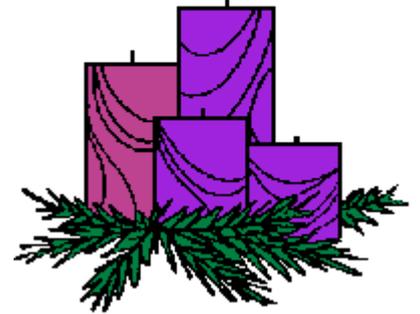
- 1) The most important thing is **getting the card into the hands of parishioners** on the first weekend of Advent (December 1 & 2). To this end, parishes are encouraged to enlist the help of people ahead of time for each of the weekend Masses. These people will be responsible for making sure that cards are handed to people as they leave the Church – with a smile!
- 2) Some parishes will choose to distribute the card to those who attend Mass; others will extend an invitation to parishioners to take a card and **bring it to someone not at Mass** as a gift (akin to what was done during the Reach Out Campaign in the past). An envelope will be provided for this latter option.
- 3) Once the card has been distributed hopefully it won't be forgotten about; the prayer for each week can be **prayed at the Weekend Masses** as a way of reminding people to continue to use the prayer in their homes for the season and as a way of linking with the Gift of Advent boxes that may be in the Church.

Distributing the Advent Card

People who you might enlist to distribute the cards include members of the parish liturgy group and/or parish pastoral council, regular ushers/greeters, John Paul II students...

We Celebrate – Sunday Advent Liturgy Suggestions

Advent Wreath



First Sunday of Advent: Lighting of Wreath...

Before Mass begins or after the opening procession and greeting have a **parishioner** introduce the lighting of the Advent Wreath, perhaps giving a very brief explanation of the meaning of the wreath (see bulletin insert notes) and then inviting four people to carry a candle from four corners of the Church and place them in the wreath.

The priest celebrant can then bless the wreath and one of the people can light the first candle of the wreath.

Weekly Lighting of Advent Wreath

Before Mass begins, or following the opening procession and greeting, have a parishioner introduce the lighting of the wreath – reminding people that the candles of the wreath are marking our journey through Advent as we prepare to open our hearts to welcome Christ. A child and parent or single member of the parish are invited in the introduction to come forward to light the appropriate number of candles on the Advent Wreath.

Music Suggestion for Advent Wreath



As the candles are placed in week one and in the other weeks as person/people lighting the candles come forward instrumental music could be played, for example 'O Come, O come Emmanuel' (especially for week 3 & 4). When the candle has been lit the whole congregation can join in once more on the refrain, 'Rejoice, Rejoice Emmanuel...'

An alternative music suggestion might be music and the refrain from 'My Soul in Stillness Waits' - in the Gather Hymnal (especially suitable for week 1 & 2).

Unwrapping the Gifts of Advent:

A Suggestion for the Sundays of Advent



Hope

Peace

Joy

Love

For this Advent Sacred Space you will need:

- One small evergreen tree (possibly in a pot).
- Four boxes/shoeboxes wrapped with the Words Hope, Peace, Joy and Love in large font on them.
- Some material to place under and around the tree.

Liturgical Action:

Beginning the first week of Advent, during the Sunday Liturgy one of the gift boxes is placed beneath the evergreen tree. The gifts could be placed under the tree each week by different members of the congregation, eg. a family, a child, an older person, a young person, a single person or a married couple. The gifts could be placed beneath the tree at the beginning of Mass, during the homily or at any other suitable time.

The words on the boxes are our wishes for this time of year as the birth of Jesus draws near. We wish for Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love for each member of our faith community. The gifts as they increase in number also symbolise that we are moving closer to Christmas and are reminiscent of gifts that we ourselves will be giving and receiving this festive season.

The particular gift placed beneath the evergreen tree each week gives us a weekly focus in our preparations during Advent for Christmas. The word on each box could feed into the Sunday Liturgy. For example, the gift of Hope or a theme of Hope could be incorporated into the Homily, Prayer of the Faithful or Communion reflection.

Those who prepare the prayer of the faithful might choose to use a corresponding invitation to pray each week, such as 'We pray to the God of Hope' - Lord hear our prayer.

Linking with the Advent Card

The prayer on the Advent Card corresponds in turn to each of the four gifts above and so could be prayed when the box is put in its place, at the end of the homily or as a communion reflection.

Parishioner Engagement with the Gift Boxes

Parishioners might be invited to place their intentions/wishes for each of the four themes in either a slit in the gift box itself or another specially designed box for this purpose. (Have a table with slips of paper & pens ready for this purpose.)

Link with Christmas Eve Mass

As part of the Christmas Eve liturgy these gift boxes or one gift box containing all the intentions/wishes could be placed in the crib scene.

The above ideas can be varied and changed to suit your parish.

Gathering with Hope: A Prayer Service for this time

What is this prayer?

This is a prayer service of readings, reflections, prayers, light and song. Depending on local choices the prayer service should take around 30 mins.

Why this prayer?

As a diocese we are very conscious that across our communities people are faced with a multitude of stresses in their daily lives. Alongside financial hardship, many people in our midst continue to struggle with family breakdown, bereavement, addiction, illness and depression.

The Advent season stands before us as a season of hope, offering us the invitation to turn to God who is the source of our hope. As a parish we can join with one another in a shared moment of prayer for ourselves, for our families and for the people of our community.

Who will pray this prayer service?

This prayer can be celebrated in a local parish or as a pastoral area initiative, allowing for the sharing of resources. Parishes might invite local community and support groups to attend and advertise this prayer service.

When will this service take place?

This prayer service is being offered for use in the first week of Advent. Ideally it will take place on **Tuesday, 4th December** - in this way the prayer of an individual parish can be in solidarity with other parishes across the diocese who gather on this night.

Preparing this prayer service

A prayer ritual is being provided by the diocese (largely following the previously offered Liturgy of Hope, with some adjustments). ***This prayer service will be emailed to all parishes and liturgy groups by November 16th***. A local preparation group is then free to make any changes to the text that is felt appropriate to the place of celebration.

Hospitality & further support

Parishes might consider offering a cup of tea after the service to those who come. This could be an opportunity to share information handouts/flyers for local support groups etc.

Sacrament of Reconciliation Service With Guided Meditation*

Quiet, meditative music is playing as people enter the Church.

*Lights are dim, with the light of the Advent wreath already lit as people gather.
Night lights may be lit around the base of the wreath for use later
(see meditation below).*

In a spirit of quiet prayer and reflection the Presider, as well as the ministers of reconciliation, are already seated throughout the church for a number of minutes before the liturgy begins.

As each person enters the church they are invited to take a holly leaf from a basket.

Introduction:

When it is time to begin a member of the community introduces the liturgy in the following words:

Good evening everyone and welcome to this celebration of God's love and forgiveness.

We gather here tonight to acknowledge the areas of our lives that are hurting and in need of healing and forgiveness. We are wounded human beings on a spiritual journey. There is so much darkness around us in society, in our Church and in our personal lives. We need to acknowledge the pain and hurt in all of those areas.

Tonight, at this service of reconciliation and healing, we come as a community to acknowledge the failures of the past, to offer healing, hope and reconciliation, to find a new and better future. For, as scripture tells us, 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light'. On this night we acknowledge the darkness but more importantly we welcome the light.

This time of year nature around us expresses the struggle between darkness and the yearning for the light as we mark the **Winter Solstice**. Darkness loses its firm grip to give way to increasing light.

Every one of us has our dark corners. We are all in some way flawed and broken. Tonight we remember that in the depths of darkness there is hope.

The birth of Christ marks the birth of One who is the greatest and most inspiring Light – Christ our Light. The invitation now is to invite Jesus, our Light, into our own struggles and darkness; Jesus who comes to us with the healing power of God's forgiving, compassionate love.

**The introduction and guided meditation found in this resource were written by Sr. Eileen Deegan and are reproduced here with her kind permission.*

Opening procession:

The presider stands and those leading the music invite the people to stand and to join in singing the chosen opening hymn:

Music Suggestions:

“O Come O Come Emmanuel”

“Come O Long expected Jesus”

“Be Still and know that I am God” *or another suitable communal hymn*

Greeting:

Opening Prayer:

Let us pray...

Lord our God,

On this night we invite you into our hearts

As we prepare for the coming of our Saviour.

Come and enlighten us.

Help us to recognise our sin.

Helps us to know and trust in your mercy and healing.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Invitation to listen to the Word of God

We open our hearts to hear the Word which will now be proclaimed, encouraging us to reach towards the Light, to walk in the Light, to be that Light.

Liturgy of the Word

A Reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians

You yourselves used to be in the darkness once but now you have become the Lord's people; you are in the light.

So you must live like people who belong to the light; for it is the light that brings a rich harvest of every kind of goodness, righteousness and truth.

Try to learn what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the worthless things that people do, things that belong to the darkness.

Instead bring them out into the light. When all things are brought out into the light their true nature is revealed. **THE WORD OF THE LORD**

Silence

Psalm 25 “To you O Lord I lift my soul” Or Psalm 85 – sung text Gather 48: “Lord, let us see your kindness”

silence

Alleluia

Gospel: Luke 3:1-6

Homily:

Rite of Reconciliation:

Examination of Conscience:

Background music is quietly played during the guided meditation.

Guided meditation:

In the tranquility of this guided reflection tonight we have the opportunity to meet with Jesus and allow to surface what we need to bring to Him for healing and forgiveness. Hold the holly leaf in your hand.

I invite you to make yourself comfortable, to enter into the peace and quiet of this sacred place...try to let go of the busyness of the day and enter into the now, the present moment. If you wish, close your eyes and focus on yourself and on how you're feeling at this time; tune into your breathing and be still....Enter into the interior room of your heart and rest in the stillness.

Hear God speak to you, "Be still and know I am your God".

Be aware of the leaf you are holding...feel its sharpness and its smoothness...see in this leaf a symbol of your life as you come to God in this quiet time.

Invite Jesus into this time of quiet and ask Him to journey with you as you reflect on your life. Let the smooth part of the leaf be for you a symbol of all that is good in your life, all that brings you peace and hope. Tell Jesus what is hopeful and life-giving for you...maybe special relationships, family, friendship, good health, the ways in which you try to live honestly and generously, your sense of gratitude, your faith....

Now focus your attention on the sharp parts of the leaf, the rough edges...let these symbolise for you the areas of your life that are not so life-giving...see in these sharp areas something of your life that is troubled, not at ease, in need of healing, in need of forgiveness. Maybe it's a hurt from the past, a difficult relationship.....your failure to forgive yourself or someone else...your anger at someone; maybe it's your harsh criticism and lack of compassion for someone. Invite Jesus into these difficult, dark, sharp areas of your life. He knows, He understands. He wants to help make the rough places in your life smooth.

Imagine Jesus now placing His hands on your head and He is saying to you: Receive my gift of compassion and forgiveness to night. Open wide the door of your heart to my forgiving love.....

Be aware again of the leaf you're holding—this leaf now is a symbol of your life with God; you in your light and darkness; you as you are with your strengths and weaknesses held lovingly and tenderly in God's hands.

Be aware again of the community of people gathered here with you to night.

During our time of confession, when you are ready, and if you choose to go to confession to one of the priests, take the holly leaf with you and as you return to your place, drop it into the basket and receive a light reminding yourself that Christ is your Light and that you wish to always walk in that Light....' **May you continue to let your light shine'**, is said by person giving out the light to each person.

(2 people needed to hold baskets and two to present lights)

General confession of sins:

The presider invites the assembly to kneel and to pray together, I confess to Almighty God...

The Lord's Prayer:

Presider: Assured of God's mercy and love, we stand and join in prayer to God the Father...Our Father...

Individual Confession and absolution:

Presider: I invite my brother priests to take their places.

As you come forward to confess individually and to receive absolution I invite you again to bring your holly leaf and on your way back to your place to drop it into the basket and receive a light.

Later, when we come to the final part of our celebration together, may the growing light of the candles serve as a sign of our willingness to welcome the light of the Christ child into our hearts this Christmas.

(During this time music ministers can lead the assembly in reflective music – both instrumental and sung, for example. Taize Music – “Wait for the Lord”; “To you O Lord My soul in stillness waits”; “O Comfort my people” For you O Lord my soul in stillness waits ...)

A Prayer/Litany:

This may be said by alternating groups (if the prayer is printed on leaflet)

We pray for the gift of hope that we may be able to meet the challenges each day brings.
R. *May we be bearers of hope in the lives of those whom we are in contact with each day.*

We pray for the gift of peace that we may be in harmony with each other, accepting differences as gift.

R. *May we be peacemakers, knowing that peace begins with me.*

We pray for the gift of joy that we may always delight in the beauty and goodness of each human being and in the mystery of God's love for all.

R. May we be carriers of joy in our families, workplaces and communities

We pray for the gift of love that our lives will be lived in a deep appreciation for the wonder and dignity of every person.

R. May we be loving and supportive people in all our dealings with others.

Sign of Peace:

Presider: We have received God's love and forgiveness. In this same spirit, may we reach out to one another with a sign of peace.

Closing Prayer:

Presider: Lord our God,
On the first day of creation,
You made the light that scatters all darkness.
Let Christ, the light of lights, hidden from all eternity,
shine at last on your people.
Fill our lives with hope, peace, joy and love
as we go out to meet your Son with open and welcoming hearts.
We ask in the name of the one whose day draws near,
whose coming is certain,
our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Blessing: And may Almighty God bless you...

Dismissal:

Presider: The Lord has forgiven you. Go in peace. THANKS BE TO GOD.

Going Forth: *A hymn, for example "O Come, O Come Emmanuel", or instrumental music may accompany the people as they leave.*

During the closing procession the baskets of holly leaves are held aloft and carried out in procession.

Link with Christmas liturgies:

These same baskets might be carried in during a Christmas Eve liturgy and scattered around the crib scene in the Church.

We Believe - Some Bulletin Inserts for the Weeks of Advent

The meaning of Advent

The word 'Advent' is from the Latin '*Adventus*,' meaning 'coming.' Advent marks the beginning of a new Church year and lasts from the fourth Sunday before Christmas, until the celebration of the Nativity of Our Lord. Advent is a period of preparation that directs our hearts and minds to the time when Christ will come again and to the remembrance and celebration of the first coming of Christ to us at Christmas.

The meaning of the Advent Wreath

The advent wreath has a rich meaning. The circle of the wreath, with no beginning or end, symbolises the eternity of God. The evergreen reminds us of the everlasting life we have in Christ while any pine cones or pods in the wreath represent new life and resurrection. The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent. Purple is traditionally a colour of penance and prayer while the rose pink candle that is lit on the Third Sunday marks our joy as we move ever closer to Christmas.

“If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. Christ takes nothing away and gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life.”
(Pope Benedict XVI)

Advent is a waiting time,

- we await the celebration of the birth of Jesus.
- we await Christ's second coming,
- but God waits for us too.

God lives today, and so...

Our first challenge is to bring Jesus to life in our own living, to become aware of his presence.

the presence of the Spirit working within us, prompting us, sustaining us, working through us, waiting for us.

Since the coming of Christ goes on forever – he is always he who is to come in the world and in the Church – there is always an Advent going on.

(Jean Danielou)

No one can celebrate a genuine Christmas without being truly poor. The self-sufficient, the proud, those who, because they have everything, look down on others, those who have no need even of God – for them there will be no Christmas. Only the poor, the hungry, those who need someone to come on their behalf, will have that someone. That someone is God, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Without poverty of Spirit there can be no abundance of God.

(Oscar Romero)

We are the people of Advent...

for Advent is now and not just back then. Therefore we can see all the characters of Advent that was 'then' in our Advent which is 'now'. Where in our lives is John the Baptist, provoking us to become more aware of new things happening in our lives? Where is Zachariah in our lives, not immediately open to what is so new, so hard to understand? Where is Elizabeth, so ready, through the wisdom of living, to appreciate the coming of the Lord? Where is Joseph, so gracious when all was so strange? And where is Mary in us, trusting in the providence given to her, welcoming the word in her heart? For, where we find Mary in ourselves, there we find Christ being born in our souls.

Are you ready? Just take one moment.

It's almost Christmas Eve. Are you tired? It's been a long journey to the Bethlehem barn. Are you ready for Christmas? Gifts wrapped, tree decorated, crib in place, food bought. But are *you* ready? Are you filled with wonder at this God of ours who loves us, who forgives us, who wants us, who gives His very own Son to be our Saviour? Are you ready to sing Alleluia with the heavenly choir? Take a moment – take a moment to savour and welcome what all the preparations have been for: God is with us.

We Live

St. Vincent de Paul

We are keenly aware of the hardship that many, many families and people in our communities are facing. This year more than ever these people will rely on the work of St. Vincent de Paul.



In our parishes how can we make the Christmas collection for St. Vincent de Paul as successful as possible? How will it be advertised and promoted?

On the allocated Sunday when food is being collected for St. Vincent de Paul why not make it part of the collection at Mass – a reminder of the call to charity that this action gives us every week in the Liturgy. Before the gifts and bread are brought to the altar why not invite young people in the church to bring forward an item of food and place them in baskets in the sanctuary area.

Trócaire – Gifts of Change

Trócaire is the Irish Catholic Church's agency for overseas development. In recent years its global gift appeal has offered people an opportunity to give a gift that will richly impact the life of others. This gift in its new title reminds us of the power of giving.



This year why not remind parishioners of the value of giving such a gift to someone this Christmas. Find out more on www.trocaire.org

