

Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin

Waiting in Hope



Advent Scripture Sharing 2025



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PRAYER FOR JUBILEE 2025

Father in heaven,
may the faith you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of charity enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed hope
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us
into tireless cultivators
of the seeds of the Gospel.
May those seeds transform from within
both humanity and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth,
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever.

Amen.

Francis



The Jubilee Prayer might be a suitable closing
prayer for each Scripture Sharing meeting.

SUGGESTED METHOD

Thanks to all those who decide to use our Advent Booklets this year

We know that there are many well-established groups both in Kildare and Leighlin and outside who may wish to use these booklets... thanks for your faithfulness!!

We hope that this booklet may also be of use to people who wish to reflect on the Advent readings, but for different reasons cannot join a group.

Here are some guidelines to help those who are reflecting in groups:

- Wherever you gather, some focus might be very useful, such as a lighted candle or an icon. This can be very simple but serves to remind people that we gather in the presence of the God who wants to speak to us through his Word.
- Before you begin, it might be an idea to use a small Taize chant, for example “Prepare the Way of the Lord” or a well-known hymn, just to set the atmosphere.
- It would be good to pray the opening prayer together as a group.
- Take time at the reading of the Gospel passage. A long passage might be read by more than one person.
This is the most important part of the gathering.
Allow for some minutes of silence afterwards for people to reflect on the Gospel – perhaps focusing on a word or sentence that spoke to them in particular in the reading and sharing that with the group.
- Arrange with someone beforehand to read the Reflection. Again, after the reflection, please allow for some time of silence. This can be followed by a time of sharing in response to the reflection, but no-one should be put under pressure to say anything!
- The prayers given can be supplemented with prayers for the parish or community, or other needs that present themselves within the group.
- The “Final Thought” is meant to give a small idea for people to take away with them. It can be read out loud, or people can read it in their own time.
- The *Ceremony of Hope* is a short prayer service that might be used by a group who wish to meet in the days between the 4th Sunday of Advent and Christmas Day, or at another suitable time for the group. This can also be an occasion to share a cuppa, if this is not done during the other meeting times.

Thank you once again for your faithfulness to this reflection of the Gospels. We hope it brings you the joy and peace that comes to those who ‘hear God’s Word and keep it’!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to thank Fr Ciprian Matei, Curate of Portlaoise Parish, Sr Brenda Dolphin, Naas Parish, and Margarita Bedding, Newbridge Parish, for generously giving their time to contribute to our Advent Scripture booklet with such wonderful reflections and prayers. May these reflections and prayers inspire us all.



1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PRAYER

Advent is the meeting of Christ coming to us, and our journey in meeting him, recognizing the things of our lives that need to change so that we can acknowledge the presence of God in the things of beauty, love and integrity. Maranatha – Come, Lord Jesus.

With Mary we pray
Hail Mary ...

READING

People can take it in turns to read the Gospel, or else if someone is praying on his/her own, then s/he can read the Gospel several times. This should be followed by a time of reflective silence.

First Reading: Isaiah 2:1-5

Second Reading: Romans 13:11-14

Read the Text

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew 24:37-44

Jesus said to his disciples: *'As it was in Noah's day, so will it be when the Son of Man comes. For in those days before the Flood people were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, and they suspected nothing till the Flood came and swept all away. It will be like this when the Son of Man comes. Then of two men in the fields one is taken, one left; of two women at the millstone grinding, one is taken, one left. 'So, stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. You may be quite sure of this that if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his*

house. Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person takes a moment to reflect on the Gospel and to say a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

REFLECTION

As more of the darkness is being dispelled by Christmas lights, the quietness and muckiness of November is being replaced with the cheeriness and the joy of Christmas, it is evident that Advent is always a time of waiting, but for what? For so many different people, waiting during Advent can take on many forms and guises: children wait for presents (most of the time), elderly in the nursing homes wait to be visited once again by their families, parents can't wait for this madness and running around for the perfect present to be over, and I am sure many of my fellow priests can't wait for 26th of December, when the quietness returns in some form in all people's lives and therefore, ours.

Then Advent is like an endurance, a time to get past. It is passive waiting, like waiting for some event in the calendar to come, we enjoy it and then it passes; and if we look back on our lives to date, this may have been a common theme of Advent for us every year.

But this is not the Advent to which the Church calls us. It is not an event that happens to us, but something that we engage in, a journey that we take.

In the night that our Lord was born, only a handful of people were witnesses to what I think is the greatest miracle to have ever happened: God himself chose to be weak and meek like ourselves, sharing in our fragility so he could offer us a gift that we could never dream of: his very Self.

The shepherds and even the Magi did not fully comprehend what was happening but being vigilant and willing to walk the

journey they got to encounter the Holy Family: Mary, Joseph and Jesus, to encounter the gift of reconciliation and peace that God the Father was willing to offer to all the people of good will. The Gospel for the First Sunday of Advent, if we understand it properly, seeks to prepare us for the same encounter with Christ, by making us aware of two things: Firstly, it advises us not to let ourselves be distracted, like the people in the time of Noah; and we know especially in this time how easy it is to get distracted, to do something to fill the void, the silence, the emptiness. The celebration of Christmas will come and go, and we will reach December 26th with an overwhelming sense of relief that we have survived another one. Advent invites us to silence and stillness, because in that stillness we will understand how to be vigilant, be awake.

And that second point of the Gospel today: being vigilant. When the distractions are cleared away, we will have the possibility to be awake, vigilant for Christ who makes himself known in so many forms throughout Advent, and not only in the lonely people at home or in nursing homes, in the families struggling and their children, in so many people that are weak, meek and frail, and in need of love, to be alert to God in the things of God.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes silence

PRAYER

Response: Maranatha – Come, Lord Jesus.

For the Church, may we not be led astray by distractions as we walk this path of Advent that takes us to the birth of our Lord. We pray to the Lord.
Maranatha – Come, Lord Jesus.

As we light the first candle of the Advent wreath, that dispels darkness, we pray for the people suffering in silence and unseen. May the light of hope shine in their lives,

knowing that the Lord is always with them. We pray to the Lord.
Maranatha – Come, Lord Jesus.

As we run forth to meet Christ Jesus, may we be vigilant to see Him in all our brothers and sisters who are weak, meek and frail, and especially those who are ignored. We pray to the Lord.
Maranatha – Come, Lord Jesus.

We pray for peace to all people of good will, as Christ brings us reconciliation. May all who are in distress, or in conflict, find peace with their fellow man, peace with Christ, and peace with themselves. We pray to the Lord.
Maranatha – Come, Lord Jesus.

Our Father

FINAL THOUGHT

The first candle of the Advent wreath is also the candle of the prophets, the ones who foretold the coming of our Lord, but also for ourselves, we, who in Baptism, are prophets. We are invited to proclaim Merry Christmas and the coming of Christ, and not only Happy Holidays. That all people caught in noise, and all kinds of distractions, who are not vigilant enough, might have the grace to encounter Jesus Christ in their midst.





2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PRAYER

Our readings today focus our attention on the importance and the blessings of being open, loving, and tolerant in all our interactions with one another.

St Paul, in his letter to the Romans, reminds us that everything written in Scripture is for our instruction and encouragement, so that we may live in harmony, reconciled with each other. We pray: *Lord, we turn to you today, asking you to reach down and help us when we feel too weak to seek reconciliation. Give us your strength to help us break down the barriers to forgiveness that keep us apart. Help us to take to heart John the Baptist's clarion call to make way for your coming among us. Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus.*

With Mary we pray

Hail Mary ...

READING

People can take it in turns to read the Gospel, or else if someone is praying on his/her own, then s/he can read the Gospel several times. This should be followed by a time of reflective silence.

First Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10

Second Reading: Romans 15:4-9

Read the Text

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew 3:1-12

In due course John the Baptist appeared; he preached in the wilderness of Judaea and this was his message: *'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'* This was the man the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he said: A voice cries in the

wilderness:

Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.

This man John wore a garment made of camelhair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judaea and the whole of Jordan district made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan, they confessed their sins. But when he saw a number of Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, *'Brood of vipers, who warned you to fly from the retribution that is coming? But if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit, and do not presume to tell yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our Father,' because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones. Even now the axe is laid to the roots of the trees, so that any tree which fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire. I baptise you in water for repentance, but the one who follows me is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand; he will clear his threshing-floor and gather his wheat into the barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.'*

WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person takes a moment to reflect on the Gospel and to say a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

REFLECTION

The purpose of Advent is to prepare ourselves to welcome Jesus. Our readings today show us clearly that such preparation calls us to reach out and be reconciled with one another. St Paul, in his letter to the Romans, states this very directly: "Accept one another as Christ accepted you."

Isaiah, in the first reading, speaks of reconciliation and harmony among all God's creatures in a deeply symbolic way:

“The wolf lives with the lamb,
The panther lies down with the kid,
Calf and lion feed together,
With a little child to lead them.”

“They do no hurt, no harm, on all my holy mountain, for the country is filled with the knowledge of the Lord.”

Isaiah brings us back to the Garden of Eden, where all creatures are tame and no one has the least fear or suspicion. This abundance of innocent joy depends on the goodness of men and women. The prophet looks forward to a new paradise, where justice will defend the poor and the meek, and the wicked will be removed. Just as suspicion and mistrust entered human relationships through the sin of Adam and Eve, so the coming of Jesus, who redeems all humankind, will restore the entire earth to its pristine peace.

It is God who redeems, and so Isaiah awaits God’s initiative, the day when the Spirit of God will rest upon us. This redemption, we know, will come through Jesus. Through him, the same Spirit will be poured out on each of us: a Spirit of wisdom and understanding, inclining us to do what is according to God’s will; a Spirit of counsel and might, enabling us to act with conscience and basic goodness toward others; a Spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord, spreading the wonder of God’s judgment far and wide. There will be delight everywhere. Such spontaneous goodness within the human family might seem utterly impossible in what appears to be the arid desert of our times. Yet, even in the desert, there are oases, places where one suddenly encounters glorious signs of life in what seems only dry, baked earth. This Advent, we wait like the wilderness for the Spirit of the Lord to rest on us, so that the depth of life, rooted in innate goodness, wisdom, sound judgement, and integrity, may blossom. In this

transformation, the planet itself will no longer be abused through waste and pollution; wild creatures will learn to trust and live in harmony.

St Paul, in his letter to the Romans, speaks in a similar way, though less poetically. Reconciliation between feuding peoples, especially between Jew and Gentile, is his focus. How this may come about is, for him, a “profound mystery” (Romans 11:25). Yet he will settle for nothing less than a new human family, as he expresses earlier in the same letter to the Romans: “Creation groans and is in agony as it awaits the glorious freedom (and redemption) of the children of God.” (Romans 8:21–22)

We are called to begin this transformation of God’s people this Advent, making every effort to accept one another and to live in harmony, even with those who are different, hostile, or distant from us. If we refuse this journey of hope, then we must face the stern and uncompromising John the Baptist, “A voice crying in the wilderness,” summoning us to “prepare the way of the Lord.” He demands that we show signs of conversion, of genuine reform in our lives, warning us darkly: “The axe is laid to the roots of the trees, so that any tree that fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire.”

If we argue that those we reject cannot change or be reconciled, John replies: “God can raise children for Abraham from these stones,” meaning that nothing is impossible for God, the desert can, and will, blossom again.

This Advent, we dare to hope as we choose to follow the Lord’s invitation to conversion, to live in closer harmony with our neighbour, and to be reconciled.

We turn to Mary, Mother of Jesus and our mother, as we continue our pilgrimage of hope, sure that she walks with us, watches over us, and will invariably guide us on the path that leads to Jesus. In conclusion, with St Augustine, we thank her: “Because you are there forever, simply because you are Mary, simply because you exist, Mother of Jesus Christ, we thank you!”

*Allow for a period of five to ten minutes
silence*

PRAYER

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

For Pope Leo, as he continues to walk with us on the pilgrim path of hope, may he be strengthened and encouraged by the prayers of all the faithful as he leads the Church in following Jesus Christ, we pray:
Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For a deeper understanding of your ways, O God of Peace, that we may renounce whatever separates us from you and from our brothers and sisters, we pray:
Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

That nations torn apart by racial and ethnic prejudices, by class and religious differences, may, with your help, O God of Love, find a way to embrace true peace and justice, we pray:
Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

That families and communities divided by suspicion and old hurts may find their way to reconciliation and harmony, we pray:
Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For a spirit of openness to the prophets and poets among us who speak with special clarity, we pray:
Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

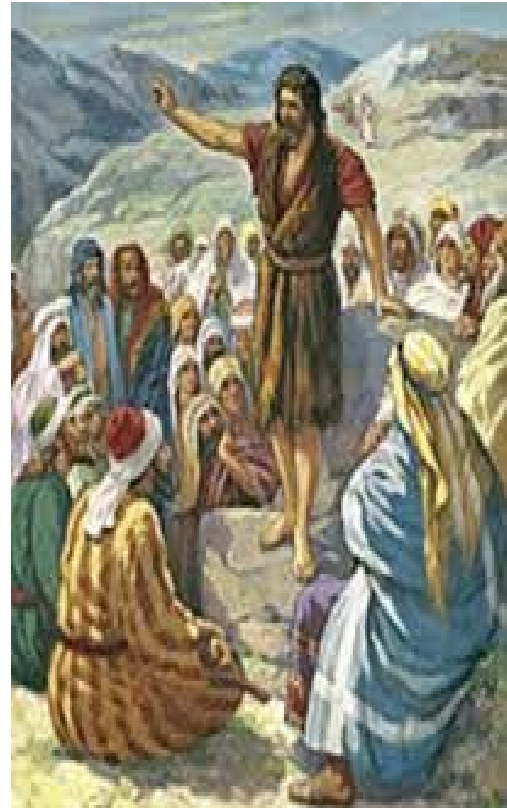
The communion of saints binds all believers together in the union of Christ's love. May all those who have gone before us in faith enjoy eternal life with you forever, we pray:
Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Our Father

FINAL THOUGHT

Following the advice given to us by John the Baptist, we recognise that the best way to prepare for the coming of Jesus into our hearts and our world this Advent is to look carefully at the patterns in our lives that close us in on ourselves. With the help of

God's ever-present grace, let us find simple ways, within the ordinary rhythm of daily life, to be conduits of God's merciful love wherever we are. In this way, we dare to be beacons of hope for our world.





3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PRAYER

Lord, on this advent day may we rejoice in you and recognise you as the One who brings justice to the oppressed, gives bread to the hungry, gives sight to the blind and who raises up those who are bowed down. Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus. Come and save us.

With Mary we pray

Hail Mary ...

READING

Again, ask a few people to read the Gospel text. Keep it slow! Take your time; remember that God wants to speak to you in these words.

Allow for a few minutes of silence.

First Reading: Isaiah 35:1-6.10

Second Reading: James 5:7-10

Read the Text

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew 11:2-11

John in his prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, *'Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?'* Jesus answered, *'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.'*

As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John: *'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man*

wearing fine clothes? Oh no, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way before you. I tell you solemnly, of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is.'

WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person takes a moment to reflect on the Gospel and to say a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

REFLECTION

John the Baptist asked his followers to ask Jesus is he the one who is to come? Jesus answered: Tell John what you see and hear: The blind see again, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear and the dead are raised to new life and the good news is proclaimed.

Have I witnessed any or all of these signs? Even more importantly have I contributed to any of those signs? Have I proclaimed the good news? In my home, my place of work, my community, my place of recreation and relaxation have I

proclaimed the good news? Are my daily actions proclaiming the good news? Do I give life to my partner, or have we grown immune to each other? Likewise, with my children, neighbours, friends and work colleagues, do I bring them life, or do I diminish their lives? Have I, by my words and actions, encouraged others to grow?

Have I inhibited them or stopped them from being their true selves because I didn't approve of the way they feel called to live their lives? Christ came that we may have life and have it to the full.

On this Gaudete Sunday can I rejoice because the Lord is alive all around me and in all his beautiful creation? I want to see you Lord more clearly in my daily life,

in my family, in my partner, in my children, in my colleagues, in my neighbours and in your beautiful cosmos.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes silence

PRAYER

Response: O Lord give us your love

Lord renew in us this Advent a sense of joy. Help us to rejoice knowing that no matter what may come our way, in life, that we are not alone and that you are always there for each one of us. Lord hear us we pray

O Lord give us your love

Lord give us the courage of John the Baptist so that we too will go out into the wilderness in our lives and search for you and proclaim your good news. Lord hear us we pray.

O Lord give us your love

Jesus help us to realise that like Isaiah 'The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me. He has sent me to bring good news.' May we bring good news to all we meet and encounter in our daily living. Lord hear us we pray

O Lord give us your love

Lord when we feel like giving up help us realise 'It is you Lord who keeps faith forever.' Lord hear us we pray

O Lord give us your love

FINAL THOUGHT

Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours'. (Teresa of Avila)





4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PRAYER

Loving God, at this Advent time we gather in your presence, trusting in your love and care for us. With Mary and Joseph, we prepare for the coming of your Son, God-with-us, into our midst. And so we pray:

Hail Mary ...

READING

Once again, ask a number of people to read the Gospel Passage. Remember that God wants to speak to you through these words, so spend a little time in silence to grasp these words and hold them.

First Reading: Isaiah 7:10-14

Second Reading: Romans 1:1-7

Read the Text

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew 1:18-24

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said, *'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his*

people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: *'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'.*

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.

WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person takes a moment to reflect on the Gospel and to say a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

REFLECTION

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" the opening words of a well-known Advent hymn form the prayer of Christians throughout the world as we draw ever closer to Christmas. During the past three weeks we have been pondering on the word of God; we have been encouraged to take stock of our lives, to repent, to rejoice in the promise of the coming of our Saviour, the promise echoed in the first reading today: 'the maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us.' Let us this week spend a little time with Mary and Joseph as their lives are changed forever.

We are told they are betrothed to be married. This is sometimes described as an engagement period, but it is more than that. Betrothal in first century Jewish culture was in fact the first part of the marriage contract. A breach of this contract was considered adultery. So, when Mary is found to be with child, if adultery is proven, the punishment could be death. Joseph decides to act discreetly in his plans to break the marriage contract, so as to protect Mary. Then God intervenes.

Joseph has a dream and, in that dream, he is told not to be afraid but to take Mary into his home. He is told that the child to

be born will be the fulfilment of the prophecy we hear in today's first reading. What must that have been like for Joseph? It required faith to take that brave step and to trust that all would be well. And Mary, who had her own visitation and promise, had the courage to act on God's word and to make her home with Joseph as she awaited the birth of her child. Surely, they are both models for us of what it means to be faithful servants of God.

This Advent Sunday we are reminded too of who and how our God is. He is the God who dwells within and among us, who in the person of Jesus comes to us as a vulnerable baby, born in a stable, not in a grand palace. He lived in our world and experienced all our human frailty unto death itself. But in his Resurrection he brings us new life and the hope that is central to our lives as Christians. Pope Francis prayed "For all of us, may the Jubilee (year) be an opportunity to be renewed in hope" And Pope Leo recently stated that, "to hope is not to know... But we have Jesus. We follow Jesus. And so, we hope for what we do not yet see."

The story of Advent is a story of waiting, looking forward in hope. Today people are waiting to get on a boat at the risk of their lives, hoping for something better; refugees leave home, travelling in hope to what they see as the promised land. Children are suffering due to war, famine and homelessness. Families huddle under canvas in the rain and cold, a homeless man is found dead on the street, a pensioner has to decide between having food to eat and staying warm.

We can see so much hardship in our world and that is why we are called to care for each other, as Mary and Joseph did in their little family. We are invited to be open to the stirring of God's spirit in our hearts, as Joseph did, and to act courageously in responding with love and generosity. Let us ask ourselves: how do I allow the words of scripture to speak to me, to prompt me to action during these last few days of Advent?

Do I believe in a God who is with us?

How can I be a sign of hope in today's world?

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes of silence

PRAYER

Response: Come, Lord Jesus.

Lord, you came among us as a tiny babe; help us to ensure the care and welfare of all children, before, during and after birth.

Come Lord Jesus.

Lord, you grew up in a loving family; may all families grow in their experience of love and dignity and know your loving presence with them.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Lord, you are the bringer of Hope; touch our hearts so that we too may be people who walk together in hope for a better future for all.

Come Lord Jesus.

Lord, be with your Church as we prepare to celebrate your birth.

May we journey together with love and generosity,

may we live with openness and respect for all

and may we be bearers of peace to all whom we meet.

Come Lord Jesus.

FINAL THOUGHT

We light our Advent candle

to recall Mary & Joseph

who saw their visions and dreamed their dreams,

who heard angelic announcements

and were obedient to your word and their calling,

giving a home and loving care to the child, Jesus.

May the light overcome the darkness.

CEREMONY OF HOPE

From Darkness into Light

Wrapped in December darkness we welcome the birth of the Son of God, the light of lights, the Prince of Peace.

SUGGESTED SETTING

Group in a circle. Cloth in the centre with an unlit large candle, and a small tea light for each member of the group.

LEADER

Let us take a few moments to be aware of our breathing, to be quiet and focus on the unlit large candle. *(Background music if possible)*

December 21st has the longest hours of darkness for those of us in the Northern Hemisphere. If you were in Newgrange, Co. Meath on that morning at 9am you would experience the rising sun and the sunlight peeping through the passage grave.

In pre-Christian times our ancestors were fearful that darkness and death would rule over the earth, so they circled sacred fires built on hilltops and in holy places to petition the gods and the goddesses to bring back the sun.

The Christian feast, December 25th, Christmas day, celebrates the word made flesh who came as a light in the darkness. Jesus the Light of our world has overcome darkness. This darkness comes in many forms and patterns. It can be a brief visitor or a long-term resident. The darkness holds a variety of emotions, some of which may not feel good *(Background music)* Let us reflect on the dark times in our lives during the past year *(pause)*. *(The large, unlit candle is passed around as each person takes time to reflect on the darkness in their own lives. Each person is then invited to share their dark times with one other person, or with the group if they so wish)*



VOICE 1

If we listen carefully in the darkness, we will hear a tiny voice whisper.

VOICE 2

I will go before you and level the mountains. I will give you treasures out of the darkness and riches that have been hidden away.

VOICE 3

In the dark days I do not wait until light dawns for I know not when it shall come. I go instead stumbling into the darkness, searching for a road, straining to see a way – darkness, it is a place of growth.

Tonight, we are celebrating and marking the emergence of light out of darkness, of hope out of despair. *(one person is invited by the leader to light the large candle. All present stretch out their hand towards the candle as the blessing is read)*

BLESSING

As we light this candle, we ask that God who is the fullness of light will protect each of us, our families and friends from that which we fear most.

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:1

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. On those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone.

(Silent Reflection)

PRAYER

May we all be encircled by the warmth of the light and love of God and the flame of our friendship with one another.

May we who are gathered here be protected from all harm and disease, all evil and wickedness, all fear and darkness. Let us celebrate the light breaking through the darkness with song.

'The Light of Christ has come into the World' or 'City of God' or any suitable hymn.

LEADER

Invites each one to light a tea light from the large candle

We focus on each person as s/he lights a candle, and we remember his/her family and friends. We are aware also of our connectedness with each other, with the world and the whole of creation.

Invites each one to share their hopes for this Christmas and for 2026.

PRAYER

May we find hope in the lights we have kindled, hope in one another and in all who form the web work of peace and justice that spans the world. May we call forth from one another the light and the love that is hidden in every heart.

HYMN

The Lord is my Light
My Light and Salvation
In Him I trust
In Him I trust
Or any hymn of choice.

FINAL BLESSING

Light of God to give us hope
Power of God to protect us
Light of God to give us joy
Peace of God to calm us
Light of God to give us faith
Grace of God to save us,
this night and ever more.
Amen



PRAYER FOR JUBILEE 2025

Father in heaven,
may the faith you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of charity enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed hope
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us
into tireless cultivators
of the seeds of the Gospel.
May those seeds transform from within
both humanity and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth,
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever.

Amen.

Franciscans



