

for Advent and the Christmas Season 2016–17

SACRED SPACE

SAMPLE

November 27, 2016, to January 8, 2017

from the website www.sacredspace.ie

Prayer from the Irish Jesuits



The logo consists of two overlapping circles, one slightly above and to the left of the other, with a vertical line passing through the center of both circles, creating a stylized figure or symbol.

garratt
PUBLISHING



Published in Australia by
Garratt Publishing
32 Glenvale Crescent
Mulgrave VIC 3170

www.garrattpublishing.com.au

Sacred Space for the Advent and Christmas Season 2016-2017
© 2016 by The Irish Province of the Society of Jesus

Scripture quotations are from *The New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition*, copyright © 1989, 1993 national Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Published under arrangement with Loyola Press, Chicago, IL

All rights reserved. Except as provided by Australian copyright law, no part of this publication may be reproduced in any manner without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Cover art credit: © iStock/Qweek

ISBN: 9781925073225 (paperback)

The author and publisher gratefully acknowledge the permission granted to reproduce the copyright material in this book. Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyright material.

The publisher apologises for any errors or omissions in the above list and would be grateful if notified of any corrections that should be incorporated in future reprints or editions of this book.

Contents

How to Use This Booklet	1
The First Week of Advent	2
The Second Week of Advent	13
The Third Week of Advent	24
The Fourth Week of Advent	37
The First Week of Christmas	51
The Second Week of Christmas/Epiphany	65
An Advent Retreat	79

SAMPLE

The Presence of God

Bless all who worship you, almighty God,
from the rising of the sun to its setting:
from your goodness enrich us,
by your love inspire us,
by your Spirit guide us,
by your power protect us,
in your mercy receive us,
now and always.

SAMPLE

How to Use This Booklet

During each week of Advent, begin by reading the “Something to think and pray about each day this week.” Then go through “The Presence of God,” “Freedom,” and “Consciousness” steps to help you prepare yourself to hear the Word of God speaking to you. In the next step, “The Word,” turn to the Scripture reading for each day of the week. Inspiration points are provided if you need them. Then return to the “Conversation” and “Conclusion” steps. Follow this process every day of Advent.

The Advent retreat at the back of this book follows a similar structure: an invitation to experience stillness, a Scripture passage and reflection points, and suggestions for prayer; you may find it useful to move back and forth between the daily reflections and the retreat.

The First Week of Advent
November 27—December 3, 2016

Something to think and pray about each day this week:

The Dynamic of Hope

A driving dynamic of Advent is hope. If we had nothing to hope for, there would be no point to this season. The original hope was for a child to be born who would bring justice and peace to the world and who would heal the rift between humanity and God. But that larger hope is filled with smaller ones—daily hopes that can shape us as people. Some hopes will shape our relationships. The Christ Child grew to be a man who embodied forgiveness and generosity. A life of hope sees the good in others, is patient with their shortcomings, and tenaciously envisions them at their best. Some hopes will shape our life work. The promised Messiah proclaimed God's realm of justice and mercy. No matter what jobs we do or work positions we hold, as hopeful people we maintain fairness and integrity as short-term and long-term goals. We make our work matter for the common good. Some hopes will shape our character. Jesus exemplified hope that cultivates true interior freedom. A hopeful person cannot continue in anxiety, grasping, need for

control, and habitual anger. How is hope visible in your life? Where has it faded?

—Vinita Hampton Wright, Loyola Press blogs

The Presence of God

Be still and know that I am God. Lord, may your spirit guide me to seek your loving presence more and more. For it is there I find rest and refreshment from this busy world.

Freedom

By God's grace I was born to live in freedom. Free to enjoy the pleasures He created for me. Dear Lord, grant that I may live as you intended, with complete confidence in your loving care.

Consciousness

In God's loving presence I unwind the past day, starting from now and looking back, moment by moment.

I gather in all the goodness and light, in gratitude. I attend to the shadows and what they say to me, seeking healing, courage, forgiveness.

The Word

The Word of God comes to us through the Scriptures. May the Holy Spirit enlighten my mind and heart to respond to the gospel teachings. (Please turn to the

Scriptures on the following pages. Inspiration points are there should you need them. When you are ready, return here to continue.)

Conversation

Jesus, you always welcomed little children when you walked on this earth. Teach me to have a childlike trust in you. To live in the knowledge that you will never abandon me.

Conclusion

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen.

Sunday 27th November

First Sunday of Advent

Matthew 24:37–44

For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

- There are tough images here: floods, capture, thieving. These are frightening, life-changing events. We have one life, and it is precious and fragile. We need to be in tune with Jesus constantly, ready for whatever comes our way, not sleepwalking through life.
- Lord, make me present to your daily appearances in my life. As the poet Tagore says: “He comes,

comes, ever comes.” Lord, do not let me miss you, even in my ordinary routine.

Monday 28th November

Matthew 8:5–11

When Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress.” And he said to him, “I will come and cure him.” The centurion answered, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and the slave does it.” When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, “Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”

- The centurion was an officer of the imperial army, a man with power and status. He was begging a favor from a penniless itinerant teacher and declaring himself unworthy even to entertain Jesus in his house. Jesus was amazed, not merely at the trust of the man, but at the fact that his love for his servant led him to cut through all the barriers of rank

and race. Lord, so much of my life is structured by social conventions and barriers. Give me the grace to listen to my heart and reach out to those that I can help.

- This miracle is unusual for two reasons. Jesus was not actually present when the healing took place: he spoke the word, and the centurion's servant was healed. The servant did not even have to hear Jesus speak the word: it was enough that the word was spoken. Do we realize that when we speak God's word, someone, somewhere, may find healing?

Tuesday 29th November

Luke 10:21-24

Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said to them privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it."

- In this scene, Jesus seems to be rejoicing in his disciples, happy that they are with him. He is happy, too, in what God his Father has given to his followers. Jesus rejoices in us just as friends rejoice together and as parents rejoice in the talents and gifts of their children. Perhaps, then, can we rejoice in one another? In prayer we can allow ourselves to be grateful for the goodness, gifts, and faith of others, especially people who are significant in our lives.
- I watch Jesus at his prayer. What is it like to see him rejoicing in the Holy Spirit and thanking his Father? At this moment as I pray, the three divine Persons are present with me, and the Spirit is praying in me. Awareness of this can transform my prayer.

Wednesday 30th November

Matthew 4:18–22

As Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee,

mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

- Jesus called the fishermen, speaking to them in terms they recognized. Jesus calls me as I am, wanting me to use my skills and abilities to draw others to life. Peter, Andrew, James, and John responded to Jesus immediately. I think of how slow my reactions are. I try to see what holds me back, and I talk to Jesus about it.
- In the middle of any ordinary day Jesus walks by, sees me, singles me out from the crowd, speaks to me, and invites my discipleship. What attracts me to Jesus? What helps me respond generously to him? Am I a close follower of his, or do I keep my eye on him only occasionally?

Thursday 1st December

Matthew 7:21, 24–27

Jesus said to the people, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does

not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!”

- Saint Ignatius remarks that love is found in deeds rather than in words. Jesus praises good deeds over good intentions that are not carried out. I pray to be like a good servant who does the work God invites me to do.
- Hearing or reading God’s Word is important, but it is not the end. I take time to let the Word of God settle into the shape of my life. I take care not to let it merely stay in my mind but to let it touch my heart and desires as well. I ask God to help me be present to the Word. My words are part of my response to God, but I realize that it is not just the saying of words that is important. I ask for sincerity and integrity, that my words will become actions that become my way of life.

Friday 2nd December

Matthew 9:27–31

As Jesus went on his way, two blind men followed him, crying loudly, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to him,

“Yes, Lord.” Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you.” And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly ordered them, “See that no one knows of this.” But they went away and spread the news about him throughout that district.

- How could these men follow Jesus if they could not see? By hearing his voice, perhaps. Or maybe others led them to him. How did they know what to ask for? They knew they needed physical *and* spiritual sight, so they asked for more than sight: they asked for mercy. Their faith in Jesus opened their hearts to appeal to him. Their faith touched power in Jesus, and they were healed. They knew their need for God and for others; they did not hide their need and thus were healed.
- Lord, you do not meet me as one of a multitude, but face to face, on my own, where you can test the truth of my words. You meet me and listen to my desire when it is free from the illusions of mass emotion.

Saturday 3rd December

Matthew 9:35–10:1, 5a, 6–8

Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every

sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.”

- This seems to be a really outgoing Gospel reading: we are to look at the big harvest—the sick, the dead, the outcasts. All the needs of people are part of prayer. It is in care and compassion that the kingdom of heaven comes near.
- Lord, the cries of the poor and brokenhearted are evident in the mass migrations daily beamed into my living room. Let me not forget that you summon me today to be your eyes, your ears, and your hands of compassion. May I respond with loving compassion to all who come to me.