

for Advent and the Christmas Season 2015–16

SACRED  
SPACE

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for Advent and the Christmas Season 2015–16

# SACRED SPACE

November 29, 2015, to January 3, 2016

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Prayer from the Irish Jesuits



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## **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.

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## 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 and back forth between the daily reflections and the retreat.

The First Week of Advent  
**November 29—December 5, 2015**

Something to think and pray about each day this week:

**Imagination and Hope**

We used to imagine that, despite the diversity within societies and across the world, we could somehow all achieve safe middle-class ambitions like basic financial security, a wholesome family life, an education for excellence, a fulfilling job with a handsome wage, good health and white teeth, a house in the suburbs, freedom to worship, protection from terrorism, and an environment ready to do our bidding. Now we know that life is not so straightforward. We are not here only to make money, though we need that too. We are not here just to enjoy good health, though we all know what an incredible difference that makes. We are not here solely to live morally good lives, admirable though moral living is. We are here for a project so audacious that something within us finds it hard to believe: we are here to transform ourselves and our world. If we cannot believe this, it is because we have downsized our beliefs. It is our greatness rather than our littleness that intimidates us. But hope can heal us, for hope unsettles us with the passionate unrest that propels us toward great things, and it is imagination that gives us the entrance ticket



into the hope-filled world of possibility. We can hope in God, for God is the true fulfillment of everything for which we long and desire. God promises us that the best is yet to come.

### **The Presence of God**

Come to me all you who are burdened and I will give you rest.

Here I am, Lord. I come to seek your presence.

I long for your healing power.

### **Freedom**

Lord, grant me the grace to be free from the excesses of this life.

Let me not get caught up with the desire for wealth.

Keep my heart and mind free to love and serve you.

### **Consciousness**

At this moment, Lord, I turn my thoughts to you.

I will leave aside my chores and preoccupations.

I will take rest and refreshment in your presence, Lord.

### **The Word**

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

Inspiration points are there should you need them.  
When you are ready, return here to continue.)

### **Conversation**

Jesus, you speak to me through the words of the  
Gospels.

May I respond to your call today.

Teach me to recognize your hand at work in my daily  
living.

### **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 29th November** **First Sunday of Advent**

*Luke 21:25–28, 34–36*

Jesus said, “There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near. Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

- Jesus is using traditional Jewish symbolism to describe what will happen when God’s final judgment occurs. He says that people will see “the Son of Man coming in a cloud.” The cloud is a symbol for God’s presence. Jesus’ message bursts with hope and confidence because, unlike those who have reason to fear his coming, Jesus’ followers

will be able to hold their heads high because their liberation is at hand.

- Jesus urges me to be on guard so that my heart is not weighed down by the worries of life. What are the worries and cares of life that weigh me down today? As I prepare for a conversation with Jesus, can I bring my worries and cares to him in prayer?

## **Monday 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 lake—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.

- The call of the disciples is rooted in the call of Jesus, and this call is to change their lives forever. The disciples are not only to hear the word of God; they act on it. So the first disciples leave everything and follow him. Jesus will go on to teach the disciples a new way of life, for they cannot be

open to the work of God unless they have their ears opened by his word.

- I pray: “Jesus, show me what I need to leave behind in order to be a good disciple. Do not let me fall far behind you and lose sight of you. Keep me close. Thank you for these times of prayer, and for inviting me to share a meal with you in the Eucharist.”

## **Tuesday 1st December**

*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.”

- To rejoice in the Holy Spirit is to be aware of the Father’s infinite and unconditional love poured out on me. Are there moments in my life when I

have felt such love? What may be preventing me from experiencing such love today?

- How blessed are we to see Jesus and to hear his words! And Jesus has chosen to reveal his Father to us! I consider how this message might make me glad and grateful.

## **Wednesday 2nd December**

*Matthew 15:29–37*

Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, and he went up the mountain, where he sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others. They put them at his feet, and he cured them, so that the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel. Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way.” Jesus asked them, “How many loaves have you?” They said, “Seven, and a few small fish.” Then ordering the crowd to sit down on the ground, he took the seven loaves and the fish; and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

And all of them ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full.

- I imagine the crowd, with everyone bringing their problems to Jesus. The people who approach him have an illness or are accompanying a person with an illness. What problem might I bring, and how does Jesus deal with it? Is this how I deal with the problems others bring to me?
- Jesus takes in the bigger picture: He is in touch with our basic human need for nourishment. What joy he must have had in providing this party in the wilderness! Everything is for sharing; how might I be glad to share what I can? What do my bread and fish look like?

### **Thursday 3rd 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 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