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presents

SACRED STILLNESS

A CATHOLIC ADVENT RETREAT

ADVENT 2023 JOURNAL



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December 3

PREPARING THE WAY

"Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." —Isaiah 40:3

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, as we begin this season of Advent, help us prepare our hearts to receive You.
Remove any obstacles that hinder Your entry into our lives. May we make straight paths for You
in our hearts and minds.

Reflection Questions

What are some obstacles or distractions that might prevent you from fully preparing for the coming of Christ this Advent season?

How can you simplify your life during Advent to create more space for prayer and reflection?

In what ways can you make your heart more receptive to God's presence in your daily life?

December 4

HOPE IN THE DARKNESS

"Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit." —Catechism of the Catholic Church, §1817

PRAYER

Lord, fill us with the virtue of hope as we journey through Advent. Help us to trust in Your promises, especially in times of darkness and uncertainty.

Reflection Questions

What are some areas of your life where you need to strengthen your sense of hope in Christ's promises?

How can you rely more on the grace of the Holy Spirit and less on your own strength in your daily life?

Reflect on a time when hope carried you through a challenging situation. How did your faith sustain you?

December 5

THE GIFT OF TIME

"This is no time to be ashamed of the Gospel. It is the time to preach it from the rooftops."
—St. John Paul II

PRAYER

Lord, in this Advent season, help us recognize the gift of time as an opportunity to draw closer to You.
May we use each day wisely, knowing that today is the day of salvation.

Reflection Questions

How often do you find yourself procrastinating or putting off important matters until "tomorrow"? What can you do to change this habit?

Reflect on the idea that today is a gift from God. How can you make the most of each day during Advent?

Are there any specific actions or commitments you need to make today in order to grow spiritually during this season?

December 6

CULTIVATING SILENCE

"Silence is the door-keeper of the interior life." —St. John Climacus

PRAYER

Lord, teach us the value of silence as we await Your coming. Help us to quiet the noise of the world so that we may hear Your gentle voice in our hearts.

Reflection Questions

In today's noisy world, how can you intentionally create moments of silence for prayer and reflection?

What are the benefits of silence in your spiritual life? How does it help you grow closer to God?

Consider the times in your life when God has spoken to you in moments of silence. What did you hear or experience?

December 7

JOYFUL ANTICIPATION

"Advent is the time we are given to welcome the Lord who comes to encounter us, and also to verify our longing for God, to look forward and prepare ourselves for Christ's return."
—Pope Francis

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, fill our hearts with joyful anticipation as we await the birth of Your Son. Help us be still, present, and open to the ways You are working in our lives.

Reflection Questions

How can you cultivate a sense of joyful anticipation in your daily life during Advent?

In what ways can you be more present to others and to God during this season?

Are there any preconceived notions or expectations you need to let go of in order to be more open to Christ's coming?

December 8

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

"Mary, full of grace, be a mother to us!" —St. Thérèse of Lisieux

PRAYER

Blessed Mother, on this feast of your Immaculate Conception, help us grow in purity of heart and spirit.
May we imitate your openness to God's will in our lives.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on Mary's "yes" to God's plan at the Annunciation. How can you be more open to God's will in your own life?

In what areas of your life do you struggle with impurity of heart or spirit? How can you seek Mary's intercession and guidance?

Consider the graces and virtues you can learn from Mary's example of humility and obedience.

December 9

PRACTICING PATIENCE

"Patience is the companion of wisdom." —St. Augustine

PRAYER

Lord, grant us the grace of patience as we await Your coming. Help us to trust in Your perfect timing and wisdom.

Reflection Questions

In what areas of your life do you struggle with impatience? How can you grow in this virtue during Advent?

Consider moments in your life when you had to exercise patience. What did you learn from those experiences?

How can patience be a companion to your pursuit of wisdom in your spiritual journey?

December 10
THE GIFT OF GIVING

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." —Acts 20:35

PRAYER

Lord, teach us the joy of giving during this Advent season. Help us to be generous with our time, resources, and love.

Reflection Questions

In what ways can you practice generosity and giving to others during Advent?

Reflect on a time when you experienced the joy of giving. How did it impact your life and the lives of those you gave to?

How can the act of giving be a reflection of God's love and grace in your life?

December 11

SEEKING FORGIVENESS

"Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away." —Acts 3:19

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, during this Advent season, help us to seek forgiveness for our sins and to turn our hearts back to You. Grant us the grace of true contrition and conversion.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on any areas of your life where you need to seek forgiveness and reconciliation. How can you take steps toward healing during Advent?

Consider the importance of repentance and conversion in your spiritual journey. What changes do you need to make to draw closer to God?

How can the Sacrament of Reconciliation be a source of grace and renewal during this season?

December 12

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

"Am I not here, I, who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection?"
—Our Lady of Guadalupe

PRAYER

Our Lady of Guadalupe, protectress of the Americas, intercede for us in our times of need. Help us to always seek shelter and refuge under your maternal care.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on the significance of Our Lady of Guadalupe's message of love and protection. How can you draw closer to her in your spiritual life?

In what ways can you find comfort and strength in the maternal love and care of the Blessed Virgin Mary?

Consider the role of Our Lady of Guadalupe as a bridge between cultures and peoples. How can you be an instrument of unity and love in your community?

December 13
THE GIFT OF PEACE

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you." —John 14:27

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, grant us the gift of Your peace during this Advent season. Help us to find tranquility amidst the busyness of life.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on the peace that Christ offers. How can you invite this peace into your heart and share it with others?

In what ways can you prioritize moments of silence and prayer to cultivate inner peace during Advent?

Consider the areas of your life where you need reconciliation and peace. Are there things or relationships that cause you stress? How can you work toward healing and harmony?

December 14

EMBRACING GENEROSITY

"In order to become the image of God, we must empty ourselves of our obsession with ourselves." —St. Teresa of Calcutta

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help us embrace simplicity during Advent. May we let go of our obsessions with ourselves and focus on serving others in love.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on the ways materialism and self-centeredness can distract us from the true meaning of Advent. How can you simplify your life during this season?

Consider the joy of serving others and putting their needs before your own. How can you practice this kind of selflessness?

In what ways can you become a better reflection of God's image by emptying yourself of self-centeredness?

December 15

THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." —John 8:12

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, be the light that guides us on our Advent journey. Help us to walk in Your light and share it with others.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on the image of Christ as the Light of the World. How can you allow His light to shine in your life and dispel darkness?

In what ways can you be a bearer of Christ's light to those around you, especially during this season?

Consider the areas of your life where you may be walking in darkness. How can you turn to Christ for illumination and guidance?

December 16

THE GIFT OF FAITH

"Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe."
—St. Augustine

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, increase our faith during this Advent season. Help us to trust in Your presence even when we cannot see it.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on the nature of faith. How does it require trust in the unseen and the unknown?

In what ways can you nurture and strengthen your faith during Advent?

Consider moments in your life when your faith was tested. How did you experience the reward of seeing what you believed?

December 17

THE JOY OF RECONCILIATION

"Be reconciled to God." —2 Corinthians 5:20

PRAYER

Lord, grant us the grace of reconciliation as we seek to be reconciled with You and with others during Advent. Help us to experience the joy of forgiveness.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on the importance of reconciliation in your relationship with God and others. How can you foster this spirit of reconciliation during this season? Consider beginning with a plan to receive the sacrament of reconciliation.

In what ways can you extend forgiveness and seek reconciliation with someone you may have conflicts with?

Consider the freedom and joy that comes from being reconciled. How can this experience deepen your faith and gratitude?

December 18

THE GIFT OF LOVE

"Love is the most necessary of all virtues. Love in the person who preaches the word of God is like fire in a musket." —St. Anthony Mary Claret

PRAYER

Lord, fill our hearts with the gift of love during this Advent season. Help us to be vessels of Your love to all we encounter.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on the significance of love as the most necessary of virtues. How can you cultivate love in your daily life during Advent?

In what ways can you show love and compassion to those who may be in need or facing challenges?

Consider the image of love as a fire. How can your love be a source of warmth, light, and transformation in the lives of others?

December 19

THE GIFT OF HUMILITY

"Humility is the mother of all virtues; purity, charity, and obedience. It is in being humble that our love becomes real, devoted, and ardent." —St. Teresa of Calcutta

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, grant us the grace of humility during Advent. Help us to embrace the virtue that opens the door to all other virtues.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on the role of humility as the mother of all virtues. How can you cultivate humility in your life during this season?

In what ways can you practice humility in your relationships with others and in your service to those in need?

Consider the connection between humility and love. How does humility enable genuine and selfless love for others?

December 20

THE GIFT OF GRATITUDE

"The secret of happiness is to live moment by moment and to thank God for what He is sending us every day in His goodness." —St. Gianna Beretta Molla

PRAYER

Lord, help us cultivate an attitude of gratitude during Advent. May we recognize and give thanks for the many blessings You bestow upon us each day.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on the idea of living moment by moment and finding happiness in gratitude. How can you practice this during Advent?

In what ways can you express your gratitude to God for His goodness and blessings in your life?

Consider the impact of gratitude on your overall well-being and spiritual journey. How does it enhance your relationship with God?

December 21

THE GIFT OF TRUST

"Let us not be weary in well-doing, for we shall reap in due season, if we faint not."
—Galatians 6:9

PRAYER

Lord, grant us the gift of trust during this Advent season. Help us to persevere in doing good and to trust in Your divine timing.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on the idea of not growing weary in well-doing. How can you find strength and trust in God's plan during difficult times?

In what ways can you cultivate trust in God's timing and providence as you journey through Advent?

Consider the idea of reaping in due season. How does trust in God's promises bring hope and perseverance to your life?

December 22

THE GIFT OF WISDOM

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." —James 1:5

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, grant us the gift of wisdom during Advent. May we seek Your guidance and understanding in all we do.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on the importance of seeking wisdom from God. How can you make prayer for wisdom a regular part of your Advent journey?

In what areas of your life do you need wisdom and discernment? How can you trust God to provide it?

Consider the impact of wisdom on your decision-making and relationships. How does it lead you closer to God's plan for your life?

December 23

THE GIFT OF JOY

"Joy is a net of love by which we catch souls." —St. Teresa of Calcutta

PRAYER

Lord, fill our hearts with the gift of joy during this Advent season. May our joy be a witness to Your love and draw others closer to You.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on the idea of joy as a net of love. How can your joy be a means of sharing God's love with others?

In what ways can you cultivate a joyful spirit in your daily life during Advent, even in the midst of challenges?

Consider the connection between joy and evangelization. How can your joyful disposition lead others to Christ?

December 24

PREPARING FOR HIS ARRIVAL

"Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." —Revelation 22:20

PRAYER

Lord, as we approach the celebration of Your birth, we eagerly await Your arrival in our hearts. Come, Lord Jesus, and fill us with Your presence.

Reflection Questions

Reflect on your anticipation of Christ's arrival. How has Advent prepared you to welcome Him into your life?

In what ways can you make room for Christ in your heart and mind as you celebrate His birth?

Consider the significance of Christ's coming in your life. How will you respond to His presence during this Christmas season?

Merry Christmas

We hope you have enjoyed this reflection guide and these prayers and questions have helped to prepare you for the Christmas season we are about to enter. May your heart be filled with hope and joy at the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We pray that this time of reflection has deepened your faith and brought you closer to the true meaning of Christmas.

A photograph of three lit candles on a wooden surface, surrounded by pine branches and red berries. The candles are lit, casting a warm glow. The background is dark and out of focus.

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