

Welcome

Humble and Holy continues a centuries-old Christian tradition of setting aside time to prepare for the celebration of Jesus' birth and to anticipate his return. The Advent season of preparation then unfolds in the joy of the twelve days of Christmas and the day of Epiphany.

This devotional offers daily devotions for the first Sunday of Advent (November 30, 2025) through Epiphany (January 6, 2026). These devotions explore the humble and the holy in year A scripture readings (in the Revised Common Lectionary) for the Sundays of Advent and Christmas, as well as for the festival days and commemorations in the Advent and Christmas seasons. The writers bring their unique voices and pastoral wisdom to these texts, and offer the voices of other witnesses in the quotations they have chosen for the "To ponder" sections. The devotional also provides household blessings and prayers (see pages 81–93) to enrich your preparations and celebrations during the Advent and Christmas seasons.

May the humble and holy birth of the Christ child bring you joy, love, and peace throughout the year!



December 3

Isaiah 2:4-5

They shall beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation;
neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD!

To ponder

In fighting for what we consider to be right, we can too easily
lose sight of what is good.—Dorcas Cheng-Tozun, *Social
Justice for the Sensitive Soul*

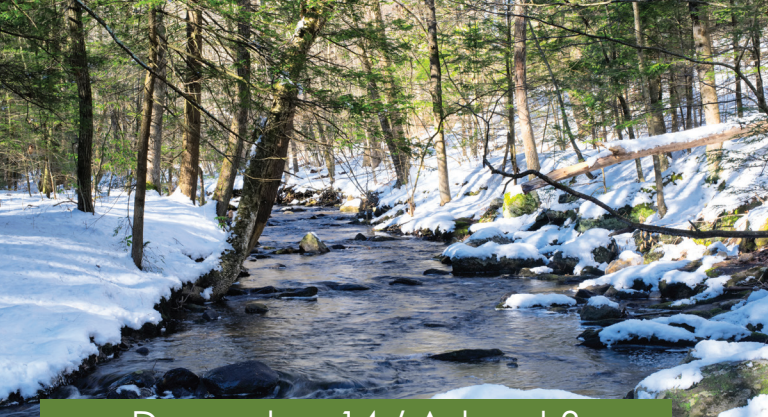
Do you hear God's song?

Several years ago, a film adaptation of *Les Misérables* was released to great acclaim. This musical tells the intertwining stories of a reformed convict on the run, his adopted child growing up, and the residents of Paris tragically caught up in the latest revolution. As I watched the final scene of the movie, I noticed props that seemed out of place. Nearly the entire cast held weapons of war as they sang about peace to a swelling orchestral score. Had the producers taken the time to listen to the lyrics? Hadn't they watched the rest of the movie?

All too often in our lives, we hear the words God is singing into our hearts, but don't really listen. We take up instruments of death and uphold systems that harm, while claiming to be on the side of life. All the while, God is breaking our weapons, breaking down barriers, and transforming violence and death into life.

Prayer

Lord, lead us in your radical way of peace. Banish our desire to hide or to fight. Instead, embolden us with love for our neighbors throughout the world. Amen.



December 14 / Advent 3

Isaiah 35:1-2, 4, 6-7

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and shouting.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God. . . .

Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
“Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.” . . .

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness
and streams in the desert;

the burning sand shall become a pool
and the thirsty ground springs of water.

To ponder

It occurred to me that as much as I think I am waiting on God, as much as I struggle with this between time of my prayer and God's answer, perhaps God is also waiting on me.—Yolanda Pierce, "The Spirituality of Waiting"

I am with you always

God calls us to take heart and to encourage other people. A fearful heart can be full of doubt and anxiety, but God keeps sending us into the world with the good news of hope. Like the promise of spring celebrated in the coldest days of winter or even in the heat of burning sands, faith gains new confidence that God is working in mysterious ways. God watches and waits for us to grasp the good news: I am with you in all the seasons of life. We need not be afraid.

When we finally see spring waters begin to flow, we can announce with joy that God has always been with us, even in times when we wait on mysterious and unexpected surprises to be revealed.

Prayer

Encourage us, God-with-us, to overcome our fears through the power of your living word. Amen.



Household Blessings and Prayers

Advent

In the days of Advent, Christians prepare to celebrate the presence of God's Word among us in our own day. During these four weeks, we pray that the reign of God, which Jesus preached and lived, would come among us. We pray that God's justice would flourish in our land, that the people of the earth would live in peace, that the weak and the sick and the hungry would be strengthened, healed, and fed with God's merciful presence.

During the last days of Advent, Christians welcome Christ with names inspired by the prophets: wisdom, liberator of slaves, mighty power, radiant dawn and sun of justice, the keystone of the arch of humanity, and Emmanuel—God with us.

The Advent wreath

One of the best-known customs for the season is the Advent wreath. The wreath and winter candle-lighting in the midst of growing darkness strengthen some of the Advent images found in the Bible. The unbroken circle of greens is clearly an image of everlasting life, a victory wreath, the crown of Christ, or the wheel of time itself. Christians use the wreath as a sign that Christ reaches into our time to lead us to the light of everlasting life. The four candles mark the progress of the four weeks of Advent and the growth of light. Sometimes the wreath is embellished with natural dried flowers or fruit. Its evergreen branches lead the household and the congregation to the evergreen Christmas tree. In many homes, the family gathers for prayer around the wreath.

An evening service of light for Advent

This brief order may be used on any evening during the season of Advent. If the household has an Advent wreath (one candle for each of the four weeks of Advent), it may be lighted during this service. Alternatively, one simple candle (perhaps a votive candle) may be lighted instead.

Lighting the Advent wreath

May this candle/these candles be a sign of the coming light of Christ.

One or more candles may be lighted.

Week 1: Lighting the first candle

Blessed are you, God of Jacob, for you promise to transform weapons of war into implements of planting and harvest and to teach us your way of peace; you promise that our night of sin is far gone and that your day of salvation is dawning.

As we light the first Advent candle, wake us from our sleep, wrap us in your light, empower us to live honorably, and guide us along your path of peace.

O house of Jacob, come,
let us walk in the light of the Lord. Amen.

Week 2: Lighting the first two candles

Blessed are you, God of hope, for you promise to bring forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse who will bring justice to the poor, who will deliver the needy and crush the oppressor, who will stand as a signal of hope for all people.

As we light these candles, turn our wills to bear the fruit of repentance, transform our hearts to live in justice and harmony with one another, and fix our eyes on the shoot from Jesse, Jesus Christ, the hope of all nations.

O people of hope, come,
let us rejoice in the faithfulness of the Lord. Amen.