



MEETING JESUS

Making time to share our faith

Staff Prayer Resource

"When evangelizers rise from prayer, their hearts are more open; freed of self-absorption, they are desirous of doing good and sharing their lives with others."

- Pope Francis, Joy of the Gospel, p. 282

“How significant is prayer in your life? Does what you do control your prayer life, or does your prayer life provide strength for what you do?”

Fr. James McIlhone

Two central components of evangelization are prayer and the ability to witness where Jesus is actively working in your daily life. When we spend time with Jesus in prayer, we get to know him more intimately, even as we get to know ourselves more fully. As people of faith, we also need to know how to share how God is working in our lives with others so that they can start to see how God is active in their own journey.

This tool is designed for your parish team as a way to pray together and to share where God is working in each of you and your community. By praying together and getting some practice at faith sharing, the hope is these conversations will come more easily when we talk with our parishioners or guests.

We all know the importance of spending time in conversation with our God, yet, as people working to build God's Kingdom, the practicalities of meetings, deadlines, and crowded agendas mean that prayer gets abbreviated or shuffled to the side to make room for all we have to get done. We know, though, when we prioritize time and space for prayer as individuals and leadership groups, we find that our hearts, souls, and work are strengthened and are more fruitful.

This resource is designed primarily for parish teams, but is an easy, accessible way to engage in intentional, meaningful prayer whenever you gather as a group –Pastoral Council, Finance Council, catechist gatherings, lector trainings, small group facilitator formation, or any of the countless other meetings that fill your parish schedule. It is a way to help you have creative, prepared ways to converse with Jesus as a group.

This resource contains three sections, each of which offer a different prayer method. There are prayers in each section for the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and the beginning of ordinary time. We encourage you to incorporate one selection from this resource into each meeting among your staff, leadership, and volunteers. We encourage you to select prayers that will stretch people to encounter Jesus in a new way. Different people respond differently to prayer. Take what you like, leave what doesn't work.



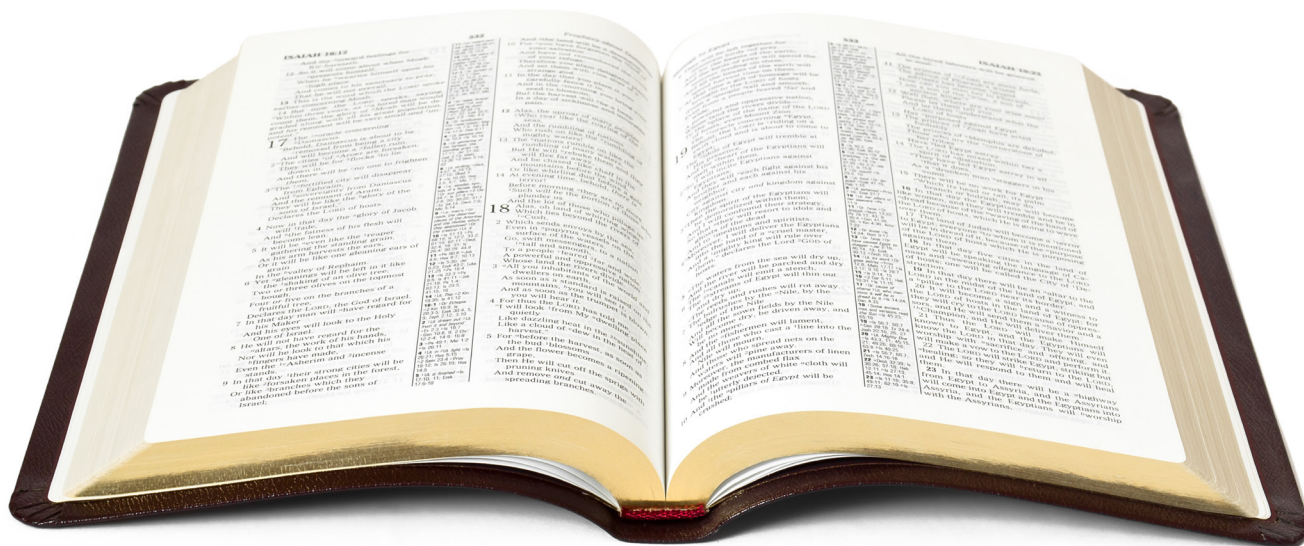
"Learn the heart of God from the Word of God."

Pope St. Gregory

PRAYING WITH THE LECTIONARY

This section may be the most familiar to your group. Reflecting on the Sunday Mass readings is a common practice. We challenge you to approach these prayer options through a lens of faith sharing, reflecting on your relationship with Jesus. Often when leaders, particularly those familiar with Scripture, approach the texts we keep the discussion within intellectual, impersonal confines. The Word of God is processed in our minds, without having the time and space to influence our hearts. We invite you to approach the readings from a place of relationship – focusing on your encounter with Jesus in the text and in your daily life.

When using a prayer from this section, open the prayer with a few words of your own. Invite someone from the group to read the Gospel passage aloud. Leave a few moments of silence. Open the reflection by inviting people to share their responses to what they hear Jesus speaking to them in the passage and through the questions. You may find that you spend all of the prayer time on one question or the group spends time with all the reflection questions.



First Sunday of Advent - December 3, 2017

Mark 13:33-37

- a. How can we be alert and watchful for the Master's coming today?
- b. As a servant in the kingdom, how are you treating those who are around you at home, at work, at church?
- c. Were Jesus to return today, "Would you be ready to greet Him?"

Second Sunday of Advent - December 10, 2017

Mark 1:1-8

- a. How can you prepare others to encounter the Lord, i.e. prepare the way of the Lord for them?
- b. What does John's preaching about Jesus, the one to come, tell you about this Jesus? Does it make you want to meet him?
- c. Imagine yourself in the crowd listening to John the Baptist. Let your mind wander. After listening to John, are you eager to be baptized with the Holy Spirit? What will that demand of you?

Third Sunday of Advent - December 17, 2017

John 1:6-8, 19-28

- a. How do you testify to the Light? What makes your testimony believable?
- b. Have you ever seen yourself as a "voice crying out in the desert?"
- c. How would you answer the question, "What do you have to say about yourself?"

Fourth Sunday of Advent - December 24, 2017

Luke 1:26-38

- a. How would you describe Mary in this gospel?
- b. When have you willingly accepted what God asked of you, "Let it be done unto me according to your word?" How did that acceptance affect your relationship with God? With others?
- c. When Mary accepts God's role for her, she immediately thinks of her kinswoman, Elizabeth, who may need help. How has your acceptance of Christ led you to assist and help others?

Solemnity of Christmas, December 25, 2017

John 1:1-5, 9-14

- a. How have you experienced the Light in your relationship with God? Where has God enlightened you?
- b. If Jesus is the Son of God, and through faith we are Children of God, logically Jesus is our brother. How is Jesus brother to you?
- c. A further conclusion from that is that we are brothers and sisters to each other. How does that affect the way we treat one another?

Feast of the Holy Family December 31, 2017

Luke 2:22-40

- a. What does the fact that Mary and Joseph perform the rites prescribed for forty days after a child's birth, purification, and presentation, tell you about their faith?
- b. How would you react if you were challenged as Mary was by Simeon?
- c. Anna's experience of Jesus led her to speak of him to others in Jerusalem who awaited redemption. How have you shared your experience of Jesus with those around you?

Feast of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God - January 1, 2018

Luke 2:16-21

- a. The Message of the Savior's birth from the angels prompts the shepherds to go and see the wonder that has taken place. The result of that is they announce the good news to all they encounter. They become evangelists. How have you been an evangelist lately?
- b. Mary on the other hand, kept these things and reflected on them. When is the last time you reflected on the good things God has accomplished in your life?
- c. What can you learn about sharing the good news from the shepherds?

Feast of Epiphany - January 7, 2018

Matthew 2:1-12

- a. Why do you think the magi's news "troubled" Herod? Have you ever acted from selfish motives?
- b. What lengths would you go to in order to find Christ? To proclaim faith in Christ?
- c. What is the star that guides your faith?

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord - January 14, 2018

Mark 1:7-11

- a. What is the significance of Jesus being baptized by John?
- b. If a voice from heaven were to announce who you were, what would it say?
- c. Jesus' baptism prepared him for his ministry to others, how has your baptism (and confirmation) prepared you to announce Jesus to others?

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time - January 21, 2018

John 1:35-42

- a. Who led you to hear Jesus' invitation, "Come and see!"?
- b. Who have you led to hear Jesus' invitation, "Come and see!"?
- c. How has accepting that invitation changed you?

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time - January 28, 2018

Mark 1:14-20

- a. Jesus begins in Mark's gospel with a call to repentance and conversion, i.e. embracing a new way of life. How does that conversion manifest itself in your life?
- b. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were called by Jesus in the midst of their normal daily routine. How do you see your daily routine as a vehicle of the call of Jesus?
- c. Have ever seen yourself as a vehicle of Jesus in calling others to follow him?

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time - February 4, 2018

Mark 1:21-28

- a. What does Mark mean when he says that Jesus "taught with authority, and not like the Scribes?"
- b. Have you ever asked Jesus to expel the demons that possess you?
- c. How does Jesus new teaching about the Kingdom of God focus your relationship with others?

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time - February 11, 2018

Mark 1:29-39

- a. What diseases are within you or your home or parish that are preventing you from serving others?
- b. How significant is prayer in your life? Does what you do control your prayer life, or does your prayer life provide strength for what you do?
- c. Jesus did not remain where he was comfortable and accepted. Do you see a necessity to move beyond your own comfort zone and reach out to others?

“He who carries God in his heart, bears Heaven with him wherever he goes.”

St. Ignatius of Loyola

EXAMENS

The purpose of an Examen prayer is to allow a person praying to look back over a period of time and detect where God has been at work in their life. As Walter Burghardt, SJ, described, prayer is “a long, loving look at the Real.” As such, praying the Examen allows a person to detect any disruptions in their spiritual life, to bring them before God, and to give great thanks for the wonders God has worked.

It is our hope that by employing some simple Examen exercises, a Parish Staff or other group might better see God’s Work in their lives and the lives of others, and that they might become more acquainted with sharing this Good News for the sake of evangelization.

The following Examen Samples will require a leader to prompt the exercise, but we hope that the leader will also take time to engage in the exercise to the best of his or her ability. Additionally, it is strongly suggested that to conclude each exercise, all participants are given a moment to share what happened in prayer and where their mind and heart went to better edify others and let everyone reflect on how they will best accompany one another.

1. A Traditional Examen during Advent (10-15 minutes + time for sharing)

This Examen prayer closely follows the traditional model and is adapted specifically for the Season of Advent.

- To begin, the leader will briefly explain his or her hopes for the time of prayer. The leader invites participants to adopt a comfortable position and slowly and calmly build a silent Sacred Space for them and yourself.
(2 minutes)
- **Relish:** Ask participants to find some aspect of their life for which they are grateful at this time. *What has been a “rose” for you in recent memory? Where do you feel God’s love for you? If you are not in a ‘good space,’ is there anything you have forgotten about yourself or your life that you would like to bring to God in gratitude?*
Allow a few moments for participants to taste these graces in silence.
(2 minutes)

- Request:** Introduce the Advent theme of waiting for the Lord. Ask participants: *What good do you hope God will give you, through Advent and Christmas? Is there a particular place, activity, or person in your life for whom you need God's help? Like the Magi, are you able to detect a Christmas Star you would like to follow? What would Jesus look like, born in that situation?*
 Allow a few moments for participants to make their silent request of God.
 (2 minutes)
- Review:** Over a given time period (please choose: the beginning of Advent, the preceding week, today, or some other notable event in your Parish's life), walk participants through each moment, and ask them: *Where did you find Advent hope? Where was God working through your life to point you towards Jesus? Have you found it easy to pray over the time period, or has it been difficult? In the midst of December busyness, are you able to keep your focus on God's Love? As you reflect on what you did yesterday before our meeting today, do you feel well-rested and hopeful, or anxious and wanting?*
 In between questions, pause to give participants time to reflect in silence.
 (5 minutes)
- Repent:** [Note: for some participants, this will simply be a continuation of the above.] Bring the theme of *Posadas* before the participants. Recall that the Holy Family went door to door in Bethlehem, often being turned away, before they settled in their poverty. *Are there moments over the given time period in which you have refused to let God dwell among you? Are there particular places/activities/times for which you would like God's mercy and forgiveness?*
 As Advent is a penitential season, suggest that they might adapt some action (such as going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, an Act of Contrition, or an Act of Mercy) that might help God's Grace dwell among them. As above, allow a few moments of silent reflection.
 (2 minutes)
- Resolve:** Having spent time reflecting on their time period, ask participants: *How can you re-commit yourself to God? Regarding the ways in which you have felt that you refused God's Incarnate Love, do you feel called to change and allow the Lord to be born in your midst? If you do not, are you willing to let God surprise you?*
 Gently leading them back to their original gratitude from the beginning of the prayer: *Will you offer God some gift, yourself?*
 Before ending the prayer, ask participants: *Please pray that you might feel God's happiness that you are doing service to the Church, and your hearts might be ready for Christmas.*
 (2 minutes)

- **Ending:** After a few moments of silence, lead participants in a simple “Glory Be” prayer. When you have concluded, invite them to share anything that they would like to with the entire group. During this time, direct them that they are not to judge or directly comment on another’s experience, but that they should listen to each other as though God were revealing something. Allow enough time and silence for anyone who wishes to share to do so, and close with the Lord’s Prayer. (allow time for sharing)

2. Incarnation Forms (time depends on group size + sharing)

This Examen very powerfully allows individuals to affirm how they have encountered Jesus in each other, and to see how they, themselves, have modeled Christ-like behavior. It works best with groups who have worked together for some time. While the experience of doing the exercise together can be powerful, you may also offer these forms for folks to do on their own time, returning later to see what others have shared and to reflect as a group.

- Using the attached resource (page 12), make enough copies, and cut the paper so that each individual has one form for every individual in the group.
- Begin by reading John 1:1-14 or a similar Scripture passage. When it has concluded, tell participants that in this Examen they will seriously reflect and share, writing very short notes to each other, on how they have seen Jesus in each other. Ask them to prayerfully reflect on the good that they have seen in each other and to write each a letter from the heart.
(2 minutes)
- Distribute the slips of paper and ask each participant to pray, reflect, and write. Give them a generous amount of time to complete the Examen, and let them know how you will cue them on the remaining time. It may be good to play some soft music for this exercise.
(15 minutes, depending on group size)
- *When the writing exercise is ending, ask participants to take a moment and ask themselves: How do I feel?* Give them a moment to reflect and ask them if they’re willing to offer that to the Lord.
(2 minutes)
- After collecting the forms, distribute them to each individual according to whom they are addressed. Give everyone time to read each letter, and during this time, ask that they refrain from speaking to one another, letting Jesus teach them through what is written.
(2 minutes)

- After a few moments, ask participants to share. There will likely be a lot of talking and activity! At an appropriate time, as a group, ask them how they are feeling. Briefly allow sharing on this, and when it is concluding, pray a brief prayer asking the Holy Spirit to not let us forget how we model Christ to one another. For the ways in which we have failed in that endeavor, ask pardon and the wisdom to know how to let Christ be born in our hearts and to be Christ for one another. It may be good to close with the Lord's Prayer or St. Teresa of Avila's prayer:

"Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks 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 Ávila



Make copies of this or a similar resource of your own creation for this Examen:

Dear _____,

I have seen the Face of Jesus in you by

In Christ,

3. A New Year's Examen (10-15 min. + time for sharing)

As the calendar year draws to a close, this Examen allows participants to reflect on their year to see how they have grown closer or drawn away from God.

- To begin, briefly explain your hopes for the time of prayer. Invite participants to adopt a comfortable position and slowly and calmly build a silent Sacred Space for them and yourself.
(2 minutes)
- **Gratitude:** Ask participants to find some aspect of their life for which they are grateful at this time. *What has been a "rose" for you this year? Where did you feel God's love for you? If you are not in a 'good space,' is there anything you have forgotten about yourself or your life that you would like to bring to God in gratitude? If there have been traumatic experiences during the past year, can you find a point in which Jesus accompanied you?* Allow a few moments for participants to taste these graces in silence.
(2 minutes)
- **Prayer for Light:** Ask participants: *As the year draws to a close, ask that God might light your reflection during this time, and God might shine a light on your path in the months to come. Daylight is gently growing as Christ's light has increased since Christmas.* Allow a few moments of silent reflection.
(2 minutes)
- **Remember:** Tell participants that you will guide them through a reflection of the entire year, asking what their highs/lowes were. If they wish to journal during this time, they may. Then, beginning with January, slowly walk them through all the months asking them: *When was it easy to find God and when was it hard?* As participants reach back in their memories, give them time to let events surface.
(5 minutes)
- **Highlighting:** When you have concluded with December, ask participants to name a particular moment that was the most important to them this past year. After a moment of silence, ask them to offer it to the Lord. *What does God have to say about it now? Give a few moments for this, and ask them: How do God's comments make you feel? What is God asking of you?*
(2 minutes)
- **Hope:** As you conclude the prayer, ask participants, in silence, to: *Name one hope that you have for the coming months. Then ask them: Pray once more for God's light to guide you.*
(2 minutes)

- **Ending:** After a few moments, lead participants in a simple “Glory Be” prayer. When you have concluded, invite them to share anything that they would like to with the entire group. During this time, direct them that they are not to judge or directly comment on another’s experience, but that they should listen to each other as though God were revealing something. Allow enough time and silence for anyone who wishes to share to do so, and close with the Lord’s Prayer.

4. In Wintertime

As the Chicago winter drags on and the Christmas Season concludes, it is good to pray this Examen to allow participants time to plant new hopes in God that they can expect to grow.

- To begin, briefly explain your hopes for the time of prayer. Invite participants to adopt a comfortable position and slowly and calmly build a silent Sacred Space for them and yourself.
(2 minutes)
- **Where are you?:** Guide them: *Bring yourself before God, just as you are. Patiently tell God what brought you to this meeting today. Name what you do and what you delight in to God. Name what you fear or how you feel.* Allow a few moments in silence for participants to taste these graces.
(2 minutes)
- **Who do you say that I am?:** Guiding them: *Shift your focus from who you are to who God is. Remember Jesus’ question to his Disciples—who do you say that I am? Tell the Lord in silence what you have noticed about God. Is God Father? Friend? Lord? Someone easy to relate to, or someone hard to look at? Take notice of your feelings.*
(2 minutes)
- **What do you want me to do for you?:** Guiding them: *Remember Jesus’ question to Bartimaeus: What do you want me to do for you? Is there anything that you need from God at this moment? Do you find it easy to ask God, or difficult? Hold your petition up to God’s attention.*
(2 minutes)
- **Must not the Son of Man suffer and die, and be raised up?:** Guiding them: *Wintertime is often a time for farmers to plant. Ask God to help plant your petition, placing it near his Sacred Heart. How much do you want to work with God in granting this request? Is it easy for you to allow God’s help, or difficult? Jesus predicted his Passion and Resurrection for his disciples. If he was willing to suffer this, how will Jesus help you with this petition? Give them a few moments to hear God’s voice on this matter.*
(5 minutes)

- **Follow me:** Guiding them: *Remember now your original words to God—describing what brought you to the meeting today. Our hope is that God might reveal how you will be called in the course of the meeting and afterwards. Remember Jesus's words to Peter: 'Follow me.' How will you feed God's sheep? Can you follow Jesus's example in love? Ask God how you will be led for the rest of the day and tomorrow. Pray for God's grace to trust in God's presence.*
(2 minutes)
- **Ending:** After a few moments of silence, lead participants in a simple "Glory Be" prayer. When you have concluded, invite them to share anything that they would like to with the entire group. During this time, direct them that they are not to judge or directly comment on another's experience, but that they should listen to each other as though God were revealing something. Allow enough time and silence for anyone who wishes to share to do so, and close with the Lord's Prayer.

5. Preparing for the Season of Lent (10-15 min. + time for sharing)

Before Lent begins, it would be good to use this Examen to help participants prepare themselves for how they will draw near to God.

- To begin, briefly explain your hopes for the time of prayer. Invite participants to adopt a comfortable position and slowly and calmly build a silent Sacred Space for them and yourself.
(2 minutes)
- **Context:** Guiding them: *Lent is soon to begin and I hope that you can embrace this season. Remember that Lent is a time of preparation to renew our Baptismal promises and enter into Easter Joy. Briefly recall what Baptism means to you. In your Baptism you died with Christ. Think of one way in which you are grateful for Christ's Life in your parish and in your life.*
(2 minutes)
- **Deathbed Meditation:** *Imagine that, after a long and full life, you are peaceful and alive on your deathbed surrounded by loved ones. Note in gratitude who surrounds you. The community which surrounds you is the Body of Christ present to you.*
(2 minutes)
- **Looking back:** *As you reflect on this holy moment, how does one of the people with you look back on you? What sorts of things should you pay attention to? What is really important in your life? As you are so near to seeing God face-to-face, what do you want to do to better prepare for that moment? What do you need in order to feel courage in your life to live in Jesus' company?*
(5 minutes)

- **Towards Lent:** *Let this vision pass and return to where you are, on the edge of Lent. Is there anything about yourself you have learned? Is God inviting you to adopt a spiritual practice during this Lent to prepare yourself to renew your Baptismal promises? After a few moments, tell participants: I want to 'rush' Easter for a moment. Imagine the Risen Christ greeting you today. Ask him how he takes in gratitude for who you are, today. Pray that, in the coming weeks, you might not forget that he will comfort you in times of sorrow and help carry your burdens. (2 minutes)*
- **Ending:** After a few moments, lead participants in a simple "Glory Be" prayer. When you have concluded, invite them to share anything that they would like to with the entire group. During this time, direct them that they are not to judge or directly comment on another's experience, but that they should listen to each other as though God were revealing something. Allow enough time and silence for anyone who wishes to share to do so, and close with the Lord's Prayer.



"He who sings, prays twice."

St. Augustine

PRAYING WITH THE HYMNS

Music is a language which reaches beyond boundaries, real or imagined. Music evokes an emotional reaction. Music speaks when words fail. This section, focusing on the hymns of the season, offers us a way to encounter Jesus that may be new or challenging to many. Others in your group may naturally gravitate to the opportunity; consider engaging these individuals to assist in facilitating.

One method to use when approaching a prayer experience from this section is through a *lectio divina* methodology. Invite several readers, two to three, to read the lyrics of the hymn. After the first reading, pause, invite participant to spend a moment in silence reflecting. After the second reading, pause, share a word or phrase that spoke to them. After the final reading, invite the group to reflect upon the reflection questions provided.

Another method would be to sing the hymn with discussion of the questions to follow. Unless your group is very familiar with the hymn or carol, providing hymnals is recommended. This will work well if time does not allow for the first method.

If singing is not something your group wishes to do initially, consider listening to a recording of the hymn. After listening to the hymn in its music setting, invite a reader to read the lyrics. Enter into a reflection upon the questions. The next time you engage with one of the reflections from this section with the same group, consider encouraging them to sing the hymn together.

People, Look East

"People, Look East" is a relatively new Advent hymn, written by the English poet/writer Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965). Originally titled "Carol of Advent," it appeared in the Oxford Book of Carols, 1928, as a "Modern text written for traditional tunes." In this case, the tune was "Besançon," a French melody. Farjeon is also the author of the hymn text "Morning Has Broken."

"People Look East" brings in the "greening" of the home that is often done in Advent—specifically in "Make your house fair as you are able, trim the hearth and set the table." For most of us, especially in the modern world where the season of Christmas almost starts in October, we prepare our homes and trim the hearths several weeks before Christmas. We begin to anticipate the Nativity as soon as the days begin to shorten. The poem begins in the beauty and comfort of our own homes, our domestic churches, then journeys to the world also preparing, despite the dark and cold of the coming winter, giving shape to our long period of anticipation of the coming of the Messiah.

Key images of the season are abundant: in verse one “People, Look East” is the direction of the rising sun and, in the history of Christianity, the direction of the coming Messiah. In verse two, the bare earth is waiting for the seed that will flourish in the reign of the Promised One. In verse three, the image of a bird protecting its nest is used as an image of waiting and breathless anticipation. In verse four, the stars that guided the Magi shape the “bowl” of the heavens, giving signs of hope beyond “the frosty weather.” The angels’ song, in verse five, sets “every peak and valley humming,” a reference to Isaiah 40:4, “Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low. . .” Each stanza concludes with a beautiful and powerful image of Christ – Love – as “Guest,” “Rose,” “Bird,” “Star,” and “Lord.”

This joyful Advent hymn has the spirit of a Christmas carol, but with an image filled Advent text. Singing this carol is indeed one way to prepare both our homes and hearts for the coming of the Savior.

1. People, look east. The time is near
Of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
Trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the guest, is on the way.

2. Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
One more seed is planted there:
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,
That in course the flower may flourish.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the rose, is on the way.

3. Birds, though you long have ceased to
build,
Guard the nest that must be filled.
Even the hour when wings are frozen
He for fledging time has chosen.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the bird, is on the way.

4. Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim
One more light the bowl shall brim,
Shining beyond the frosty weather,
Bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the star, is on the way.

5. Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
With the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Questions for reflection:

- How can we reach out and spread the Advent message of anticipation and hope in the midst of busy Christmas preparations?
- Advent is a time of preparing to encounter Jesus, how would you describe Jesus to someone? How would you describe Jesus in a way that leaves that person wishing to encounter Jesus during Advent and Christmas?
- Which image of Christ, (Guest, Rose, Bird, Star, Lord), resonates with your relationship with Jesus? Why?

Creator of the Stars of Night

This text is based on the 8th century Latin hymn “Conditor Alme Siderum.” Strong images of Advent run throughout the text: the coming of the Messiah, who brings light from darkness, Christ coming to earth not as a king but as a humble child. It is a hymn of thanksgiving and petition: in it, we thank God for sending his Son into our troubled world, and we ask God to be with us today.

Creator of the stars of night,
Your people’s everlasting light,
O Christ, Redeemer of us all,
We pray you hear us when we call.

In sorrow that the ancient curse
Should doom to death a universe,
You came, O Savior, to set free
Your own in glorious liberty.

When this old world drew on toward night,
You came; but not in splendor bright,
Not as a monarch, but the child
Of Mary, blameless mother mild.

At your great Name, O Jesus now,
All knees must bend, all hearts must bow;
All things on earth with one accord,
Like those in heav’n, shall call you Lord.

Come in your holy might, we pray,
Redeem us for eternal day;
Defend us while we dwell below
From all assaults of our dread foe.

To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, Three in One,
Praise, honor, might, and glory be
From age to age eternally.

Questions for reflection:

- This hymn was written over 1000 years ago – what in the text speaks to us as 21st Century Christians?
- Light is a central symbol of Advent. Where can you bring light to “this old world?” Who needs to be shown the gentle light of Christ?
- Who does God use to transform the world now? Name one thing you can do in your home, community, parish, work or environment to help build God’s Kingdom on Earth.

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" is a poem and Christmas carol written in 1849 by Edmund Sears, pastor of the Unitarian Church in Wayland, Massachusetts. Sears' lyrics are most commonly set to the tune CAROL, composed by Richard Storrs Willis (1810-1876).

Sears, with news of revolution in Europe and the United States' war with Mexico fresh in his mind, portrayed the world as dark, full of "sin and strife," and not hearing the Christmas message.

Sears' poem is remarkable for its focus not on Bethlehem, but on his own time, and on the contemporary issue of war and peace.

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, goodwill to all,
From heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains,
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the heav'nly hymn have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And warring humankind hears not
The tidings which they bring;
O hush the noise and cease your strife
And hear the angels sing.

For lo! the days are hastening on,
By prophets seen of old,
When with the ever-circling years
Shall come the time foretold,
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

Questions for reflection:

- In the face of violence in our world, how can we be more in tune to the angel's song of peace?
- How can we spread the good news of that peaceful song through our everyday words and actions?
- How can you spread the message of peace and hope more widely in our war torn world?

Songs of Thankfulness and Praise

Christopher Wordsworth, a 19th century Anglican priest, wrote this hymn text for the season of Epiphany. The Epiphany is about the showing forth of God's glory in the person of Jesus Christ. This theme of manifestation is very present in this hymn: the word 'manifest' appears six times. The hymn presents many of the Gospel passages that show Jesus as the Son of God, from the beginning of his life on earth through his first examples of public ministry – the manifestations of God's living presence in the world.

Songs of thankfulness and praise,
Jesus, Lord, to you we raise,
Manifested by the star
To the sages from afar;
Branch of royal David's stem
In your birth at Bethlehem;
Anthems be to you addressed,
God in flesh made manifest.

Manifest at Jordan's stream,
Prophet, Priest, and King supreme;
And at Cana, wedding guest,
In your Godhead manifest;
Manifest in power divine,
Changing water into wine;
Anthems be to you addressed,
God in flesh made manifest.

Manifest in making whole
weakened body, fainting soul;
Manifest in valiant fight,
Quelling all the devil's might;
Manifest in gracious will,
Ever bringing good from ill;
Anthems be to you addressed,
God in flesh made manifest.

Grant us grace to see you, Lord,
Mirrored in your holy Word;
May we imitate you now,
And on us your grace endow;
That we like to you may be
At your great Epiphany;
And may praise you, ever blest,
God in flesh made manifest.

Questions for reflection:

- Where do you see Christ manifest today? Where do you encounter Christ?
- How do you point the way to the presence of Christ in our world to others?
- This hymn is a bridge between the season of Christmas and Epiphany and the season of Lent, when we will spend much time reflecting on the healing presence of Christ in our world. How can we carry the message of peace, hope, and joy from our celebration of Christmas through our keeping of the season of Lent?

Epiphany Carol

This contemporary hymn text was written by Francis Patrick O'Brien, a priest of the Archdiocese of Boston. Fr. O'Brien has spent all of his priesthood in parish and campus ministry, where, along with his sacramental and parochial duties, he has frequently served as music director and composer. This text reflects on the light of the guiding star, but moves us firmly from the traditional Epiphany images of the wise men into images of the men and women who encounter Christ today.

Ev'ry nation sees the glory
Of a star that pierced the night.
As we tell the wondrous story
We are bathed in radiant light.
Star sent forth from highest heaven,
Dancing light of God's design,
Shine upon the gift that's given:
Word made flesh now born in time.

Ev'ry tongue shall sing the praises
Of his birth in deepest night.
He is healing for the ages;
He is Christ, our God's delight.
He proclaims within his being
All our hopes, our great desires.
He shall die to rise, redeeming
All who follow with their lives.

Once again may we discover
Word made flesh sent from above.
In our neighbor, sister, brother,
In the lonely and unloved.
May we touch him, may we hold him,
May we cradle him with care
As we learn to love each other,
Bringing hope from our despair.

Gather, God, the world together
In the brightness of your day.
Fill our hearts with joy forever;
Help us walk the holy way.
May your justice rule the nations;
May all people live as one.
Now we see our true salvation
In the glory of your Son.

Questions for reflection:

- For nearly a half century, the Catholic Church in the United States has celebrated National Migration Week, which is an opportunity for the Church to reflect on the circumstances confronting migrants, including immigrants, refugees, children, and victims and survivors of human trafficking. The week generally begins on the Sunday we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord. What makes the Epiphany especially suitable for praying for the migrant peoples of the world?
- When have we encountered the bright light of Epiphany in our own lives?
- The word Epiphany means "a moment of sudden revelation or insight." How can we guide people to their own epiphanies about Christ, about their faith?

"For me prayer is a surge of the heart, it is a simple look towards Heaven, it is a cry of recognition and love, embracing both trial and joy."

St. Therese of Lisieux

We hope that this resource helped to provide you with some inspiration and easy methods to connect in deeper prayer when you gather for meetings. We also hope you know, that as you face the trials and joys that ministry brings, you are in our prayers.

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Digital copies of this resource can be found online here:

pvm.archchicago.org/evangelization/pray

Other resources and tools can be found on the Office for Evangelization and Missionary Discipleship's site at evangelizechicago.org.

If you found this resource helpful, have suggestions, comments, or questions, please let us know what you think. Contact Jennifer Delvaux, Evangelization Coordinator, at jdelvaux@archchicago.org or 312.534.8264.

