

Advent 2021

Weekly Prayer Booklet

Where there is nothing God comes in:
The Very God has room enough
In the poor heart that's stripped so clean
Of earth and all the joys thereof.
~ Katherine Tynan



Patty Wickman (American, 1959–), *Overshadowed*, 2001. Oil on canvas, 78 × 104 in. Collection of Howard F. Ahmanson Jr. and Roberta Green Ahmanson. Featured in the exhibit: *Blessed Art Thou: Images of the Virgin Mary* in the Ahmanson Collection.

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Introduction

It is the creative potential itself in human beings that is the image of God.

~Mary Daly

There is something deeply creative about the season of Advent. As any artist knows, to create something involves a great deal of patience and waiting--we wait for the right word to come, for a sense of where to place the next brushstroke. The artist sits in the emptiness before inspiration because she knows that this is a necessary part of the process. She knows that something is being born, even before she can see it materialize before her, and her task is to trust in this unfolding.

The season of Advent asks us to slow down and sit with all that remains unfulfilled within us and the world. We are invited to create space in our hearts for our deepest longings to emerge so that a new creation might be born. Like Mary, we are called to inhabit all of our humanity--our fears and doubts, our hope and joy--in the process. Advent reminds us that God is with us in all of our human experience--none of who we are or where we are in life is excluded from God's love.

This Advent, we invite you to engage with this period of waiting as a creative act. To help you do this, we have created this booklet which includes two different weekly practices: a home liturgy and a creative prayer practice. The home liturgy consists of prayers, readings, and songs to accompany the lighting of the advent wreath each week.¹ We recommend doing the liturgy before dinner, once a week or every day if you like. The weekly creative prayer practice includes a reflection on a different component of the creative process accompanied by an art exercise. This is meant to be an invitation to a creative process for all, regardless of how artistically inclined you might consider yourself to be! Some people might have a well established creative practice, and for others this might be a new and potentially daunting way of praying. Wherever you find yourself, God loves you there and loves what you create. We hope that these practices will help you discover God's abundant love in perhaps a new way, through a deepening in your relationship to creativity as a sacred act.

¹ Acknowledgements for the music used in the home liturgies:

If in your heart: © 2017 Augsburg Fortress. *Open my heart:* © 2007 Ana Hernández, admin. Augsburg Fortress. *Take, O take me as I am:* © 1995 Iona Community, GIA Publications, Inc., agent. *Wait for the Lord:* © 1984 Les Presses de Taizé, GIA Publications, Inc., agent. All reprinted with permission under OneLicense #A-706495

A note that the creative prayer practices offered in this booklet focus on creative expression primarily through visual art and writing. Perhaps you like to sing or dance or play an instrument. Feel free to adapt these practices if you'd like to your chosen medium. At the same time, it can be a rich experience to try something completely new to you. Whatever you decide, we hope that this booklet will encourage you to meet God through creative expression. We invite you to stay open, and trust that wherever you find yourself in the creative process, God is surely waiting for you.

Yours in Christ,

Annie Rovzar and The Rev. Maggie Foote

Creating Space

Home Liturgy for The First Week of Advent

Gather in God's name, lighting one candle

May God be with you... and also with you.

Prepare a place for the Holy One

A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

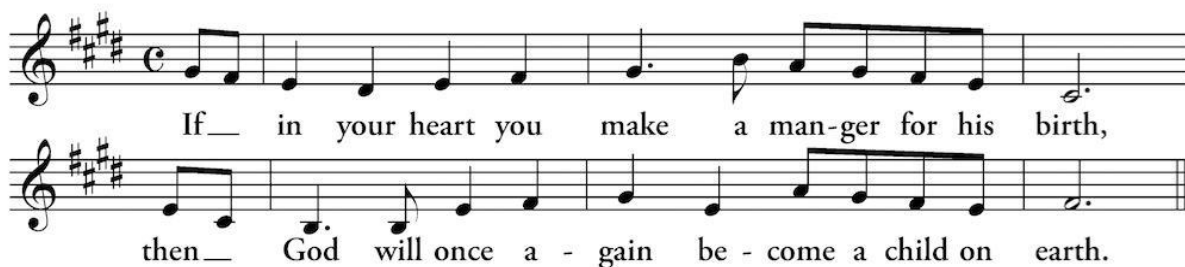
Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

-Isaiah 40:3-5

Sing: If In Your Heart, by Ana Hernández

[Click here](#) for the audio



The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those

who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
And the glory are yours,
Now and for ever. Amen.

Respond

Maybe this year has felt like wilderness to you. As 2021 draws to a close, and we await the birth of Jesus and the celebration of Christmas, I wonder if all this uneven ground we've been walking on feels like it can be made smooth? What would that take? Take a moment to consider individually, or with your family the rough places in your own heart that need to be smoothed out, to create a space for the living God.

Pray

Pray for patience, pray for clarity, pray for the journey of Advent ahead.

Close, sharing God's blessing and giving thanks together.

Creating Space

Creative Prayer Practice for the First Week of Advent

*Where there is nothing God comes in:
The Very God has room enough
In the poor heart that's stripped so clean
Of earth and all the joys thereof.*
~ Katherine Tynan

But what if we can't get to that nothingness? What if we can't create that empty space in our hearts? What if we're too busy filling our hearts and homes with the trappings of a commercial Christmas? What if the thing that's longing to be born in our lives can't find a place to take root? Advent is a time in our church year that we set aside to wait for new birth. We're literally waiting for the birth of a baby, Jesus; but we also await the birth of new hope, of change, of a reminder of that deep, deep feeling of being truly known and loved by the God who came and walked among us.

Part of the creative process is to make space for creation: to clear out things that are not needed, things that get in the way, things that don't allow us to be open to the mystery of what is to come.

I always tell people that the first thing I do when I begin to create something is clean my kitchen. This is both a physical and spiritual practice for me. Practically, it removes clutter from my line of sight, removing tangible representations of things that draw my attention away from the creative process. Also, it gives me a mental break. It provides a few minutes of time where my sole focus is the dish in my hand, or the counters being cleaned. This allows me to let go of whatever I was thinking about before I started, and to make space for what is trying to be born in me.

Daily Reflection Questions

What is taking up space in my home and not serving a purpose?

What is taking up space in my mind, distracting me from being fully present?

What is taking up space in my heart, not allowing the light of the Christ Child to shine through me?

Creative Prayer Practice Options

Option #1

Set aside a space to engage in these Advent Creative Prayer Practices. Clear out what is not needed there, and bring in anything to help you engage in a holy Advent; candles, things from nature, icons, images, etc.

Option #2

Thinking back to the reflection questions, consider the items in your home that are no longer serving a purpose. Maybe clothes that don't fit, or toys that are no longer used by children or grandchildren? Maybe old papers and junk mail? Maybe books that can be passed along to someone else? Take time to get rid of these items, clearing a space, physically and mentally, for something new to happen; for more joy to come in, for more creativity to flow out, and an openness to birth something new into this space.

Gathering In

Home Liturgy for The Second Week of Advent

Gather in God's name, lighting two candles

May God be with you... and also with you.

Alert your senses to the Holy One

I remain confident of this:

I will see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.

Wait for the Lord;

be strong and take heart

and wait for the Lord.

-Psalm 27:13-14

Sing: Open My Heart, by Ana Hernández

[click here](#) (shorter version) or [here](#) (longer version) to listen in

The musical score is written for three parts. Part 1 is in the treble clef, Part 2 is in the treble clef, and Part 3 is in the bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are: "O - pen my heart, o - pen my heart. O - pen my heart, o - pen my heart." The melody is simple and repetitive, with each part having its own line of music.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your Name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

On earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those

who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial,

And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
And the glory are yours,
Now and for ever. Amen.

Respond

Now, and throughout this week, think on these things: How can I open myself to all the ways in which I'm able to experience God in the world; through all of the different senses and experiences available to me?

Pray

Pray for a spirit of openness to experience the Divine in the world around you.

Close, sharing God's blessing and giving thanks together.

Gathering In

Creative Prayer for The Second Week of Advent

“How do we wait for God? We wait with patience. But patience does not mean passivity. Waiting patiently is not like waiting for the bus to come, the rain to stop, or the sun to rise. It is an active waiting in which we live the present moment to the full in order to find there the signs of the One we are waiting for.

The word patience comes from the Latin verb patior which means “to suffer.” Waiting patiently is suffering through the present moment, tasting it to the full, and letting the seeds that are sown in the ground on which we stand grow into strong plants. Waiting patiently always means paying attention to what is happening right before our eyes and seeing there the first rays of God’s glorious coming.”

~Henri Nouwen

As Henri Nouwen reminds us, Advent is a time of active rather than passive waiting, of paying attention to moments of God’s love in our midst. Similarly, the beginning of any creative process involves gathering and noticing what speaks to you, what makes you curious--whether you’re a sculptor gathering scraps of material, a writer jotting down lines overheard from a conversation, or a collage artist collecting images from magazines. This week, we invite you to pay attention and “gather” moments of God’s presence in your days. God is always meeting us incarnate--*through our senses*.

Daily Reflection Questions

What moved me today?

What did I taste, read, hear, smell, touch that delighted my senses?

What did I taste, read, hear, smell, touch that made me more curious?

What questions about my relationship with God come to the fore as I turn inward and begin to pay attention to how God is working in my life?

What prevents me from noticing God through my senses? What do I need/want to do in order to slow down and be more attentive to my body/sensory experience?

Prayer

Before you begin creating, take a few moments in stillness to invite God to be with you during this time. Bring to God what’s on your heart and mind at this time. Name what grace you desire from this

time in prayerful creation with God. You may wish to conclude with the following prayer from the Book of Common Prayer:

O God, whom saints and angels delight to worship in heaven: Be ever present with your servants who seek through art and music to perfect the praises offered by your people on earth; and grant us even now glimpses of your beauty, and make us worthy at length to behold it unveiled for evermore; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Creative Prayer Practice Options

(*Note: The following practices are intended to be completed over the next few weeks in distinct phases. See below for part 1 of each practice.)

Option #1: Collage Activity (Part 1)

Materials needed:

Magazines, postcards, newspapers, old books with images

Scissors

1. Sift through your magazines, postcards, etc and find 30 images that speak to you. Try not to go searching for anything in particular, just pay attention to what you gravitate towards. It might be particular colors, textures, figures, etc. Save these images in a folder for part 2 next week.

Option #2: Writing Activity (Part 1)

1. Take a walk around the neighborhood (or even just look outside your window!) and record 40 different concrete observations. Try to be as concrete as possible (example: a blue bird sits on a telephone wire and not a beautiful bird rests. Record as objectively as possible what you see, hear, smell, etc.) Save these observations for part 2 next week.

Option #3: Sculpture Activity (Part 1)

1. Go on a walk (around the neighborhood, your home, the beach, etc.) collecting objects that you will later use to create a sculpture. You might choose to use the following question as a guide while gathering your materials: What does being in the presence of Jesus feel like?

Letting Go

Home Liturgy for The Third Week of Advent

Gather in God's name, lighting three candles

May God be with you... and also with you.

Listen to the Wisdom of the Holy One

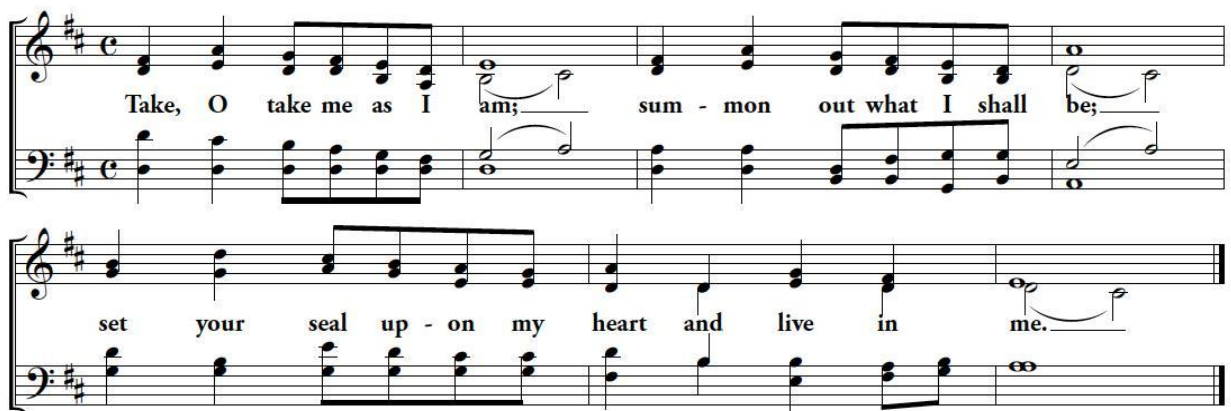
For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

-Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Sing: Take, O Take Me as I Am, by John Bell

[click here](#) to listen



The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your Name,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
 As we forgive those
 who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
 And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
 And the glory are yours,
 Now and for ever. Amen.

Respond

Now, and throughout this week, think on these things: what do I need to let go of in order to be able to experience the Divine in my own life? What ideas I have about myself are getting in the way of allowing the love of God to enter in?

Pray

Pray for courage in letting go, pray for honesty, and pray for gentleness.

Close, sharing God's blessing and giving thanks together.

Letting Go

Creative Prayer Practice for The Third Week of Advent

Journey of the Magi

By T.S. Eliot

'A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.'"And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

T.S. Eliot's "Journey of the Magi" confronts us with a stark picture of what the days leading up to Christ's birth might have been like for the wise men, and it has much to teach us about our own faith journey through Advent. For the magus of Eliot's poem, the way to Bethlehem is "cold," "just the worst time of year", full of "hard and bitter agony". Eliot's is not exactly a rosy, cheerful description of the anticipation of Christ's birth--instead, his poem articulates the at times painful reality of what it's actually like to fully inhabit these days of waiting. Our egos are hard wired to keep us wanting things in control, obsessing over the final product and making it to the finish line and avoiding uncertainty at all costs. Like the magus, when we set out in our faith life to be with our uncertainty--to trust God and surrender to all the feelings that arise when we simply don't know what to do next or what's ahead--it can feel like a kind of spiritual death. But Eliot's poem makes clear that these are the very moments which define deep inner conversion. They are what allow the magus to be free enough in his heart "to be glad of another death".

The creative process, too, can be much like the journey T.S. Eliot describes in his poem--there are times we can easily doubt what we're doing, run out of ideas, or judge ourselves for even setting out in the first place. But, again, as the magus in the poem reminds us, each of these stumbling blocks--these mini "deaths" when we are no longer comfortable "in the old dispensations"-- are an invitation to let go of control, and to trust that God is ushering us deeper into the heart of God's love through the process.

Reflection Questions

What stands in the way of my trusting and giving myself to God in the creative process? What am I being invited to let go of in my heart?

A Note on the creative practices this week:

As you engage with the practices this week, pay attention to when you are feeling drawn in or in a state of “flow”, in addition to moments when you are feeling stuck, resistant, or self-critical. Most if not all people struggle with being open during the creative process--we are quick to say “this is bad art! I don’t like it! I’m no good!” Moments of doubt and moments of consolation are opportunities to invite God into the process--to share in gratitude with God for participating in an act of creation, or to ask for God’s loving guidance.

Prayer

Before you begin creating, take a few moments in stillness to invite God to be with you during this time. Bring to God what’s on your heart and mind at this time. Name what grace you desire from this time in prayerful creation with God. You may wish to conclude with the following prayer from the Book of Common Prayer:

O God, whom saints and angels delight to worship in heaven: Be ever present with your servants who seek through art and music to perfect the praises offered by your people on earth; and grant us even now glimpses of your beauty, and make us worthy at length to behold it unveiled for evermore; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Creative Prayer Practice Options

Option #1: Collage Activity (Part 2):

1. From the images you collected last week, select 15 images that speak to you. Then, make a collage using only those 15 images. Do not glue the images down! Take a picture once you’ve assembled the collage.
2. Using only those same 15 images, make an entirely different collage--feel free to experiment with cutting or ripping the images, arranging them in a new place on the page, etc. Just don’t add new images. Again, do not glue the images down. Take a picture of the image.
3. Repeat this process 4 more times, until you have created a total of 6 separate collages using the same materials.

Option #2: Writing Activity (Part 2)

1. Take your list of 40 observations and select 10 of your favorites. Then narrow that list down to 5.

2. Take a piece of paper and cut out 5 2" squares. On each of these squares, you will be creating a very simplified drawing of one of your five observations. Think of this drawing like a hieroglyph. For example, for the observation "a bird perched on a telephone wire" my drawing might look something like this:



Repeat this process for the other observations. You should have five squares each with a different drawing that corresponds to a different observation from your list.

3. Arrange your five squares into an order. It might be an order based on the shapes, or perhaps you see some narrative relationship between the squares.
4. For five minutes, write a story or poem using the squares as your guide. It might be that the story uses the literal observations you made from your list. It might be that the bird on the wire now looks more like a car on the road or something entirely different than what you initially observed. Go with this wherever you please!
5. Once the 5 minutes are up, rearrange the squares in a different order. Set the timer again and now write a new story or poem.
6. Repeat this process 4 more times, until you have 6 different stories or poems.

Option #3: Sculpture Activity (Part 3)

1. Using the materials you gathered from last week, create a sculpture (be sure to use only the objects you collected.)
2. Once you've created a sculpture, take a picture of it.
3. Using those same materials, now create an entirely different sculpture and take a picture of it.
4. Repeat this process 4 more times for a total of 6 separate sculptures using the same materials.

Reflection Questions on the Process:

What was it like to create several different iterations using the same materials? What feelings arose in the process? What (if anything) were you surprised by?

When did you feel close to yourself/God as you created?

When did you feel far away from yourself/God? When (if at all) did you feel stuck, self-critical, resistant?

What did you discover in this process? About yourself? The creative process? God's love?

Stepping Back

Home Liturgy for The Fourth Week of Advent

Gather in God's name, lighting four candles

May God be with you... and also with you.

Listen for the Holy

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

-John 1:1-5, 14

Sing: Wait for the Lord

[click here](#) to listen

The musical score is written for two staves, treble and bass clef, in G major (one sharp). The melody is simple and hymn-like. The lyrics are: "Wait for the Lord, whose day is near. Wait for the Lord; be strong, take heart!" The score includes a repeat sign at the end of the second line.

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.

Wait for the Lord; be strong, take heart!

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
And the glory are yours,
Now and for ever. Amen.

Respond

Where have you seen God in your midst? Where does this hope lead you?

Pray

Pray with gratitude for moments of grace, moments of connection with God.

Close, sharing God's blessing and giving thanks together.

Stepping Back

Creative Prayer Practice for The Fourth Week of Advent

We forget all too easily that one of the big lessons of the Incarnation is that God is found in the ordinary. You wish to see God? Look at the face of the person next to you. You want to hear God? Listen to the cry of a baby, the loud laughter at a party, the wind rustling in the trees. You want to feel God? Stretch your hand out and hold someone. Or just quiet yourself, become aware of the sensations in your body, sense God's almighty power at work in you and feel how near God is to you. Emmanuel, God-with-us.

~Anthony DeMello

For the past three weeks of Advent, we have been preparing for the birth of Christ by creating space in our hearts and homes, gathering in sources of inspiration, and letting go of fears and doubt as we engage with God in the creative process. This final week of advent, we call to mind the ways in which God has been with us throughout our Advent journey. We step back to notice and celebrate the moments when, like Elizabeth, we have felt new life leaping inside us. Our prayer practice this week will focus on revisiting a previous moment in prayer and creation over the past few weeks.

Repetition is the return to a previous period of prayer for the purpose of allowing the movements of God to deepen within the heart. Through repetitions, we fine-tune our sensitivities to God and to how he speaks in our prayer and in our life circumstances. The prayer of repetition teaches us to understand who we are in light of how God sees us and who God is revealing himself to be for us. Repetition is a way of honoring God's word to us in the earlier prayer period. It is recalling and pondering an earlier conversation with one we love. It is as if we say to God, "Tell me that again; what did I hear you saying?" In this follow-up conversation or repetition, we open ourselves to a healing presence that often transforms whatever sadness and confusion we may have experienced the first time we prayed. In repetitions, not only does the consolation (joy, warmth, peace) deepen, but the desolation (pain, sadness, confusion) frequently moves to a new level of understanding and acceptance within God's plan for us.²

² Excerpt from *Love: A Guide for Prayer* by Jacqueline Syrup Bergan and Sister Marie Schwan, CSJ

Reflection Questions

As I look back on the past few weeks of Advent, where and when did I feel closest to God? When did I feel farther away?

What do I offer back in gratitude to God from these past few weeks of prayer?

Creative Prayer Practice Options

1) *Repetition of a Previous Prayer*

Make yourself comfortable and set aside some quiet time for prayer. Perhaps light a candle or begin with deep breaths. Once you are settled, review the last few weeks of prayer. If you like, you can replay in your mind moment to moment what was happening in your prayer. Then select a period of prayer to repeat in which you have experienced a significant movement of joy, sadness, or confusion. You might also select a period in which nothing seemed to happen—perhaps because of your lack of readiness at the time.³

Recall the feelings of the first period of prayer. Use as a point of entry the scene, word, or feeling that was previously most significant. Allow the Spirit to direct the inner movements of your heart during this time of prayer.⁴

2) *Praying with Your Art*

For this prayer practice, you will need either a piece of art you created during this Advent or a photo of something you created.

Begin by making yourself comfortable and set aside some quiet time for prayer. Perhaps light a candle or take a few deep breaths. Once you are settled, invite God to be with you during this period of prayer. Ask for the grace to see your life and art as God sees you.

Spend some moments looking at what you have created, noticing what feelings and thoughts arise as you survey your creation. Now imagine looking at your art through God's eyes--full of love, acceptance, and joy. To make this a more imaginative exercise, you can visualize handing your art over to Jesus. Imagine him looking at what you've created with tenderness, pride, and love. How does he hold what you've created? What do you notice in Jesus' face as he looks at your art? Does he say anything to you? What does he want you to reveal to you about God's love? What feelings, thoughts, memories does this experience with Jesus beholding your artwork evoke for you? Spend some time in prayerful conversation with Jesus. Conclude your prayer time in gratitude for what God has revealed to you during this time of prayer.

³ Adapted from *Love: A Guide for Prayer* by Jacqueline Syrup Bergan and Sister Marie Schwan, CSJ

⁴ Excerpt from *Love: A Guide for Prayer* by Jacqueline Syrup Bergan and Sister Marie Schwan, CSJ

Additional Resources

The Daily Examen Prayer

*A daily examen prayer can be a powerful way to help you pay attention to how God is working through you this Advent season. Usually done for 15 to 20 minutes at the end of a day, the prayer was popularized by St. Ignatius Loyola in his classic text *The Spiritual Exercises*. Use these five easy steps to pray the examen every day, and soon you'll begin to notice God's presence more easily.*

1. Presence: Remember that you're in the presence of God in a special way when you pray. Ask God for help in prayer.
2. Gratitude: Recall two or three things that happened today for which you are especially grateful. Savor them. Then thank God for these gifts.
3. Review: Review your day from start to finish, noticing where you experienced God's presence. Notice everything from large to small: from an enjoyable interaction with a friend to the feel of the sun on your face. When did you love? When were you loved?
4. Sorrow: You may have sinned today or done something you regret. Express your sorrow to God and ask for forgiveness. If it's a grave sin, pray about seeking forgiveness from the person offended, or the sacrament of reconciliation.
5. Grace: You may want to return to a meaningful part of your prayer and speak to God about how you felt. At the close of the prayer, ask for God's grace for the following day.⁵

⁵ This version of the examen comes from Fr. James Martin, S.J.

Some Advent Discussion Questions for Families with Kids

In addition to the prayer practices in this booklet, the following questions may help to deepen and enrich conversations with children about the meaning of Advent.

- Do you know what Advent is? What do you know about it? Have you ever heard of Advent Calendars?
 - More than just a countdown to Christmas, Advent is a season in the church year where we prepare our hearts and minds for the birth of Jesus.
- What are some things we can do as a family to prepare for the birth of Jesus?
 - I wonder how we can prepare our home?
 - I wonder how we can prepare ourselves?
- I wonder if you remember any family traditions that help us get ready for Christmas?
- Sometimes, we like to think of the four weeks of Advent with the four themes of hope, peace, joy, and love.
 - I wonder what makes you feel hopeful?
 - I wonder what makes you feel peaceful?
 - I wonder what makes you feel joyful?
 - I wonder what makes you feel loved?
- I wonder what you are excited about for Christmas?
- I wonder if you can remember anything about the story of Jesus' birth?

Advent in 5 Minutes a Day

Even in such a busy season, we all have five minutes a day to spare to prepare our hearts, homes, and minds for the birth of Jesus.

Nov. 28 - Day 1 --- Notice something blue today, or a peaceful sound. When you do, set an intention for a meaningful Advent.	Nov. 29 - Day 2 --- Perform a small act of kindness today. Hold the door for someone, drop a quick note to a friend, etc.	Nov. 30 - Day 3 --- Set a timer for 5 minutes. Spend them in prayer; try silent meditation.	Dec. 1 - Day 4 --- Read Luke 1:26-38	Dec. 2 - Day 5 --- Set a timer for 5 minutes. Use that time to create something: a small drawing, hum or sing a song, etc.	Dec. 3 - Day 6 --- Give something away. Give someone a gift, make something for someone, etc.	Dec. 4 - Day 7 --- Set a timer for 5 minutes. Spend those 5 minutes at rest, laying down, or with your eyes closed.
Dec. 5 - Day 8 --- During a routine action that you undertake, pay attention to the people or things around you. What do you notice?	Dec. 6 - Day 9 --- Reach out to someone who is on your heart today, with a simple text, call, letter or visit.	Dec. 7 - Day 10 --- Set a timer for 5 minutes. Spend them in prayer; try journaling.	Dec. 8 - Day 11 --- Read Luke 1:39-56	Dec. 9 - Day 12 --- Listen to a song that has meaning for you. Think about what that song might be speaking to you now.	Dec. 10 - Day 13 --- Make a donation of any size to an organization of your choice.	Dec. 11 - Day 14 --- Set a timer for 5 minutes. Spend those 5 minutes at rest, laying down, or with your eyes closed.
Dec. 12 - Day 15 --- Set a timer for 5 minutes; bring awareness to your body by	Dec. 13 - Day 16 --- Give someone in your family or who you regularly spend time with an affirmation.	Dec. 14 - Day 17 --- Set a timer for 5 minutes. Spend them in prayer; try praying with music.	Dec. 15 - Day 18 --- Read Luke 1:57-80	Dec. 16 - Day 19 --- Write an Advent themed Haiku.	Dec. 17 - Day 20 --- Set aside a canned good to bring to church tomorrow for the Canned Food Drive.	Dec. 18 - Day 21 --- Set a timer for 5 minutes. Spend those 5 minutes at rest, laying down, or with your eyes closed.
Dec. 19 - Day 22 --- Go outside. What do you notice? What do you hear and see? How does the air feel against your skin?	Dec. 20 - Day 23 --- Say a prayer for someone you haven't seen in a while.	Dec. 21 - Day 24 --- Set a timer for 5 minutes. Spend them in prayer; try praying the collects for Advent on page 211 in the Book of Common Prayer.	Dec. 22 - Day 25 --- Read Luke 2:1-20	Dec. 23 - Day 26 --- Try writing your own Advent collect.	Dec. 24 - Day 27 --- Light a candle and invite the light of Christ into your day.	Christmas Day!