

ADVENT HOUSE GROUPS 2025

SESSION 1



The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. ISAIAH 9:2

Enter the Sacred Space (5 minutes)

The leader invites all to enter into a prayerful presence to the Holy Spirit, whose guidance we seek during our time together. During this prayerful silence, we give thanks for the opportunity of this time together, for the presence and gift of each other and ask for the grace of the Spirit to flow unimpeded during the session. All pray in silence for all, that each may receive light and healing

Pray and Share (15 minutes)

O God,
send forth your Holy Spirit
into our hearts that we might perceive,
into our minds that we might remember,
into our souls that we might meditate.
Inspire us to speak with love, holiness,
tenderness and mercy.
Teach, guide and direct our thoughts and senses
from beginning to end.
May your grace help us to see with your eyes
and to act with your love and light in our hearts.
May we be strengthened with wisdom from on high
for the sake and glory of your kingdom.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

In a period of calm and a space of trust, each one of us is invited to share briefly one thing that has happened in the past week or your hopes for the week ahead. It could be one thing that has given you cause for concern, something shared during the last time you met as a group or something that has given you cause to celebrate.

In this moment of peace and fellowship, we pray for the good of the group. Each member is invited to offer up any personal intentions. We also pray for the good of the Church, for wisdom in our country and for the common good. Let us also bring to mind the poor, the sick and those who have died. We join together in praying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen

Spiritual Reading and Contemplation (15 minutes)

What follows is the practice of spiritual reading and journaling that we can choose to generously share with each other. Each week includes a scripture passage, a poem and a picture. Read through the materials once as a group and then each person reflects on the material in silence.

- *Select one or more of the items to reflect on*
- *If desired write your thoughts in the space provided*

Scripture Reading

Matthew 24:37-44 - Stay awake so that you may be ready.

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples: 'For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

How am I preparing my heart for the coming of Christ, both at Christmas and at the end of time?

What does it mean for me to "stay awake" in my faith life today?

Like the people in Noah's time, am I living as though life will always go on as usual?

If Christ came today, would He find me ready?

How can I help others prepare for the Lord's coming?

Poem

Advent Calendar by Rowan Williams

He will come like last leaf's fall.
One night when the November wind
has flayed the trees to the bone, and earth
wakes choking on the mould,
the soft shroud's folding.

He will come like frost.
One morning when the shrinking earth
opens on mist, to find itself
arrested in the net
of alien, sword-set beauty.

He will come like dark.
One evening when the bursting red
December sun draws up the sheet
and penny-masks its eye to yield
the star-snowed fields of sky.

He will come, will come,
will come like crying in the night,
like blood, like breaking,
as the earth writhes to toss him free.
He will come like child.

As the poem moves through autumn to winter it repeats the promise "He will come". As I progress through my days do I live in the same assurance?

In the poem, the Christ child appears after a great struggle, a great stripping down, when the world is at its darkest point. What does this say to me about my Advent journey?

As we enter the season of Advent, what is the balance in your heart between hope and fear?

Picture

The Cestello Annunciation by Sandro Botticelli.



The Angel Gabriel kneels in deference to the mother of Jesus.

Mary's body language and face are conflicted, afraid, welcoming, retreating, advancing, concerned and puzzled.

If Mary says "no", what becomes of creation so eagerly waiting for its salvation?

Journal Notes

Optionally use this page to record your thoughts during your time of reflection

Conversation and Sharing (15 minutes)

Each person is invited to briefly share any thought or insight related to the materials that came to them during their time of reflection. This could be in the form of a simple phrase, a prayer that came to mind, an image or any other insight. It is also permissible to simply respond with silence and no one is obliged to speak.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

The leader can optionally summarise the main insights that have been shared and the meeting concludes with prayer:

Heavenly Father, as we have gathered in the warmth of this house, we thank you for this season of Advent, a time of reflection, anticipation, and renewal. We ask for the grace to see Christmas in a new light. Help us to look beyond the familiar and seek the deeper meaning of your son's birth. May we see Christ in every act of kindness, every gesture of love, and every moment of stillness. Open our hearts to the wonder of your presence in unexpected places—whether in the humble manger, within the experience of others or within our own hearts.

Amen