

ADVENT HOUSE GROUPS 2025

SESSION 2



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 3:1-12 - Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight."'

Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father", for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

'I baptise you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

Advent invites us to a conversion of heart. In what areas of my life do I sense God calling me to change or turn back to Him?

What concrete actions—acts of love, forgiveness, or service—can help make my heart and my world more ready to receive Christ?

Do I sometimes rely on my spiritual background or identity, rather than living faith in action?

Are there particular virtues, habits, or relationships where God is inviting growth or healing?

Poem

Shadows by D.H. Lawrence

And if tonight my soul may find her peace
in sleep, and sink in good oblivion,
and in the morning wake like a new-opened flower
then I have been dipped again in God, and new created.

And if, as weeks go round, in the dark of the moon
my spirit darkens and goes out, and soft, strange gloom
pervades my movements and my thoughts and words
then shall I know that I am walking still
with God, we are close together now the moon's in shadow.

And if, as autumn deepens and darkens
I feel the pain of falling leaves, and stems that break in storms
and trouble and dissolution and distress
and then the softness of deep shadows folding, folding
around my soul and spirit, around my lips
so sweet, like a swoon, or more like the drowse of a low, sad song
singing darker than the nightingale, on, on to the solstice
and the silence of short days, the silence of the year, the shadow,
then I shall know that my life is moving still
with the dark earth, and drenched
with the deep oblivion of earth's lapse and renewal.

And if, in the changing phases of man's life
I fall in sickness and in misery
my wrists seem broken and my heart seems dead
and strength is gone, and my life
is only the leavings of a life:

and still, among it all, snatches of lovely oblivion, and snatches of renewal
odd, wintry flowers upon the withered stem, yet new, strange flowers
such as my life has not brought forth before, new blossoms of me –

then I must know that still
I am in the hands of the unknown God,
he is breaking me down to his own oblivion
to send me forth on a new morning, a new man.

The poem speaks of different sorts of oblivion; can oblivion be good if it means being dipped again in God and made new?

To what extent are you able to feel held in God's hands?

Are there some losses in your life (including of your own powers) that you need to accept and embrace?

Picture

Simeon's Song of Praise - Rembrandt van Rijn



Simeon declares Jesus to be a light of revelation that will illuminate all peoples. What does the light of Christ reveal in me?

Simeon has seen enough to know that God the Creator is at work in renewing creation and can now leave in peace.

All peoples, all races, will be illuminated by this light, able to see each other in their common humanity and know their share in the love of God.

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