

ADVENT HOUSE GROUPS 2025

SESSION 4



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 1:18-24 - Jesus was born of Mary, who was betrothed to Joseph, son of David.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel' — which means, God with us. When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife.

Like Joseph, am I open to trusting God even when I don't fully understand His ways?

What fears or uncertainties might God be inviting me to let go of this Advent?

Joseph acts without fanfare or words, simply doing what God asks. In what areas of my life is God calling me to respond with quiet trust and action?

How do I experience God's nearness in my daily life, and how can I help others recognize that God is truly with them?

What practical or spiritual steps can I take to make space for Jesus amid the busyness of the season?

Poem

The Visitation by Elizabeth Jennings

She had not held her secret long enough
To covet it but wished it shared as though
Telling would tame the terrifying moment
When she, most calm in her own afternoon,
Felt the intrepid angel, heard
His beating wings, his voice across her prayer.

This was the thing she needed to impart,
The uncalm moment, the strange interruption,
The angel bringing pain disguised as joy,
But mixed with this was something she could share
And not abandon, simply how
A child sprang in her like the first of seeds.

And in the stillness of that other day
The afternoon exposed its emptiness,
Shadows drift from light, the long road turning
In a dry sequence of the sun. And she
No apprehensive figure seemed,
Only a moving silence though the land.

And all her journeying was a caressing
Within her mind of secrets to be spoken.
The simple fact of birth soon overshadowed
The shadow of the angel. When she came
Close to her cousin's house she kept
Only the message of her happiness.

And those two women in their quick embrace
Gazed at each other with looks undisturbed
By men or miracles. It was the child
who laid his shadow on their afternoon
By stirring suddenly, by bringing
Back the broad echoes of those beating wings.

Have you ever found there was something about your relationship with God that has been quite impossible to communicate to anyone else?

Picture

Saint Joseph with the Infant Jesus by Guido Reni



Perhaps God chooses Joseph to care for Jesus because he does not insist on being seen as important but simply offers himself to be what God needs him to be.

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