



2017 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL FROM THE
DIOCESE OF VIRGINIA AND FORMA



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF VIRGINIA



THE NETWORK FOR CHRISTIAN FORMATION

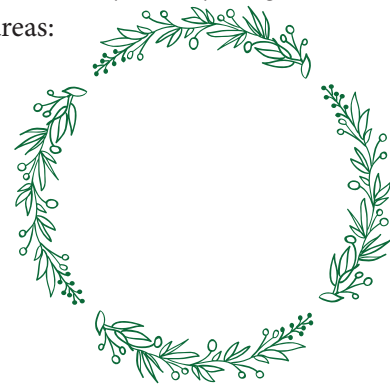
The Diocese of Virginia and Forma are thrilled to partner together to offer this simple Advent devotional to families. Please use this to deepen your faith and your understanding of this important, but often overlooked season in the Church year.

Paris Ball, the Director of Christian Formation and Shrine Mont Camps for the Diocese of Virginia, and Bill Campbell, the Forma Executive Director partnered together to create a few offerings for each week of Advent. You will find a brief overview of the scriptural themes for each week, ideas to try in your home to deepen your experience of Advent, and some short prayers and rituals to make your Advent experience complete.

This is merely a guide. Please do embrace the Advent season as a moment to pause, reflect, and push aside the secularization of Christmas. Advent was historically a penitential season. We certainly don't think that many people are going to return to a second Lent like season, but we are hopeful that everyone will find a few moments in each day to think about the coming of Jesus into your life. What does it mean to be waiting with anticipation for our Lord to come? What is holding you back from being with Christ as he is born? Now is the time to ask those questions.

We encourage you to explore a spiritual practice beyond these suggested activities. One suggested place to start is with the ancient daily practice called The Examen. This sounds daunting and severe – don't worry, it's anything but. All the Examen asks of you is to pause for a few moments at the end of the day and focus in 5 areas:

1. **Become aware of God's presence.**
2. **Review the day with gratitude.**
3. **Pay attention to your emotions.**
4. **Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.**
5. **Look toward tomorrow.**



The Examen has become such a popular tool for spiritual formation that there is now an app on Android and iPhone systems. Go to your app store and search for Reimagining the Examen. You will find this to be a simple, but profound tool for reordering your daily life in God's grace.

While we were purposeful when writing this devotional to make it as "supply free" as possible, we hope you will consider purchasing or creating you own advent wreath for your home ritual. Ask your priest or lay minister in charge of Christian Formation for more information about what an Advent wreath is and where you can get one.

There is nothing here that is complicated or unruly. This Advent devotional is designed for anyone to use this at home alone, with their friends, spouse, children, or anyone you want to deepen your faith with.

WE INVITE YOU INTO A HOLY ADVENT – LET'S BEGIN!!

NOTE – How the Church Tells Time

Most of the world thinks of time as a line. We have what once was, we have now, and we have what will be. The Church does not think of time in this way. Advent is the beginning of the Church liturgical year, but in practice, we have no beginning or end. We have seasons: Advent (4 Sundays), Christmas (12 days) ending on Epiphany, Lent (6 Sundays), Easter (7 Sundays) ending on Pentecost, and the Sundays after Pentecost (also called Ordinary Time). The cycle repeats over and over again living through the life cycle of Christ and the Church, calling us into memorial and remembrance of what was, is, and will be.

Advent, Week 2

Theme: Peace

Scripture: *Isaiah 40:1-11, 2 Peter 3:8-15a, Mark 1:1-8, Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13*

“Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.” — 2 Peter 15a

Introduction:

In the second week of Advent, our focus is on Peace. What does it mean to be at peace? What is the Peace of God? If it passes all understanding, how are we to even begin understanding it? These are the sort of questions that can tie theologians in knots. They are also the sort of questions that can leave us wondering why so much of religion is difficult to grasp.

Peace can mean lots of different things. If you talk to a historian, they might tell you that we currently live in an unprecedented state of peacefulness. If you talk to anyone watching the 24-hour news cycle, they will tell you that the historian is crazy! Peace is indeed a relative idea. For many of us, living in peace means not having strife, stress, or chaos in our lives.

One of the gifts of the Christ-child coming among us is that God comes to this earth to bring peace to the people. During Jesus' ministry, he declared the year of our Lord's favor which historically would have forgiven debts, freed prisoners, and marked a period of peace against enemies. We can't control much of the world's machinations, but how can we bring peace into our lives? How can we invite a bit of peacefulness into our homes and into our minds as we prepare for the coming of Jesus?

Households with Adults and Children:

➤ **DISCUSSION STARTER AND ACTIVITY:** Children of all ages understand the nature of sitting still, not hitting, sharing, etc. We consider these actions to be “good manners” but they are also spiritual imperatives. We must find time to sit in the stillness of God, to share the gifts we have with others who have less, and we must turn the other cheek.

○ Using the simple messages that we teach all young children, what are ways they practice peace? (Parents, keep in mind that peacemaking is all about small actions that add up on a global scale – such as sharing a toy, being a friend at daycare or school, standing up for someone being picked on, giving to those who have less...)

○ Keep a list of the ways they have brought peace into the earth. Help them see that they are creating peace... from nothing into something.

Households with Adults and Youth

➤ **DISCUSSION STARTER AND ACTIVITY:** When was a time that the family felt at peace? There are many dynamics that go on inside families. We often focus on “fixing” the negative dynamics. Spend some time thinking about, talking about, and living in moments when you and your family were at peace.

○ What do these moments share? How can we create more of these moments together?

○ This week, find times to share moments of quiet intimacy with each other. A shared meal, prayers at bedtimes, in the car on the way from school or sports – find a time to share your moments of peace and ask God to create more moments together.

Households with Adults

➤ **DISCUSSION STARTER AND ACTIVITY:** As an adult, you have more autonomy than children or youth to bring peace to others. One of the greatest commandments we take on in our baptismal promise is to be Christ-like towards other people. To seek and serve Christ in others.

○ What are the ways you are going out to bring peace to others? What ministry can you join, or even create to bring about lasting peace to your neighbors?

○ Go get involved in a local ministry, even if you are already doing some good work in your community – take on one more action as you prepare for the coming of Christ.

For Everyone – Rituals and Prayers

Light a small candle, LED candle, or the second candle of your Advent wreath. Gather with your loved ones as you are able and ask this simple prayer:

*God, help us to see where we bring peace into the World.
Help us to serve others and see Christ in the world around us.*

Where are we seeing Peace?

Where are we seeing the opposite of Peace? How can we bring Peace into the world?

