Praying at Home for Advent

Northern Pastoral Network

"Centred in Christ, we the Northern Pastoral Network, gather to nurture, support and inspire each other in our ministries. This enables us to share ideas, initiatives and resources to build and enrich our faith communities."

The Northern Pastoral Network is a group of laity, clergy and religious from across the Dioceses of Armagh, Clogher, Derry, Down and Connor, Dromore, Kilmore and Raphoe.

Thank you for taking the time to use this resource this Advent.

**A resource has been produced
for the Twelve Days of Christmas
and will be available to download from our website.**

**Do follow us on Social Media
to have access to more resources
to support you in your prayer at home.**

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www.northernpastoral.network

"You have made us for yourself, O Lord,
and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

Saint Augustine

In the short days, dark nights and chill of winter, we reminisce of the brighter and warmer days that have passed and in hope, long for their return. We are tired by the strain of this pandemic and the disruption that it has brought to our lives. We yearn for constancy, we seek out signs of hope, and we long for something to fill the void in our lives. Our constancy and our hope are found in God. God is with us.

The Church has many seasons. Advent is a season of preparation for the great feast of Christmas. In the 4 weeks of Advent we have a time to prepare spiritually for Christmas and the arrival of the Son of God to a stable in Bethlehem.

As we set out on our journey towards Christmas, we may find ourselves connecting with the emotions of weariness, anxiety and fear felt by Mary and Joseph on the road to Bethlehem. Unsure of what lay ahead Mary and Joseph embarked on a courageous journey fuelled by their trust in God and a beautiful expectant hope of better things to come. Let trust and hope be the hallmarks of our prayerful journey this Advent.

The Northern Pastoral Network have collated this prayerful resource to support you in your spiritual preparations through Advent. We invite you to use this resource through each of the four Sundays of Advent. Week by week, may the candles on our Advent wreaths dispel the darkness as we journey to Christmas and the arrival of the Light of the World, Jesus Christ.

May Christ Emmanuel be with you in these weeks of waiting and anticipation and we pray that, as you journey through Advent, you will grow closer to Christ experiencing the hope, love, joy and peace that a relationship with Jesus brings.

Rejoice!! Rejoice!! Emmanuel.
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Preparing

This resource has several different elements that we hope will enrich your prayer in the days ahead. During the four Sundays of Advent there will be some activities and you might want to gather together the materials ahead of time. Do remember that Jesus was born in a stable so it doesn't matter if your candles are a different colour, or if your crib is made from a cornflake box – it's the thought that counts.

Set Aside Time to Pray

This is a time for you to connect with God , so find a time that will be free from interruptions or hurrying onto another task. Having a regular time for prayer helps prayer to become part of our routine and strengthens us to love God, our neighbour and ourselves.

If you already have a time of prayer such as the rosary you can combine this prayer with it.

The Family That Prays Together, Stays Together

Children love to be involved. Let them read, sing, blow the candles out to send the prayers to heaven and let them share their thoughts and questions. Families sometimes say it can be hard to make teenage children pray. Our advice don't make them pray, invite them to be with you. The following words might help:

"Prayer is really important for me, it gives me strength, peace and a time to reflect. I pray for you every day and I'd really like us to pray together, having you with me would be a great gift."

Pope Francis encourages an alliance between young and older people especially by the sharing of the wisdom and experience of older people, with the new generations who are hungry for guidance and support as they prepare for the future. Why not share this time of prayer with someone from a different generation and be richly blessed in the process.

Get Creative

You might have favourite hymns or reflective music bring your playlist or CD player to your time of prayer or if you can sing or play an instrument you can give great Glory to God using your talents.

Create a prayer space. You might prefer to read the scriptures from your own Bible, pray in front of the crib or bring a favourite image. Couples might wish to light the candles from their wedding day or parents of a new baby, their baptismal candle.

Make Space For a Loved One

This year when travel is restricted, we might not be able to gather in the same way with family and indeed many of us will be missing a loved one who has passed away. You can place a photograph in your prayer space of someone you wish to remember or pray for.

Use Technology

In 2020 we have learnt lots of new skills to stay connected. We may not be able to travel and visit people in their homes but we can connect for prayer – be it over the phone, iPad or computer.

QR Codes

The QR Codes in this book will bring you to further resources on our website.

If using a printed copy, use the camera on your smartphone.

If using a digital copy, click on the code.

LOVE HOPE PEACE JOY

1st Sunday of Advent
29th November 2020

Jesus In Our Midst, An Activity in the Home

The Advent wreath is a Christian tradition symbolising the passage of the four weeks of Advent. It is a circle of evergreen foliage that holds five candles. The circle represents God's infinite love and mercy and the evergreens the hope of eternal life. During the season of Advent one candle on the wreath is lit each Sunday, until all candles are lit. The candles represent hope, love, joy and peace. Traditionally we use three purple candles, one pink candle and a white candle which we light on Christmas Day.

Make an advent wreath and place it in a place where you can gather to pray. You can also colour in a paper wreath follow the QR code for a colouring in sheet.

Share a picture of your wreath with family and friends and let them know that you are praying for them.

Prayer Time at Home

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, **Amen**

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.
(Mark 13:33-37)

Jesus said to his disciples: "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. Watch, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"

HOPE

Pause for Thought

Advent is a time to be watchful. The candles of the Advent wreath give us light to watch for Jesus.

In the Gospel Jesus is like a house owner who has gone abroad, but he has left his servants – that is, you and me – in charge of his affairs, each one with their own task.

What are the tasks that Jesus has given to us in the world?

There are many people who have been signs of hope during this time of pandemic.

Who has been a sign of hope for you?
What were their actions?

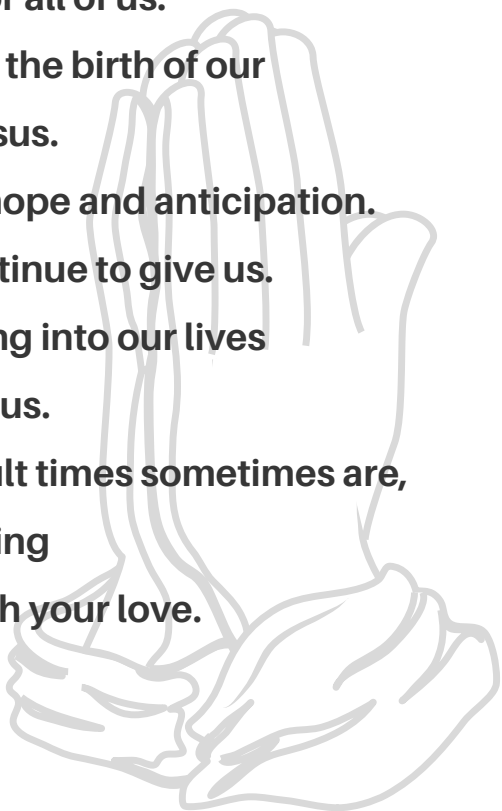
Music Suggestion
Hope For Everyone
by Matt Maher

Hope is like a light shining in a dark place.

As we look at the light of this candle, we celebrate the hope we have in Jesus Christ. We light the candle, representing hope. Hope, because God is faithful and will keep the promises made to us. God sent us the Messiah, the Son of God, as he promised. As we light the first candle, we ask God to fill our hearts and minds with hope.

A family member lights the first purple candle – the candle of hope.

God of Hope, we enter your holy season of Advent giving
thanks to you for the love you have for all of us.
We begin to prepare for the celebration of the birth of our
Lord and Saviour, your Son, Jesus.
With the promise of your Son, we live with great hope and anticipation.
Hope in the knowledge of the love you continue to give us.
Hope in the knowledge that Jesus is coming into our lives
and hearts to heal us and love us.
We are a people of hope, and no matter how difficult times sometimes are,
we know that your Son is coming
and that you continue to shower us with your love.
Amen.



Prayer for a Light in the Darkness

(adapted from the Christopher Prayer Book)

Father, grant that I may be a bearer of Christ Jesus, your Son.
Allow me to warm the often cold, impersonal scene of
modern life with your burning love.
Strengthen me, by your Holy Spirit to carry out your mission
of changing the world or some definite part of it, for the better.
Despite my failures, bring home to me that my advantages
are your blessings to be shared with others.
Nourish in me a desire to build up rather than tear down.
Never let me forget that it is far better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.
And to join my light, one day, with yours.
Amen.

Advent Litany

Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
You are light in our darkness.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Son of God, save us from our sins.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Son of Mary, deepen our love.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Bring hope into the lives of all people.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Give your peace to all nations.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Be the joy of all who love you.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Bring unity among all who believe in you.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Bless us as we gather here in your name.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Lord Jesus, stay with us always.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**

Let us pray:
May Christ give us his peace and joy and let us share them with others.
All peace and glory are his for ever. **Amen.**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

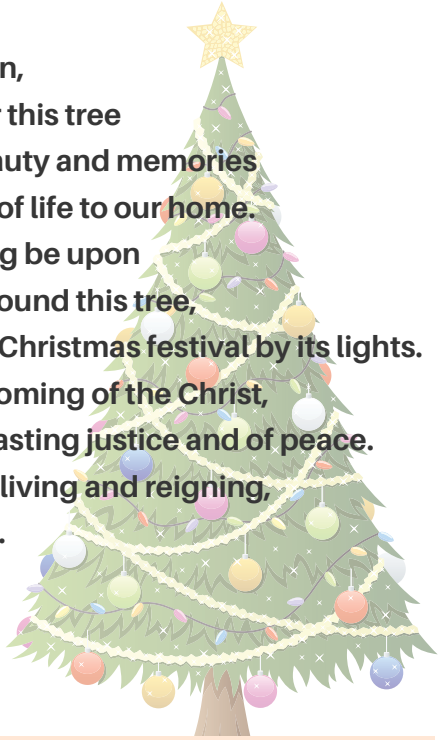
HOPE

2nd Sunday of Advent
6th December 2020

Jesus In Our Midst, An Activity in the Home

Christmas decorations bring great cheer to the family home, especially the Christmas tree. The tree reminds us of all that is beautiful, all that is filled with the gentleness and the promise of God. It stands in our midst as a tree of light, that we might promise the light of Christ to one another and to our world. It stands like that tree of paradise that God made into the tree of life, the cross of Jesus. Gather together around the Christmas tree with the lights off. Bless the star or angel from the top of the tree with Holy Water, pray together and when you say Amen, turn the lights on.

God of all creation,
we praise you for this tree
which brings beauty and memories
and the promise of life to our home.
May your blessing be upon
all who gather around this tree,
all who keep the Christmas festival by its lights.
We wait for the coming of the Christ,
the days of everlasting justice and of peace.
You are our God, living and reigning,
for ever and ever.
Amen.



Prayer Time at Home

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, **Amen**

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark.
(Mark 1:1-8)

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.
As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:
Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way.
A voice of one crying out in the desert:
"Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."
John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptised by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptised you with water; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

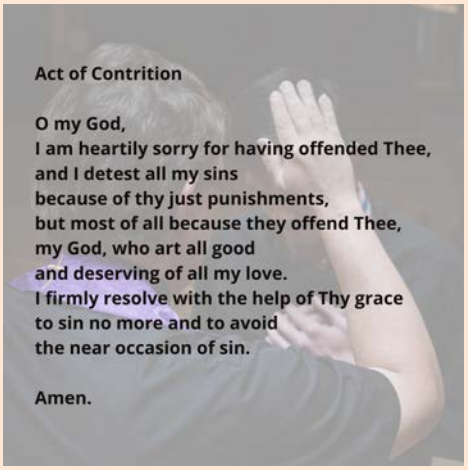
Pause for Thought

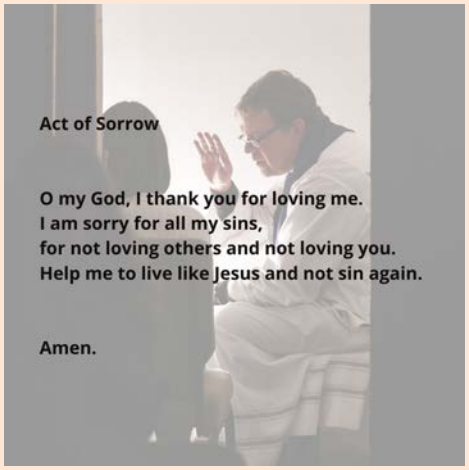
John the Baptist was an outrageous person, not many of us would share his taste in clothes or food! However, he stands out most for his words and challenge.
He calls us to look at our lives, our actions and to discover and confess our sins.
He asks us to do this because it is the way to real, deep, Christian joy.

Take time to think about the things that you are sorry for.

What is the one aspect of your life that you need to change?

In the quiet of your own heart pray an act of sorrow and ask that the Holy Spirit, given to each of us in Baptism, will strengthen and guide you on your path to Jesus.





Music Suggestion

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel by Enya

Today we light the second purple candle, representing love. We prepare for the celebration of the birth of our Lord and hold within our hearts the abundance of love that our God brings to this world.

A family member lights the second purple candle – the candle of love.

God of Love, during the Advent season,
when life is busy and excitement is in the air,
we take time to think about the awesome gift of the birth of Jesus.
We reflect on the great love you have for us
that will be shown through your Son, Jesus.
May the light of this candle reflect the light
that resides within each of us, the love that we can bring to this world,
and the healing we can offer those who are suffering.
Amen.

A prayer for Love and Service

Lord, you created us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.
Please show us how to love you with all our hearts and our neighbour as ourselves.
Teach us to be practical about loving one another in you
and for you and as you desire.
Show us our immediate neighbour today;
the need of others is your call to our attention.
Remind us that you count as done to you what we do for one another,
and that our turning away from one another is really turning our backs on you.
Make us know, love and serve you in this life
and be happy for ever in the next in union with all our brothers and sisters.
Amen.

Advent Litany

Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
You are light in our darkness.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Son of God, save us from our sins.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Son of Mary, deepen our love.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Bring hope into the lives of all people.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Give your peace to all nations.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Be the joy of all who love you.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Bring unity among all who believe in you.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Bless us as we gather here in your name.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Lord Jesus, stay with us always.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**

Let us pray:
May Christ give us his peace and joy and let us share them with others.
All peace and glory are his for ever. **Amen.**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

3rd Sunday of Advent

13th December 2020
Gaudete Sunday

Jesus In Our Midst, An Activity in the Home

Gaudete Sunday is the day when we light the pink candle to represent joy. For the time of prayer today why not wear something pink; a pink tie, pink hair clips, pink lipstick have some fun and spread some joy!!

Gaudete Sunday has for many years been the day when the children of Rome bring the figurines of Baby Jesus from their family cribs to St. Peter's Square to be blessed by the Pope during the Angelus. The day is affectionately known as "Bambinelli Sunday."

Your baby Jesus may have been blessed at Mass.
At home now, say this prayer together as the baby Jesus is cradled in someone's hands.

God our Father, you loved us so much
that you sent us your only Son, Jesus,
born of the Virgin Mary,
to save us and lead us back to you.
We pray that, with your blessing,
this image of Jesus might be a sign of your
presence and love in our homes.
Open our hearts, that we might receive Jesus in joy,
do always what he asks of us,
and see him in those who need our love.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, your beloved Son,
who came to give peace to the world.
You, who live and reign forever and ever.
Amen

Now you are invited to wrap the baby Jesus figurine in Christmas wrapping and to place him under the tree, to be opened as the first gift of Christmas.

Prayer Time at Home

In the name of the Father, and of
the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, **Amen**

A reading from the Gospel according to John.
(John 1:6-8, 19-28)

A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light but came to testify to the light. And this is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, "Who are you?" He admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Christ." So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?" He said: "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'make straight the way of the Lord,'" as Isaiah the prophet said." Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, "Why then do you baptise if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptise with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognise, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptising.

Pause for Thought

John the Baptist knew that his role was to bring people to Christ. This is our role too. We try to live our lives with honesty, compassion, and generosity so that people will be able to know that our faith in Jesus makes a difference in our everyday lives.

What actions of ours point the way to Jesus?

Have we ever shared our faith with someone else?

What is the one thing we would want to share with others?

Music Suggestion
Come To Us
by Greg Watson

Today we light the third candle on our Advent wreath, the pink candle. The theme this week is joy. We are getting closer to celebrating the birth of our Lord and Saviour and the great joy he brings to our lives.

A family member lights the third, pink candle – the candle of joy.

God of joy, as we get closer to the celebration of the birth of your Son, we remain filled with joy. We know that life often presents us with challenges and that it is difficult to always be optimistic and cheerful. However, we know that you wish us to be a joy-filled people. Help us to focus on our blessings, to be appreciative of the many people who support us, and to be ever mindful of your constant presence. As we approach the celebration of Jesus' birth, may the peace and joy of the season fill our hearts. Amen.

Praises of God

(Saint Francis of Assisi)

You are holy, Lord, the only God and your deeds are wonderful.
You are strong. You are great. You are the Most High.
You are almighty. You holy Father, are King of heaven and earth.
You are Three and One, Lord God, all good.
You are Good, all Good, supreme Good, Lord God, Living and true.
You are love, You are wisdom. You are humility, You are endurance.
You are rest, You are peace. You are joy and gladness.
You are justice and moderation. You are all our riches, And you suffice for us.
You are beauty. You are gentleness.
You are our protector, You are our guardian and defender.
You are courage. You are our haven and our hope.
You are faith, our great consolation.
You are our eternal life, Great and wonderful
Lord, God almighty, Merciful Saviour.

Advent Litany

Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
You are light in our darkness.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Son of God, save us from our sins.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Son of Mary, deepen our love.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Bring hope into the lives of all people.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Give your peace to all nations.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Be the joy of all who love you.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Bring unity among all who believe in you.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Bless us as we gather here in your name.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Lord Jesus, stay with us always.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**

Let us pray:

May Christ give us his peace and joy and let us share them with others.
All peace and glory are his for ever. **Amen.**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

4th Sunday of Advent

20th December 2020

Jesus In Our Midst, An Activity in the Home

By the fourth Sunday of Advent the preparations for Christmas are well underway. We encourage you to wrap up warmly and take a drive or a walk to take in the beauty of the Christmas lights as you make your way to a local Church. At the Church we invite you to take time to place your intentions before God and to ask for blessing on the close of this Advent season.

Music Suggestion

Gabriel's Message by Matt Maher

Prayer Time at Home

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, **Amen**

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke. (Luke 1:26-38)

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."
But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

PEACE

Pause for Thought

The words "Do not be afraid" are words for us too. In the quiet of your heart talk to God about the things you are frightened of. Now remember these words; "The Lord is with you." Take time to acknowledge God's presence and entrust your worries, fears and concerns to him, for God has promised to be with us always to the end of time. "Nothing will be impossible for God."

Today we light the fourth candle on our Advent wreath. The theme this week is peace.

Jesus, Prince of Peace brings healing to a broken world.

Music Suggestion

God With Us by All Sons & Daughters

A family member lights the last purple candle - the candle of peace.

God of Peace, in a troubled world where there is suffering and strife, conflict and war, we pray for peace.
We also pray for inner peace, that our minds and bodies will be calm and at peace in the knowledge that You are about to come to us.
Without inner peace, we know there can be no global peace, so we look to you,
Lord, for your love and direction to calm ourselves and be instruments of peace in the world.
Amen.

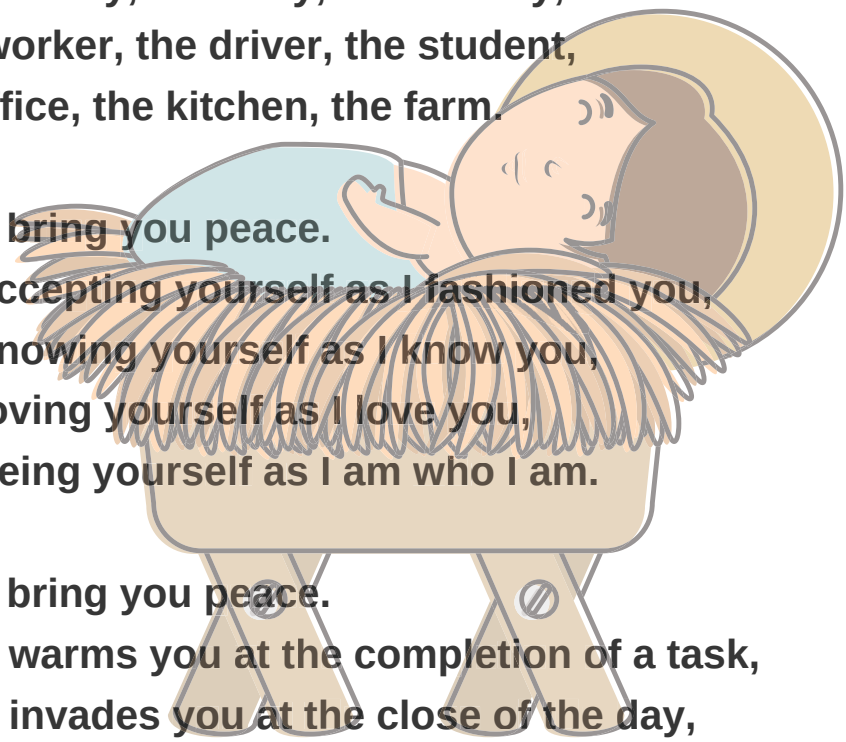
PACEM IN TERRIS *(Pope Saint John XXIII)*

Dear Lord, may you banish from the hearts of men and women, whatever might endanger peace. May you transform each of us into witnesses of truth, justice and brotherly love. May you enlighten the rulers of peoples so that they may guarantee and defend the great gift of peace. May you enkindle the wills of all, so that we may overcome the barriers that divide, cherish the bonds of mutual charity, understand others, and pardon those who have done us wrong. By virtue of your action, may all peoples of the earth become as brothers and sisters, and may the most longed-for peace blossom forth and reign forever. Amen.

I Have Come to Bring You Peace

I have come to bring you peace.
Not the peace of the season, for it is too fleeting,
Not the peace of the carol, for it is too nostalgic,
Not the peace of the greeting card, for it is too slick,
Not the peace of the crib, for it is too wistful.

Rather, I have come to bring you peace.
Peace of the ordinary, the daily, the homely,
Peace for the worker, the driver, the student,
Peace in the office, the kitchen, the farm.



I have come to bring you peace.
The peace of accepting yourself as I fashioned you,
The peace of knowing yourself as I know you,
The peace of loving yourself as I love you,
The peace of being yourself as I am who I am.

I have come to bring you peace.
The peace that warms you at the completion of a task,
The peace that invades you at the close of the day,
The peace that sustains you at the beginning of the day,
The peace that reinforces you when you are reconciled with one another,
The peace that touches you when your family is in order.

Without peace, my coming is unfulfilled.
Without peace, my birth is forgettable.
Without peace, Christmas is a contradiction.
I have come to bring you peace.

PEACE

Advent Litany

Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
You are light in our darkness.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
Son of God, save us from our sins.	**Come, Lord Jesus.**
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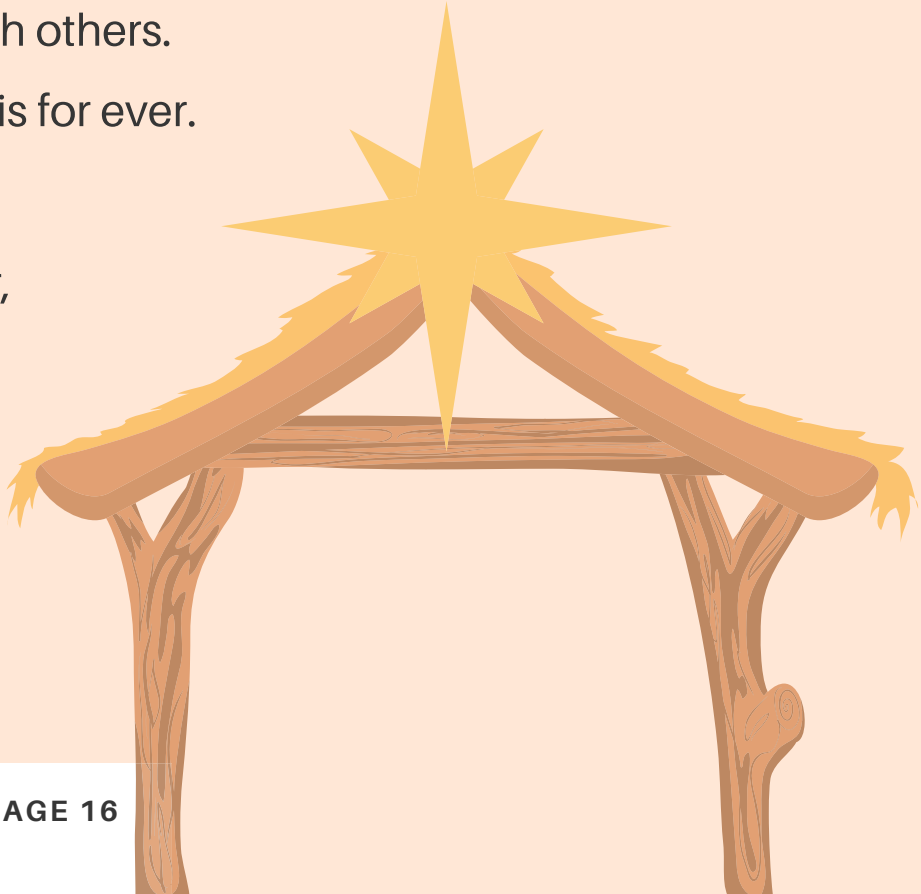
and let us share them with others.
All peace and glory are his for ever.
Amen.

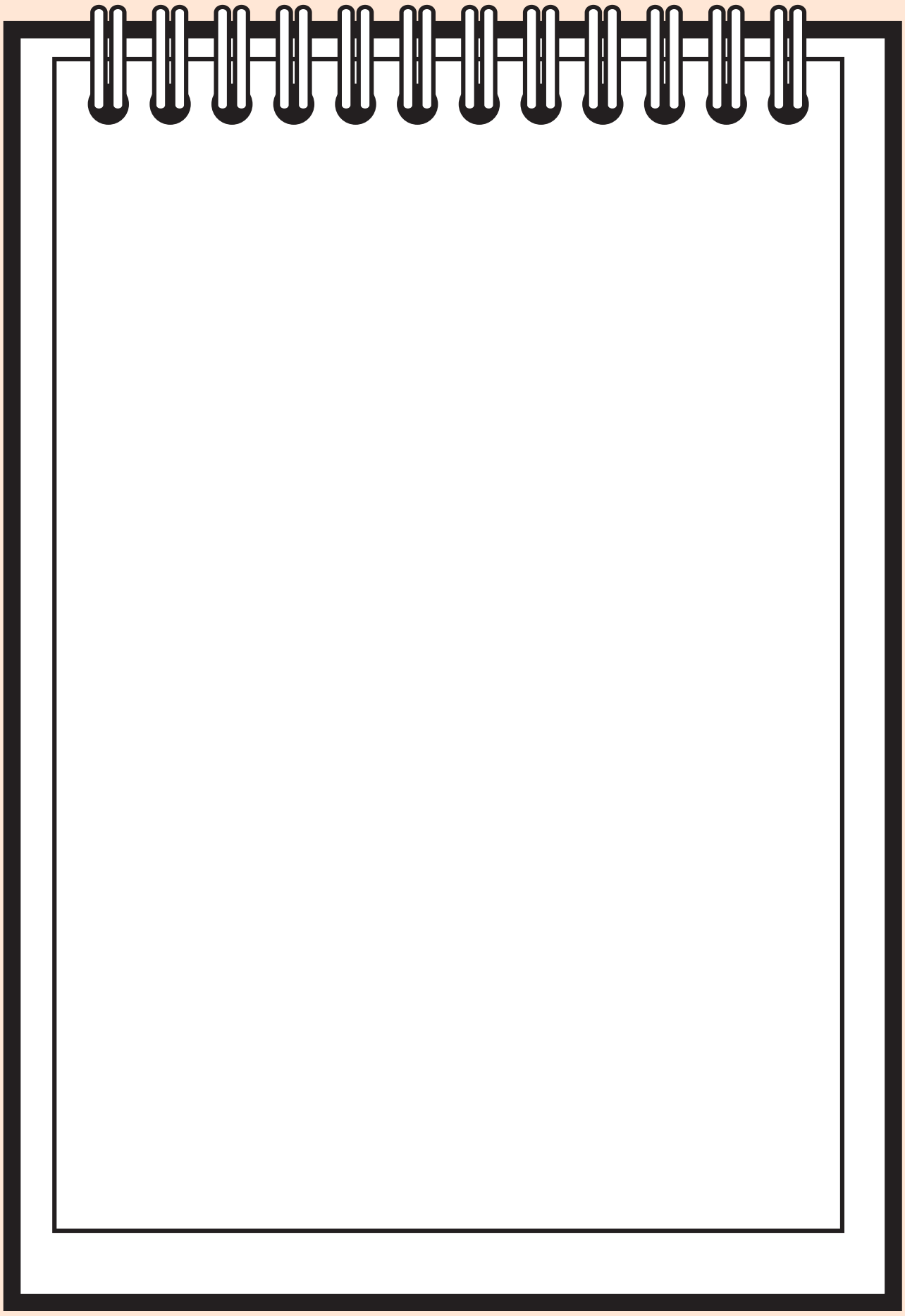
In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.



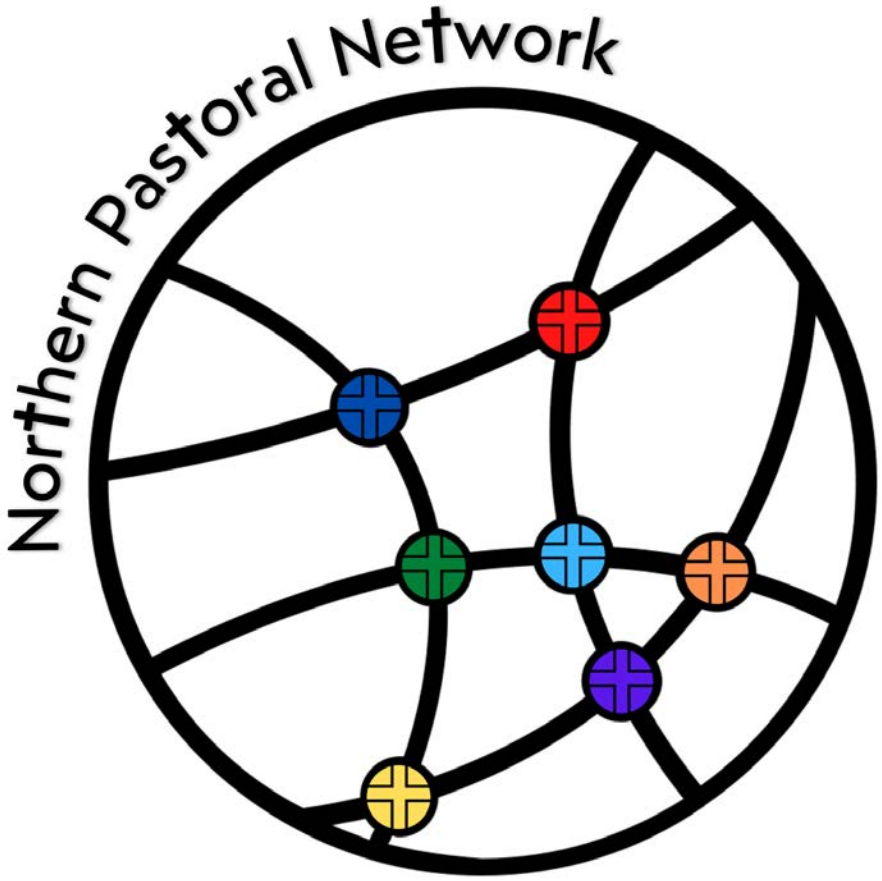
PEACE

My Own Reflections

Use this page to jot down your own thoughts and prayers.



HOPE LOVE JOY PEACE



"Centred in Christ, we the Northern Pastoral Network,
gather to nurture, support and inspire
each other in our ministries.
This enables us to share ideas, initiatives and resources
to build and enrich our faith communities."