Preparing Our Hearts for Christmas

ADVENT
Candle-lighting Liturgy
2009

“Let us not become preoccupied with the external preparations so as to miss the preparation of the heart. Better a poorly trimmed tree than a poorly trimmed heart! Better an empty refrigerator than an empty soul!”

Fr. John Mack, SS Peter and Paul Antiochan Orthodox Church, Kansas
The First Sunday of Advent
Waiting in Hope

Read Jeremiah 33: 14-16

Sing: “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

O Come, O Come Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here, Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

This week, think about waiting in hope for Jesus. Long, long ago, people were waiting for God’s special one – the Messiah – to be born. They hoped that when the Messiah came, people would remember that God is always with them. What are you hoping for this Advent?

Voice 1: On this first Sunday in Advent we light this candle and name it Hope. (Lights first purple candle.) When we light it, we feel excited. We are looking forward to something special. What can it be? When is it going to happen? When we light this candle, we feel hopeful as we wait in this season.

Voice 2: This candle reminds us that the prophet Jeremiah was longing for God’s presence too.

Voice 3: It reminds us that the people in the early church were longing for God’s presence too.

Voice 4: This candle is a symbol for our own longing for God to be with us. We wait in hope for God to surprise us and break into our lives.

All: O God, come, travel with us through Advent. Give us courage to spread hope in the world. Amen.

Sung Response: Hope is a star that shines in the night,
Leading us on till the morning is bright.
When God is a child there’s joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
And none shall be afraid.

Additional scripture readings for the first Sunday/week of Advent: Isaiah 2: 1-5, Psalm 122, Romans 13: 11-14, Matthew 24: 36-44
The Second Sunday of Advent
Preparing Our Hearts to Love

Read Luke 1: 26-38

Sing: “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

O Come, thou Day-Spring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, And death’s dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

This week we think about love. Say something you love about each person present (including yourself!) Name one or more others whom you love.

Voice 1: On this second Sunday in Advent we light the candle of Hope again. (Lights first purple candle) We remember our longing for God to be with us.

Voice 2: Today we light a second candle and name it Love. (Lights second purple candle.)

Voice 3: This candle reminds us of Mary, Jesus’ mother. She was a person who had a lot of courage. This candle reminds us of a mother’s love for her child, Jesus, who was God’s own Son.

Voice 4: This candle is a symbol of God’s love that was born in baby Jesus on Christmas Day. It is a symbol of God’s love that is alive in us each day too.

All: O God, come, travel with us through Advent. Give us courage to spread love in the world. Amen.

Sung Response: Love is a flame that burns in our heart.
Jesus will come and never depart.
When God is child there’s joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
And none shall be afraid.

The Third Sunday of Advent
Waiting in Joy

Read Luke 1: 39-56

Sing:  

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

O come, thou wisdom from on high, And order all things, far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show, And cause us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

This week, think about joy. Share some memories of joy that each person has experienced and name one or more people whom you hope will find real joy this Christmas.

Voice 1: On this third Sunday in Advent we light the candles of Hope and Love again. (Lights first two purple candles.) We remember our longing for God to be with us and fill our hearts with love.

Voice 2: Today we light a third candle and name it Joy. (Lights pink candle.)

Voice 3: This candle reminds us that God wants us to rejoice, even when that feels hard to do.

Voice 4: This candle is a symbol of the joy that comes when God is with us.

All: O God, come, travel with us through Advent. Give us courage to spread joy in the world. Amen.

Sung Response:  

Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,  
Telling the world that the Savior is born.  
When God is a child there’s joy in our song.  
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,  
And none shall be afraid.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent
Comfort and Peace

Read Micah 5: 2-5a

Sing: “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

O come, desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease; Fill the whole world with heaven’s peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

This week, we think about peace. Name one or more places where you would like to pray for peace, remembering that it is not just the absence of war, but the presence of justice.

Voice 1: On this fourth Sunday in Advent we light the candles of Hope, Love and Joy again. (Lights first two purple candles and pink candle) We remember our longing for God to be with us, to fill our hearts with love and to rejoice with us.
Voice 2: Today we light a fourth candle and name it Peace. (Light last purple candle)
Voice 3: This candle reminds us of our dreams for peace in the world.
Voice 4: This candle reminds us that Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and that he is coming.
Voice 5: This candle is a symbol of God’s promise of peace, and comfort and strength.
All: O God, come, travel with us through Advent. Give us courage to spread peace in the world. Amen.

Sung Response: Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,
Giving a promise of safety and worth.
When God is a child there’s joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
And none shall be afraid.

Lighting of the Christ Candle
At Christmas Fulfillment

Read Luke 2: 1-20

Invite each person to name a favorite Christmas carol or hymn and sing one verse. Close by singing, “Happy Birthday, Jesus!” Thank Jesus for coming to be with us.

Voice 1: The Advent time of waiting and preparing is over! We have lit four candles that remind us about longing and love and joy and peace. (Light the four Advent candles.)

Voice 2: These candles remind us that God has come to be with us, to teach us to love, to help us rejoice and to comfort us.

Voice 3: Today we celebrate that God has come to be with us in the baby called Jesus.

Voice 4: Today we light one more candle, and we call it the Christ candle. (Light the white candle.) This candle reminds us of all God has done for us. God fills us with good things, like hope and love and joy and peace. God is faithful to us. God is with us, now and always.

All: O God, come, lead us through our lives. Give us courage to spread your light in the world. Amen.

Sung Response: “Joy to the World”
Joy to the world! The Lord is come: Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare His room, And heaven and nature sing, And heaven and nature sing, And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Additional scripture readings for the first week of Christmas: Isaiah 62: 6-12, Psalm 97, Titus 3: 4-7