



## JESUIT VOLUNTEER CORPS

### ADVENT PRAYER GUIDE

Advent is the four weeks leading up to the celebration of Christmas. During this important part of the Catholic liturgical calendar, JVC highly encourages spending time in individual and group reflection. Advent is a time of anticipation and preparation, and as a Jesuit Volunteer, it is a time to experiment with practices that help make you feel more grounded in your spirituality, your experience in this program, and to recognize the ways God is incarnate in your term of service. This advent resource is an invitation for you to stay rooted in a faith that does justice and connect with your community.

#### Ways to Pray this Advent

1. **Take time for individual prayer:** Using the resource list attached to this guide, find an article that resonates with you and get creative. Try crafting your own spiritual reflection that centers around Advent.
2. **Share stories about your traditions with your community:** Journal for 15 minutes about the traditions you partake in this time of year. Drawing from your practices for Advent and Christmas, think through small instances of gratitude. Do you buy or cut down a tree? Do you decorate the tree or your house? Celebrate *las posadas*? Make or eat certain foods? After reflecting in written form, go around in a circle to share! Decide which traditions you'd like to see carried out in community, or perhaps do something new. End with a prayer from this guide or something else that resonates with you.
3. **Decorate your JV community with Advent prayer flags:** In Tibet, people often hang prayer flags along the mountaintops and peaks of the Himalayas. The Tibetan Buddhists believe that the mantras and prayers spread goodwill as the wind blows each flag, ultimately promoting peace, compassion, strength, and wisdom that become a permanent part of the universe. As part of the practice, Tibetans renew their hopes for the world by continually mounting new flags alongside the old. This act symbolizes a welcoming of life's changes and an acknowledgment that all beings are part of a greater ongoing cycle. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer\\_flag](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer_flag)  
In your community, reflect on your prayers or intentions for Advent this year. After some time reflecting in silence or with light music playing, spend some time creating your own prayer flags. Using 3 pieces of purple and 1 pink piece of fabric (advent colors) and markers, capture your intentions using words or illustrative pictures. Share some of your intentions in community, and as you do, string the pieces of fabric together to hang somewhere special in your JV home.
4. **Decorate Advent candles to add to a wreath (see #7):** Using large butcher paper, reflect on your community expectations and hopes about the four values. How might Advent represent a time to go deeper in some or all of the values? After time in community reflection, work together to create advent candles. Using Mod Podge and other crafting supplies, glue images and words that elicit Advent themes that relate to your community.
5. **Create a community Advent calendar:** Give each of the four weeks a theme taken from the JVC values. For each value think through two challenges to reflect on; two short prayers written by community; two intentions for your JV community; and one intention for an agency

partner(s). Feel free to switch up the number of each intention v. short prayer. We've provided examples that would yield enough for 1 Advent reflection per day for each week. Every morning dedicate some time to think through the intention, prayer, or challenge and use it to guide your day. Calendar templates for use can be found here:

<https://prayingincolor.com/advent-calendar-templates-for-2018>

6. **Christmas sing-along:** As a JVC community, or with others in your neighborhood, gather and sing some Christmas songs (Note: there are some good Advent songs as well) karaoke style or perhaps go all out and go caroling together.
7. **Adorn your table with an Advent wreath:** Create a traditional Advent Wreath together in community, or add a bit of a twist by incorporating the four values of JVC into the candles or the wreath itself.
8. **Enter into silence:** This time of year can be full of activity, and despite the invitation of Advent, which asks us to enter prayerful anticipation—it can be frenzied and busy. Take some time in silence, away from technology and social media to be with self. Perhaps you have a chance to take an extended walk outdoors. Use the resources within this guide to elicit some responses in written form. After Christmas comes and goes, revisit your writing.
9. **Doodle and color to pray:** Sybil Macbeth outlines a visual and colorful way to pray both in her books and on her blog Praying in Color (<https://prayingincolor.com/blog>). Write your name for God (or a word you wish to explore) on a piece of paper. Draw a shape around it or just start to doodle. The drawing becomes a prayer space. Continue to add marks and shapes. Focus on the name you chose. If words come, pray them; if not, enjoy the silence. To pray for a person, write their name on the page. Draw around it. Add color, if you want. Keep drawing as you release the person into God's care. Add other people to your drawing. Think of each stroke of your pen as a prayer for them. Take a breath or say "Amen" between each person. Adapted from "Handout for Praying in Color 2016"
10. **Using four types of poetry reflect on the questions in your heart together as a community:** This exercise encourages questions and conversation about how people experience faith and spirituality. Writing a poem is a way of honoring a memory, a new insight, or an important event and giving it form through language. It can bring a sense of wholeness to capture an interior movement through an outward expressive form. Writing poetry can cultivate practices of awareness, of listening deeply to our experiences, and the world around us.

**Where I'm From Poem:** The original "[Where I'm From](#)" poem was written by Appalachian poet George Ella Lyon and has proven to be a popular format for reflection on self-identity. [Jan Richardson adapted this format to an Advent theme](#) on her blog. Richardson offers some reflective questions to prompt your own poem: where are you from; what are the places, the people, the experiences that formed your path; what holds your roots; how does where you're from help you understand who you are; how does it enable you to make a way for the one who comes in this and every season?

Start each line of your poem with the phrase "I'm from..." and fill in with statements or phrases tying back to your personal history (important people, places, ideas or experiences that have shaped you).

**Acrostic:** Start with a word or name (e.g., Hope, Love, Joy, Peace), and write it vertically on a piece of paper. Each word of the poem should begin with that letter and articulate how you hope to be intentional about these words this season/year.

**Cinquain:** Use a pattern of words in five unrhymed lines while incorporating Hope, Love, Joy, Peace, or other Advent terms into your cinquain.

Line 1: One word (noun) a title or name of the subject

Line 2: Two words (adjectives) describing the title

Line 3: Three action words (verbs) ending in –ing that describe line 1

Line 4: A four-word phrase or sentence summarizing line 1

Line 5: One word referring back to the title of the poem, a metaphoric symbol.

**Haiku:** What are four or five words that come up for you when thinking about each of the questions below? Using the different answers to these questions you'll create a poem in a similar format to a haiku.

- 1) What do you anticipate/what are you longing for?
- 2) What names do you give God?
- 3) What words describe your visual image of God?
- 4) What do you say 'yes' to?
- 5) What are challenging things to say 'yes' to?

Instead of a traditional haiku, which uses syllables, this exercise uses the number of words. Each line represents an answer to one of the questions above. Decide for yourself which lines will answer which question. The format will look something like this:

One  
Two Two  
Three Three Three  
Four Four Four Four  
Five

Spend some time creating your poems and then display them for reading. Invite each other to ask questions about how a response answers a particular question.

## RESOURCES

### **Online Prayer Resources**

- About Advent and daily suggestions for prayer: <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/advent/>
- Ignatian Spirituality – Advent: <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/22859/advent-preview>
- Sacred Space (daily prayer, from the Irish Jesuits): <https://www.sacredspace.ie/>
- The Advent Door – prayers and reflections by Jan Richardson, an artist and Methodist minister: <http://adventdoor.com/>

### **Online retreats/daily 'inbox' reflections**

- Loyola Press - Sacred Advent Retreat: <https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/liturgical-year/advent/sacred-advent-retreat>
- Daily Lectionary Readings online: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/>
- Pray as You Go: <https://www.pray-as-you-go.org/home/>
- Catholic Relief Services Advent Calendar: <https://www.crs.org/advent-calendar>
- *Women's Christmas Retreats* (ebook), Jan Richardson includes a PDF for each year 2012-2018 can be found at: <http://sanctuaryofwomen.com/blog/>

### **Articles**

- [Circle of Light: Four themes for use with the Advent wreath](#)

- ["A busy Catholic's guide to Advent: 10 tips for observing the season" – National Catholic Reporter](#)
- ["25 days of Advent in action" – US Catholic](#)