

Advent 2020: An Advent like no other

A practice to use this Advent as influenced by the Ute people

We can easily list all the ways that this year 2020 is different. We can also say for sure that this Advent/Christmas season will also be different. One way to approach this season could be to take several deep breaths and borrow the style of a prayer of the Ute people. Below are several lines from their prayer addressed to the Earth.

...Earth teach me caring
as the mother who secures her young.

Earth teach me courage
as the tree which stands all alone.

Earth teach me limitation
as the ant which crawls on the ground.

Earth teach me freedom
as the eagle which soars in the sky ...

Earth teach me to forget myself
as melted snow forgets its life.

Earth teach me to remember kindness
as dry fields weep with rain.

“Ute Prayer,” in *Earth Prayers from Around the World* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 176

This Advent how might you pray in this style?

You are invited to create your own prayer to Advent 2020. You might start with just the first line. As Advent progresses you may discover the content of the second line. Or the prayer may come to you all at one time. Here are a couple of examples of prayer to the God of Advent 2020 using this practice:

Advent 2020 teach me patience
as the baker waits for the bread to rise.

Advent 2020 teach me to treat people tenderly
as God spoke to Jerusalem to comfort them.

Suggestions for continuing this practice for your Advent reflection.

You may wish to continue to use this format during the days and weeks of Advent to add to your Advent prayer practice. Use these weekly resources or the Power Point resources as an invitation to contemplate the Scriptures or images for reflection. Use the questions if they are helpful to deepen your reflection or prayer.

Read the Scriptures of the Sunday of Advent throughout each week. This is a [link to the readings](#) from the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops.

First Sunday of Advent

The Gospel reminds us:

Be on guard
Be Alert
Be watchful
Stay awake

Pay attention to this Advent in particular. Can we make use of what will be different? If so, What might you notice this year?

What perhaps might you see with new eyes?

Psalms 80: "Give us new life and we will call upon your name."

Looking back, what has been new for you this year?

Looking ahead, what could be new this year that might be God's way of giving you new eyes or new insight?

What images might you find for new life? (e.g., seeds; water; stars; birth; other?)

What is your Advent prayer this week? For example:

Advent 2020 teach me attentiveness
as those who open a door or carry a box for a stranger.

Second Sunday of Advent

The Gospel reminds us:

I am sending a messenger
Prepare the way

This week we hear readings about messengers. In the Scriptures, angels and prophets are messengers.

Who has been a messenger for you this year?

What kinds of people may have been sent to you as God's messengers?

How might you be God's messenger this year?

Psalm 85: "I will hear what God proclaims."

If you were a messenger of this line from this week's psalm, what would you hear?

If we are God's proclaimers, called to give voice to what God wants heard, what message of God would you proclaim?

Where might you have to go to proclaim the message, even if you feel unprepared? How might that be difficult for you or make you hesitant?

What is your Advent prayer this week? For example:
Advent 2020 teach me courage to be prophetic
as those who cry out against injustice.

Third Sunday of Advent

The Gospel reminds us:

One among you that you don't recognize
A crying voice

Perhaps this year, we have not recognized much of what has happened to us.

What haven't we recognized? Or perhaps, what have we taken for granted in the past?

How have we been surprised or caught off guard by an unexpected arrival or by a crying voice?

In the reading from Isaiah, we hear the announcement of a year of favor from the Lord. (How the heck is this a year of favor?)

In Luke's Gospel (on the Fourth Sunday of Advent) when the angel announces favor to Mary, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.", Mary's response is that she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Yet she responds with the Magnificat which is this Sunday's responsorial psalm.

Luke 1 (responsorial): LK 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54. R. (Is 61:10b) R. My soul rejoices in my God.
My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked upon his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: R.

the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. R.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, R.

The responsorial is an echo of Mary's canticle, in which she proclaims that God has remembered his promise. ([Luke 1:46-55](#)). Can we recall God's promise and find some hope in it?

If you were to create a canticle, a hymn of praise to God, what would be the verses of your Magnificat this Advent?

What is your Advent prayer this week? For example:

Advent 2020 teach me patient waiting
as many in food lines who wait for nourishment.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

The Gospel reminds us:

Then the angel said to her,
“Do not be afraid, Mary,
for you have found favor with 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.

This year has surfaced many different feelings.

What conversation might you want to have with God as Mary did with God’s messenger?

Does anything feel barren to you this year. If so, what promise of something impossible do you need?

Is it possible that it is there in front of you already? Where could you look for it this Advent?

Psalms 89: “I have made a covenant with my chosen one ... Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him, and my covenant with him stands firm.”

Sometimes it is hard to remember we are in a covenant with God; that we are chosen ones. If you are chosen, what could that mean for whatever situation you find yourself in?

We have found ourselves in multiple impossible situations including the racial divide, the country’s divisions, the pandemic, etc. What does it mean to be chosen in the midst of this?

What is your Advent prayer this week? For example:

Advent 2020 teach me faithfulness
as we see in Elizabeth during years of barrenness.