

Advent week #1



Hope
December 1 -7, 2019

“Hope” is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune
without the words
And never stops - at all
And sweetest in the Gale is heard
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm
I’ve heard it in the chilliest land
And on the strangest Sea
Yet never in Extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

~Emily Dickinson



Depending on your tradition, you may or may not celebrate Advent. Or, for you, Advent may begin on a different day. For the Catholic church and many other Christian denominations, Advent begins this week and lasts for four Sundays until Christmas. It is a “countdown” of sorts for the birth of Jesus which we celebrate on Christmas Day, December 25th.

In many denominations, Christians use an Advent wreath to symbolize the four weeks of Advent - often three purple and one pink candle. In some traditions, the candles represent themes for the various weeks. The theme varies depending on what resource you access. For this resource, I am choosing to represent the first week’s theme as “Hope”. Subsequent weeks will be Peace, Joy, and Love.

As we look forward to the coming of our Lord, the first week is a good time to think about hope. Our new year for Western calendars typically starts on January 1, but for many churches, the new year begins on the first Sunday of Advent.

As you enter into this week, consider the following questions:

- What do I hope for my relationship with God as this year begins?
- What hopes do I have for my family? my friends? my colleagues?
- Hope can ebb and flow as the year progresses. So, as I begin this year, what grace(s) can I ask God for that will sustain my hope?

Consider engaging with others in conversation about their hopes as you enter into this season.

Lord, as I enter into the Advent season, grant me the grace to know You more.
Help me to increase in faith, maintain hope, and spread this hope to all those I
encounter. In your name, I pray. Amen.



A DAILY EXAMEN ON HOPE

The examen is a daily reflection created by St. Ignatius Loyola that invites a person to examine their day - looking intentionally for where they found God and where God was more difficult to find. Consider praying this Examen daily during week #1 of the Advent Season.

I spend a moment quieting myself, inviting the holy Spirit to help me examine my day.

I look back on my day since I woke up. What were signs of hope for me today?

I pause to thank God for each of these tangible signs of hope.

When was hope challenging for me today?

I ask God for forgiveness for any of my reactions today that might have lessened hope for myself or others.

I look towards the rest of my day (or tomorrow). What do I need from God in order to enter my experiences with renewed hope?

I pause to ask God for what I need.

Lord, as I end this examen, help me to see that I, too, can be a sign of hope for others in the world.

Amen



"The very least you can do in your life is figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof."

— Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams*



A DAILY REFLECTION ON SCRIPTURE

Quotes are chosen from the daily Scripture readings from the Catholic Lectionary. Daily readings can be found at uscgb.org.

Sunday: "So too, you also must be prepared for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come." (Mt 24: 44)

How can I prepare my heart this Advent season?

Monday: "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed... When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said... "Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith." (Mt: 8:8,10)

Do I have faith that God will walk with me into this new season?

Tuesday: "Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike." (Lk 10: 21)

How is God acting in my life this week?

Wednesday: "The crowds were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the deformed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind able to see, and they glorified the God of Israel." (Mt 15: 31).

Do I have hope that God can make me whole?

Thursday: "Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse." (Mt 7: 24-25)

What is my faith built on? What can I do to strengthen it?

Friday: "Then he touched their eyes and said, "Let it be done for you according to your faith." And their eyes were opened." (Mt 9: 28-29)

How can my eyes be opened this Advent season?

Saturday: "Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest." ... "Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give.'" (Mt 9: 37-38 and 10:8)

How am I called to be hope in the world?