DIOCESE of DERRY

PARISH & FAMILY PRAYER

DURING ADVENT 2026

In 2026, Advent begins on Sunday 29 November and continues until Thursday 24 December, spanning four Sundays.

HOPE*LOVE
JOY*PEACE

Download this booklet at: derrydiocese.org/advent

The Season of Advent

The word ‘Advent’ means ‘coming’ or ‘arrival’. It is a season of hope and preparation as we look towards the celebration of Jesus’ birth at Christmas. In 2026, Advent begins on Sunday, 29 November, and spans four Sundays.



This booklet guides you through the four Sundays, each with a theme: Hope, Love, Joy and Peace. For each week, you’ll find a Gospel reading, a short reflection, a family activity, a prayer and a suggestion for lighting the Advent candle. You’re also invited to pray one of the Joyful Mysteries with Mary. Music suggestions and short Sycamore films offer further ways to reflect.

Sycamore Advent video series

Alongside prayer at home, parishes, schools and chaplaincies may wish to gather for Sycamore’s four-week Advent course. It offers parishioners, parents and teachers a simple way to explore faith, reflect on Advent themes and get to know one another in small groups.

The sessions use four films: ***The Search for Happiness (1)***, ***A God Who Speaks? (3)***, ***The Bible (6)*** and ***The Power of Prayer (8)***. Groups can share a meal or keep things informal with coffee and cake. Each film includes discussion questions, so leaders need little preparation: choose a time and place, create a welcoming space and have the films ready. Visit **Sycamore.fm** for the videos.

At Christmas, we rejoice that Christ is present among us - in the Eucharist, in hearing his Word and in receiving Holy Communion. His presence calls us to live as his witnesses through prayer, action and communion with one another.

Create an Advent Family Prayer Space

Preparation

Plan a time to gather in your home to pray.

Create a Prayer Space



A Prayer Space may include:

- Photographs of loved ones.
- A lighted candle.
- A religious symbol such as a cross, an open Bible, a sacred picture or icon, a statue or rosary beads.
- Dim the lights of the room and quieten distractions to create a calm and serene atmosphere.
- If you are gathering as a group, you might choose someone to lead the different prayers or to proclaim the Gospel readings.
- You could use your phone or tablet and connect with others outside your home.
- Couples might wish to light the candles from their wedding day or parents of a new baby, their baptismal candle.
- This is your prayer time, be creative and include additional elements that will bring you and your family peace.

Scan Me

Make an Advent Wreath

Scan the QR code for instructions on making your own Advent wreath.

In the short days, dark nights and the chill of winter, we look back on the brighter and warmer days that have passed and, in hope, long for their return. We yearn for consistency, we seek out signs of hope, and we long for something to fill the void in our lives. Our consistency and our hope are found in God. God is with us.

"You have made our hearts for you, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you" – Saint Augustine

Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus!

How to use this prayer resource

Preparing for the Season of Advent

This resource has several different elements that will hopefully enrich your prayer life in the days ahead. During the four Sundays of Advent there will be some activities that 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 - be creative!

Set Aside Time to Pray

Take this time as an opportunity for you to connect with God. 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 in loving God, our neighbour and ourselves. If you already have a time of prayer such as the rosary, you can combine this prayer resource with it.

Make Time for Family Prayer

Children love to be involved. Let them read, sing, blow out the Advent candles to send the prayers to heaven and let them share their thoughts and questions. Families sometimes say it can be hard to encourage teenage children to pray. Don't make them pray. Invite them to be present with you and listen as you pray.

Pope Francis encouraged an alliance between younger 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.

Make Space For a Loved One

At this time of year many of us will be missing a loved one who has passed away. You may wish to place a photograph in your Prayer Space of someone you wish to remember or pray for.

SCAN ME

Daily Gospel Readings

Scan the QR code to view each day's Gospel reading on Universalis.

29th November 2026

1st Sunday of Advent – Hope

The first Advent candle is lit – Purple

Jesus In Our Midst

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 there are three purple candles, one pink candle and a white candle which is lit on Christmas Day.

HOPE



Today's Reading

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 on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!'

The word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Gospel reading: Universalis Publishing: universalis.com/europe.ireland/mass.htm

Sycamore Advent Films

Short films for reflection and discussion.

Film 1: The Search for Happiness

Sycamore

Pause for Thought - Hope

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

As baptised Catholics each one of us has a responsibility to share the Good News of the Gospel.

Think of ways you can share the Good News in your everyday life.

In your life who has been a sign of hope for you? Why?

Hope is like a light shining in a dark place. As we look at the light of the candle, we celebrate the hope we have in Jesus Christ.

We light the first Advent candle in the wreath, representing hope. Hope, because God is faithful and will keep the promises made to us.

On the Journey with Mary...

The Annunciation, the first joyful mystery of the Rosary, tells of the moment when Mary rejoiced in the news brought to her by the Angel Gabriel. It was a message that brought hope to Mary. As we pray this mystery, let us open our hearts to saying "yes" on life's journey, trusting in God's plan with the gift of hope.

Now pray the first joyful mystery of the Rosary: say One Our Father, Ten Hail Marys and One Glory be.

Light 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.

Advent Music Suggestion

Scan the QR code to listen to:

Hope for Everyone
by Matt Maher

SCAN ME

6th December 2026

2nd Sunday of Advent – Love

The second Advent candle is lit – Purple

Jesus In Our Midst

The Christmas tree brings great cheer to the family home. 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 share 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.

On the Feast of St Nicholas 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.



Loving God, we pray through the intercession of St Nicholas that You will guide and protect our children. Keep them safe from all harm. Help them grow to become loving disciples of Jesus in Your sight. Give them strength to always mature into deeper faith with You, and to keep alive joy in Your creation.

We ask this through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Today's Reading

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 Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

Look, I am going to send my messenger before you;
he will prepare your way.
A voice cries in the wilderness:
Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.

and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he said, 'Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

The word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Gospel reading: Universalis Publishing: universalis.com/europe.ireland/mass.htm

Pause for Thought – Love

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, bravery 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. Think of an aspect of life that needs change and bring it to God in prayer.

On the Journey with Mary...

The Visitation, the second joyful mystery of the Rosary, tells of the moment when Mary went immediately to visit her cousin Elizabeth. It was a moment of shared love as the two women rejoiced in God's blessings. As we pray this mystery, let us open our hearts to being on the move in life's journey, rejoicing with others in the ways that God blesses all of us.

Now pray the second joyful mystery of the Rosary: say One Our Father, Ten Hail Marys and One Glory be.

Light 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.

SCAN ME

Advent Music Suggestion

Scan the QR code to listen to:

Come to us
by Greg Watson

Sycamore

Sycamore Advent Films

Short films for reflection and discussion.

Film 3: A God Who Speaks?

LOVE

13th December 2026

3rd Sunday of Advent – Joy

The third Advent candle is lit – Rose

Jesus In Our Midst

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 happiness!

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'.

You are invited to wrap the baby Jesus figurine in Christmas wrapping and place Him under the tree, to be opened on Christmas morning as the first gift of Christmas.

On Christmas morning place the baby Jesus in your crib with the rest of the Holy family.

JOY



Today's Reading

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 came, sent by God.
His name was John.
He came as a witness,
as a witness to speak for the light,
so that everyone might believe through him.
He was not the light,
only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied:

a voice that cries in the wilderness:
Make a straight way for the Lord.'

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

Gospel reading: Universalis Publishing: universalis.com/europe.ireland/mass.htm

Pause for Thought – Joy

You may wish to sprinkle Holy water on the baby Jesus and your family members, and 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.

On the Journey with Mary...

The Nativity, the third joyful mystery of the Rosary, tells of the moment of joy, when the child Jesus was born, the angels rejoiced, the shepherds came in search, and Mary treasured all these things in her heart with Joseph. As we pray this mystery, let us open our hearts to rejoicing in the moments of life's journey when Christ comes into our midst, especially in the ordinary events of everyday life.

Now pray the third joyful mystery of the Rosary: say One Our Father, Ten Hail Marys and One Glory be.

Light the rose 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.

SCAN ME

Advent Music Suggestion

Scan the QR code to listen to:

Gaudete
by Anúna

Sycamore

Sycamore Advent Films

Short films for reflection and discussion.

Film 6: The Bible

20th December 2026

4th Sunday of Advent – Peace

The fourth Advent candle is lit – Purple



Jesus In Our Midst

Our Advent journey is now drawing to a close and the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Saviour is imminent. The focus today is on Mary, our role model in faith. Mary is depicted in Scripture as a person of similar virtues to Joseph, dignified and exemplary in her total trust and faith in God's plan for her and for the world.

We pray today for all expectant mothers, that our Blessed Mother will watch over and protect them and their unborn children. We ask that the beauty and joy of the life that mothers bring into the world may always be cherished as a miraculous gift of God.

The Magnificat

My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.
The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!
His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him.
He puts forth his arm in strength and scatters the proud-hearted.
He casts the mighty from their thrones and raises the lowly. He fills the starving with good things, sends the rich away empty.
He protects Israel, his servant, remembering his mercy, the mercy promised to our fathers, to Abraham and his sons for ever. Amen.

Today's Reading

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 by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?' 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered 'and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.' And the angel left her.

Gospel reading: Universalis Publishing: universalis.com/europe.ireland/mass.htm

Pause for Thought – Peace

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.

On the Journey with Mary...

The Presentation, the fourth joyful mystery of the Rosary, tells of the moment of peace, when the child Jesus was presented by Mary and Joseph in the Temple, taken into the arms of the old man Simeon and seen by the widow Anna, announcing the unveiling of God’s gift of peace to His people and to the world. As we pray this mystery, let us open our hearts to ask for peace in all the places torn by war and strife: in family life and relationships, in our communities, our nations and our world, that we may know once more the peace of the Christ Child as we journey towards the fulfilment of all God’s promises.

Now pray the fourth joyful mystery of the Rosary: say One Our Father, Ten Hail Marys and One Glory be.

PEACE

Light the fourth 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.

Pray the Rosary

Scan the QR code for a guide to praying the Rosary.

The Rosary

Advent Music Suggestion

Scan the QR code to listen to:

Waiting In Silence
by Carey Landry

SCAN ME

Sycamore Advent Films

Short films for reflection and discussion.

Film 8: The Power of Prayer

Sycamore