



Advent **S**ervice for **P**eace **I**n the **W**orld

2024

Longing for **L**ight
in the **D**arkness

Advent Service for Peace

Longing for Light in the Darkness

OPENING HYMN

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Neale

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.

O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Alternative versions:

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel	Chris Tomlin
O Come, O Come Emmanuel	King & Country
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel	Matt Maher
O Come, O Come Emmanuel	Enya

INTRODUCTION

During the season of Advent, we are called to seek the light of Christ, even in the midst of darkness. We are invited to face the darkness in our own lives and in the world around us. The prophets assure us that the darkness will not overcome us, and to watch for the light.

We trust that Christ, the Prince of Peace, will 'disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadow put to flight'. We are called to wait, to hope, and to trust in promises made.

As we make this Advent journey in faith, we invite God's light to dispel the darkness. We ask for the grace to set down all those burdens that darken our hearts as we search for the light.

We ask for the gift of attentiveness that we may truly see God's loving presence within and among us. And we ask for renewed faith that we might be light for others in the midst of turmoil, war and conflict. This evening, we deepen our resolve to pray for peace. We call on Emmanuelle to touch hearts intent on war, to sooth those whose lives are torn apart by war, and to sow the seeds of peace in the hearts of people all across the world. 'Make safe the way that leads on high'.

OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray:

O God who dispels all darkness,

Come to be with us, in each one of our situations;

Come to live among us, live with us and in us;

Come to fill the distances that divide and separate us;

Come to reconcile us with You and with one another.

God of Light, open our hearts to the mystery of your love and the invitation of your grace.

Let our complacency give way to conversion

and our judgments to compassionate acceptance of others.

Turn oppression to justice

and transform conflict to peaceful accord.

We ask this in the name of Jesus,

who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,

God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

A reading from the prophet Isaiah
The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

9:2-7



The word of the Lord.

Hymn

Peace	Bethel Music – We the Kingdom
Prince of Peace	Hillsong United
Still/Peace	Hillsong Worship
My Peace I give you	Taize
My Peace I give you	Poor Clares of Arundel

SECOND READING

A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Colossians. 1:15-20

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jn. 14:27

Peace I leave with you;

My peace I give to you

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.

He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Homily

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH:

The following reflections may be modified to suit local needs. A designated person is selected to light each candle on the Advent Wreath as each of the reflections on Hope, Peace, Joy and Love are prayerfully read.

The reflections may be accompanied with gentle instrumental music.

The reading of the reflections and the lighting of the candles can be replaced with the Litany for Peace.

HOPE

“Hope is the only tie which keeps the heart from breaking.”

Reader 1:

As war develops across the globe, the world cheers, rationalises, protests and marches in the name of peace. It's a justifiable response to our helplessness, and yet, such a response divides the world even more. For those living through conflict, despair is unavoidable, sympathy abounds. Who dares speak of hope in the midst of war?

And yet, without hope we are all lost. But how do we face such a brutal reality and look to the future with any sense of a better one? Is it even possible?

Hope is not the same thing as optimism, hope is not a feeling. Hope is what we do. It is an active, intentional, generous way of living in the world. We push back against violence, hatred and fear by living and acting in hopeful ways. Daily acts of resistance against injustice and brutality protect and nurture our humanity and open up space for our own transformation, for peace.

Reader 2:

Hope is possible, even the midst of war. Hope is not defined by the absence of hardship. Rather, hope is found in God's grace in the midst of hardship. Hope is found in His promise to give us a future.

We think of families whose loved ones are missing, incarcerated, tortured or held hostage how their lives become bargaining chips in war. Hope is all they have!

In hope, we pray for political and national leaders who tirelessly to negotiate and broker conditions for peace. Touch the hearts of those intent on war.

For relief agencies, who offer hope in food, water, medical supplies and who remind those trapped in war that the world has not forgotten them.

Lord, no matter what happens, help us to hope in You.

PEACE

*“While you are proclaiming peace with your lips,
be careful to have it even more fully in your heart.”*

Reader 1:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty

God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Bethlehem summons us to find peace not in the absence of turmoil but in the presence of the One who calms the storm. We know that the fuse of hatred has been lit across the world and exploded in a spiral of war. May the desire for peace become a guiding light for those in intent on conflict, war, terrorism, and destruction.

We not only need Your peace and joy; Lord, we crave it. Pope Francis reminds us, our world is suffering from a “famine of peace”. You’ve promised rest for the weary, victory for the battle-scarred, peace for the anxious, and acceptance for the broken hearted—not just at Advent, but every day of every year. We know that peace on earth can only come when hearts find peace with You.

Reader 2:

What war does well is destruction: of people, of homes and habitats, of infrastructure, resources and livelihoods, and of relationships. It can never create tolerance, prosperity or harmony. Lord, we earnestly pray for an end to war in our world, but let it begin with me. Mighty God, Prince of Peace, bring an end to hostility among peoples and nations. May conflict, war, injustice and genocide never be condoned in the name religion or politics. Bless leaders and people with courage, skill, hope and a desire for peace.

Prince of Peace, silence the guns that fill the lives of women and children night and day with fear. Peace is the only battle worth fighting.

Lord, ‘make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery’.

JOY

*“As long as there is heartbreak and suffering,
the heart of God beats in no other place.”*

Reader 1:

On a daily basis, we witness the harrowing and dire impact of conflict and war, and incessant suffering of innocent victims caught in wars across the world that are not of their making. We can only imagine the unrelenting roar of rockets overhead, the unceasing thunder of explosions, and the incessant bombardment of people's homes. We cannot begin to comprehend the violence, the deprivation of basic human rights, the cries of the people.

Millions across the world have been forced to flee their homes and are internally displaced again and again. Amid severe food shortages, women are eating last and least to ensure their family are fed. The devastating plight of the injured, the trauma experienced by women and children, loss of innocent life, the distress and anxiety, the population's hunger are beyond our comprehension. The constant state of instability, the lack of water, essential supplies and shelter exposes people to malnutrition, and disease.

Reader 2:

How could anyone experience joy in the midst of such suffering? And yet they do! Joy is not an emotion. It is a choice. Joy is a disposition from which I, or we, can love. It is an inner freedom, which allows us to respond even during times of trials and suffering. Joy manifests itself in war in the sharing of what little food people have with their neighbour, in rescuing the injured, in helping to carry what little belongings their neighbour has, in the fetching of water, in the providing shelter. Joy is not just a sharing of resources; it is resilience in the face of adversity and strength in the face of vulnerability.

Lord, may we courageously witness to JOY this Advent season.

LOVE

Reader 1:

“Advent always begins in the dark.” But it ends with the arrival of God in our midst. The love of God for humanity, the love of parents for their child lying in a manger transforms this darkness into a radiant light of love, joy, peace and hope.

It is easier to go to war without feelings. Without feelings, combatants and victims detach themselves from the reality and suffering around them. They become emotionally and physically numb. And yet, only love can transform the cruellest of suffering, the hardest of hearts. Only love can silence the weapons of war, the voices of hatred.

Daily, we witness the enduring love for their families – in life, in suffering, and in death. Bless those acts of love and heroism that continue amid war’s carnage. Love prevents us turning the other way. Love ensures our hearts are alive and never become cold or dispassionate to the suffering of others.

Reader 2:

Each year we sing, 'O Come O Come, Emmanuel, and rescue us'. This year that cry comes deeply from our hearts and our sadness. But it is a cry rooted in a belief that God has not forsaken us in our hatreds and our violence and our inhumanity. He is a God of Love and invites us to join him in the work of healing and repair.

Jesus came to make the world more merciful and just, to teach us to love our enemies, and to show us how to love and care for the weak and the vulnerable. He told us the peacemakers are blessed. His universal invitation to love still echoes down through the centuries as a calling the world so desperately needs. This Advent, help us to live as agents of hope as we work for the future of countries torn apart by war. May countries flourish in justice, freedom and dignity.

God of love, you never forget your people. Make all things new through Christ, our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

(A candle may be lit before each prayer is prayed)

1. For the Church throughout the world: may she be an unwavering voice for peace and reconciliation in the world. **Lord, hear us.**
2. For those suffering the effects of war, violence, and civil unrest, that they may know comfort and find paths to lasting peace. **Lord, hear us.**
3. For world leaders: that they may have the courage to resolve conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy. **Lord, hear us.**
4. We pray for peacekeepers throughout the world, particularly those on mission in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Mali, Kosovo and Israel. Protect them with the shield of your strength and keep them safe from all harm. **Lord, hear us.**
5. For our Christian brothers and sisters who are persecuted because of the faith they profess. Grant them the strength and courage remain steadfast in their faith. **Lord, hear us.**
6. For an end to the violence perpetrated by harsh words, deadly weapons, or cold indifference. May our homes, our nation, and countries around the world become havens of peace. **Lord, hear us.**
7. Tenderly hold all who are persecuted in our world. Touch their lives with peace. Inspire leaders to find non-violent ways to resolve tension and conflict, and to inspire unity throughout the world. **Lord, hear us.**
8. We pray for nations at war: Yemen, Ethiopia, Ukraine, Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Mali, Syria, Haiti, Libya, Mexico, Taiwan, Iran, Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Myanmar, Armenia-Azerbaijan, and the Congo. Silence the weapons of war, and turn swords into ploughshares. **Lord, hear us.**

9. For those who have died; may they experience the fullness of life and peace in eternal life. **Lord, hear us.**

Our Father...

LITANY OF PEACE

Response: Prince of Peace, hear us.

Cultivate peace in our hearts.....**Prince of Peace, hear us.**

May combatants at war practice justice and compassion...

We weep with all who suffer from acts of violence...

We honour all who risk their lives to save others...

We entrust all who have died into your arms of mercy...

We pray for the millions of refugees...

We pray for the displaced women and children...

We pray for the grace to forgive...

We repent of our dependency on military solutions to human problems...

We pray for the love to embrace all people as our brothers and sisters...

We speak peace, even while suffering violence...

We pray for the children in war....

Let the egos of the violent be silenced...

That our world may know no more war...

For children forced to abandon schooling and play...

For those forced to leave their homes and work...

For mothers who weep while searching for their family...

For those afraid to look up for fear of fire raining down....

For those who thirst for peace and justice....

For agencies bringing essential relief to those in need...

For hostages still unaccounted for....

For the success of diplomacy....

For governments and their pursuit of peace....

For an end to terrorism, conflict, genocide, and war....

Make Me a Channel of Your Peace

Francis of Assisi/Temple

Make me a channel of your peace:

Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
where there is injury, your healing power,
and where there's doubt, true faith in you.

Make me a channel of your peace:

where there's despair in life let me bring hope;
Where there is darkness, only light,
and where there's sadness, ever joy.

O, Spirit, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace:

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving to all that we receive,
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Closing Prayer:

Let us pray,

Emmanuel, God-with-Us,

our world waits in darkness longing for Your light.

In the midst of darkness, enkindle our hope.

As we long for lasting peace in the midst of war, Be with us.

As we long for families to be reunited, Be with us.

As we long for enemies to be reconciled, Be with us.

As we long for cures and healings, Be with us.

As we long for the bombs to fall silent, Be with us.

As we long for love and community, Be with us.

Fulfil the deepest longings of your people

And dispel the darkness in our hearts and in our world.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

CONCLUDING HYMN

Come, O long expected Jesus!

Wesley

Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.