

# PRINCE of PEACE

Family Devotions and Activities  
*for Advent*



**SARAH REINHARD**

# INTRODUCTION

*A*dvent is four of the busiest weeks of the calendar year. There's so much to do! And while it can be fun at first, it can also be stressful. We can, in fact, forget the most important reason we're so deep in things to do: Jesus is coming!

This year, let's embrace the traditional themes of each week of Advent, embodied in the candles you may light on your Advent wreath: hope, peace, joy and love.

We'll explore these themes in light of helping others. Think of it as a way of sharing the true meaning of the season with those who are closest to Christ's heart: the poor and downcast.

And sometimes, we are the poor and downcast. Though we may have many things and opportunities untold, we need prayer and comfort. Let's not forget that the homeless and the poor in other countries aren't the only people who need help. Advent can be a time to recognize the mercy that's available for us, through the grace of God, to both give and receive.

You're already busy, I know. Your family has meetings and commitments and activities and deadlines. You're juggling more than you feel you can handle—and if you're not, pray for those who are! But there's hope, there's peace, there's joy and there's love, all waiting for you this Advent.

Jesus is inviting you beyond the busy into the manger. He's asking you to join him and give the greatest gift: the gift of yourself.

Before we get started, a word of caution: Don't worry about doing it all—not the “all” that's in this booklet, and not the “all” that's all around you. Do what you can. And keep turning yourself to Christ, to the gift that awaits you on Christmas morning in the manger.

May the Savior come to you and your family in a beautiful way this Advent and always.

*Sarah Reinhard*

# NOTES ABOUT the STRUCTURE

Each day will have a Read, Think, Pray and Act. They are self-explanatory, but can also be adjusted based on your family, your mood or your circumstances. Feel free to take ownership and make this experience yours.

Each week will have an overarching activity, focused on helping others. You can use each day to complete the steps needed, or you can do it all at once, depending on what works best for your family. You may decide one thing and do another—there is nothing hard-and-fast about how things are organized. The goal is to give you an activity that focuses your family's Advent more on the Savior and the theme of each week, designed to bring you closer to Jesus on Christmas. Enjoy!





Hope is so much more than how we approach the things we want or the things we need, or even the things we think we need.

The virtue of hope is a response to our desire for happiness, which God has placed in our hearts. Hope keeps us close to God and turns our focus toward the kingdom of heaven rather than the things of this earth only. Hope fuels a healthy attitude and sustains us as we face times of abandonment.

In so many ways, hope opens our hearts to what is holy and keeps us from selfishness. Hope leads to true, eternal happiness, which flows from charity.

Hope leads to love, and we receive love in the most beautiful way at the end of Advent when we meet the Baby Jesus in the manger.

## First Sunday of Advent

Read: Mark 13:33-37



**THINK:** “You do not know when the time will come,” Matthew tells us today. That’s a great reminder. There’s a lot that we don’t know. And the not knowing is an uncomfortable feeling. Think about the people who have to live in this uncertainty, not sure where their next meal will come from or when it will come. Think about the people who are lonely and have no one to help them.

What gives you hope? Today’s reading challenges us to look beyond the here and now, beyond the comfort—or discomfort—we may find in our lives right now.



**PRAY:** Jesus, there are so many people in our world who need hope. Help me to embrace the hope that comes my way today, whether it's something small or something big. Amen.



**ACT:** This week, we'll be focusing on an activity that will give hope to others, but you may find that it gives hope to you too. That's the beautiful thing about it.

No matter where you live, there are homeless people. You may not see them. You may not even know that they are there.

This week, our activity is to make Blessing Bags for the homeless and/or elderly. We'll work on them throughout the week. Feel free to adjust the steps and order for what works best for your family.

Plan what will go in your Blessing Bags, how many you'll make and when you'll shop (if you need to).

Here's a suggested list of items to consider, based on some broad recommendations. Be sure to research what homeless shelters and organizations in your area recommend:

- Men's socks, winter hats, gloves
- Prepackaged snacks such as snack bars, crackers, protein bars, etc.
- Gift card for fast food
- Bottle of water
- Hygiene items, such as (but not limited to): toothbrush and toothpaste, hand wipes, bandages, sunscreen, hairbrush
- Encouragement, such as a prayer card, a homemade note or a hand-drawn or colored picture

Gallon-sized zipper baggies are ideal for use here. You can look online and find many different ideas for what to include. Make your list and plan when you'll put them all together.

## Monday of the First Week of Advent

Read: Luke 10:21-24



**THINK:** Have you been distracted by something that seemed important but, in the end, robbed you of the time to do what actually should have been your priority? Maybe you started watching a video before you finished a chore, and then you didn't get the chore done when it needed to be done.

In today's reading, Jesus reveals to us that God has "hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and has revealed them to infants." God has given us clear instructions, though we have the freedom to procrastinate and put things off. This week, as we focus on giving hope, let's also pay attention to God's ways by paying attention to Scripture in this holy season of Advent. Let us focus and try not to put things off until the last minute.



**PRAY:** Jesus, reveal your wisdom to me, I pray. Guide my steps and help me to see that sharing hope with others can be as simple as a friendly smile or a kind word. Give me the courage to give that smile or word today. Amen.



**ACT:** Go shopping for the items that will go in your Blessing Bags. While you're shopping, remember that your goal is to buy the items that will bring hope to those who will receive them. Resist the temptation to buy yourself a little treat or even something bigger. Let this shopping trip be strictly for the Blessing Bags. (And if you can't get it done with all the members of the family, or if you need to spread this over a couple of days, adjust as needed!)

## Tuesday of the First Week of Advent

Read: Isaiah 25:6-9



**THINK:** This time of year, there are often a lot of parties and activities going on. Families get together and exchange gifts, companies host parties, friends gather and celebrate. In the midst of all this, it can be easy to forget that Christmas doesn't start for a few weeks.

Advent is a time of preparation. And as we focus on hope this week, let's remember that there are many people who are feeling hopeless. What's usually called the Christmas season by many in the world, is what we Christians observe as Advent. As Christians, we celebrate the Christmas season beginning with Christmas Day. But whatever we call it, this time before Christmas Day is hard for many people. They may be sad because of the death of someone close to them, or they may have other struggles that make this time of year more difficult. And yet, we know that on Christmas Day, "This is the Lord for whom we have waited."



**PRAY:** Jesus, let me give hope today in a way that's gentle. Use me as a way to soothe the soul of someone who needs it. Amen.



**ACT:** Make encouragement cards and write short notes to include in your Blessing Bags. Get creative and let your artistic side shine!

## Wednesday of the First Week of Advent

Read: Luke 21:25-28, 34-36



**THINK:** Being on guard doesn't seem to make sense for this time of year, when there's happy music and lots of lights. We're so happy; why do we need to be alert?

But we're not made for only happiness on this earth. We're made for heaven. The reminder for the first week of Advent is that our hope lies in our Savior. One way we give hope is by pointing other people to Jesus. And we can often do that without even saying a word. Our actions speak louder, and they convince people better than anything we can say.



**PRAY:** Jesus, I want to give hope to the people around me. Allow me the grace to act in a way that reminds people of you and points them to your love. Amen.



**ACT:** Finish making cards, notes and gathering the items for your Blessing Bags.

## Thursday of the First Week of Advent

Read: Matthew 24:37-42



**THINK:** With today's reading, we are told to "Keep awake!" That can be hard when the days are getting shorter and there's so much going on.

Being so busy, you may easily find yourself nodding off as soon as you sit down.

In the midst of all that has to be done this time of year, let's not forget the reason we're so busy. It's not just because it's the end of the school term or that there's a holiday break coming. It's not just because we need to get ready for a party or buy a lot of presents.

We're busy because of Jesus. Have we set our sights on the manger because we want to share the hope he brings, or have we set our sights on what we want to get from other people?



**PRAY:** Jesus, it's hard to be organized. There's so much going on right now! And I'm excited about Christmas Day! Help me to focus on you and to remember that you are the source of all my hope. Amen.



**ACT:** Check that you have all the items for your Blessing Bags. If you do, then get things organized in piles for packing.

## Friday of the First Week of Advent

Read: Matthew 24:43-44



**THINK:** "Therefore you also must be ready," we read in today's reading, "for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour." Sometimes, we think we have everything ready and organized, only to find that we forgot about something we didn't even know we should include.

Advent can be like that. We start off strong (or not so much), and then Christmas Day is upon us before we even feel ready for it. Let's take it one day at a time, knowing that every small step we make toward Jesus is a step in the right direction.



**PRAY:** Jesus, give me hope to share with others today, even (and maybe especially) when I most feel discouraged. Amen.



**ACT:** Start putting all the items into your Blessing Bags. As you do so, pray for the people who will receive them.

## Saturday of the **First Week** of **Advent**

Read: Isaiah 40:9-11



**THINK:** How can we be ready for Jesus to come? Well, we know he's coming on December 25 for sure. We can be certain that when we're at Christmas services, and at every service where Christians are gathered together in prayer, there Jesus is as well, feeding his flock.

Think of a way you can make yourself ready for Jesus. Maybe it's getting up a few minutes early and praying the Lord's Prayer before church.



**PRAY:** Jesus, I want to give hope to those around me. I want to receive hope from you. Be with me as I continue my journey to Christmas Day. Amen.



**ACT:** Consider making a paper or cardboard anchor to add to your Blessing Bags. The anchor is a Christian symbol for hope. Put all the items into your Blessing Bags.



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Jesus is coming! And author Sarah Reinhard invites families to pray, learn about their faith and live it out. Because he loves us so much, Jesus humbled himself to be born in a manger and live in poverty. With these devotions and activities for each day of Advent, the whole family can celebrate the love that God has shown us by giving us his Son, the Prince of Peace.

Jesus is inviting us beyond the busyness of the season and into the peace of the season. And your whole family—including the whole family of God—is invited!

This book, along with many other Creative Communications for the Parish products, is available on [amazonkindle](#) and [nook](#)

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