

Photo: Sergi Camara/ Entreculturas



Bearers of light in displacement

2024 JRS Advent Resource



Table of content

Introduction.....p. 3

First Sunday of Advent.....p. 4
1 December 2024

Second Sunday of Advent.....p. 6
8 December 2024

Third Sunday of Advent.....p. 8
15 December 2024

Fourth Sunday of Advent.....p. 10
22 December 2024



The season of Advent marks a time of preparation for the coming of the Christ Child. Like the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, all people on the move deserve our special attention at this time.

*“Advent is a journey towards Bethlehem.
May we let ourselves be drawn
to the light of God made man.”*

Pope Francis

This Advent, JRS invites you and your communities to dedicate your Advent wreath and the lighting of candles every week to migrants and refugees.

Every Sunday, we prepare for the birth of Jesus by lighting a new candle symbolising Hope, Peace, Joy, or Love. Join us in this weekly invitation to deepen our knowledge of JRS’s mission while we remember and pray for those forcibly displaced.

How to use this resource

Individually or in a community, we invite you to spend a moment of reflection using the Advent wreath.

Each week, you will begin with a moment of prayer, followed by a description of how JRS’s work intersects with each of these Advent dimensions through its four priorities: Advocacy, Reconciliation, Education and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support. At the end, you will find some questions for reflection and a prayer to deepen your understanding of these dimensions and how they call us to action today.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT – 1 DECEMBER 2024



“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.” Mt 11:10

Advent allows us to recognise the need for change in our lives, our communities, our society, and our institutions. But for that change to happen, we need prophets to lead the way: heroes who through denouncing the injustice of this world bring hope to the persecuted.

The work of JRS for HOPE

One of the pillars of JRS’s work with displaced communities is accompaniment in the defense of their rights. In many cases we are also loudspeakers through which to advocate for more welcoming and just policies and actions for refugee populations.

Thousands of Rohingya, the majority Muslim population from Myanmar against whom genocide was committed between 2016 and 2017, are arriving as refugees in Indonesia in a second displacement from Bangladesh. JRS Indonesia works with the host community and central government to stop violent actions and hate speech directed at this population and respond to the humanitarian needs faced by these thousands of people.

“JRS has tackled the backlash caused by hate narratives and lies about the Rohingya people in Indonesian media” shares Gading Putra, JRS Indonesia advocacy officer.

Hope remains. “The local people in Aceh have always been very hospitable, known as ‘Peumilia Jamee,’ which means ‘those who welcome and honor guests, regardless of their background,’” Gading explains.



FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT – 1 DECEMBER 2024

Reflection

Advent invites us to be alert and recognise, at every corner of the road, many brothers and sisters need a future full of Hope.

We are creators of hope every time we are able to change the discourse of hatred and rejection to one of encounter and welcome.

- Do I feel around me a climate of violence and hatred towards new people coming into my community?
- How do my community and I respond?
- How can I show more hospitality in my daily life?

Prayer to light the candle

*We lack heroes, Lord,
we lack heroes...
who see you among the poor
and cry out to us
and point at them...
IT IS THE LORD!
We lack heroes who see you
in those who flee,
in the hungry,
and who cry out to us that God is in
the little ones,
and in the persecuted,
and in the silent...
We are lacking heroes, Lord, we are
lacking heroes
who encourage us to go out into the
streets
to shout to the world that you are*

*hidden among the blankets
of an abandoned woman...
we lack heroes.
We have seen a hero,
who prayed on his knees.
We have seen a hero
who encouraged the voiceless with
his voice.
We have seen a hero, Lord,
we have seen Peter on his knees,
we have seen a hero...
who gave his life,
and prayer,
and his heart
for the poorest of the poor.*

Prayer by Fr. Antonio Ordóñez, S.J.



SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT – 8 DECEMBER 2024



“This is the mission of the Church: The Church heals, it cures. Sometimes, I speak of the Church as if it were a field hospital. It's true: there are many, many wounded!” Pope Francis

Advent invites us to make room for the Lord. To get rid of everything that causes us division, conflict, violence... and to pave the way for an encounter with ourselves and with God. Only when we are able to reconcile ourselves with our own history will we also be able to reconcile ourselves with our neighbour and thus create spaces of peace in our communities.

The work of JRS for PEACE

JRS articulates reconciliation as a journey to “create right relationships” among the refugees we serve, between refugees and host communities, and among our own teams around the world.

With a population of more than one million refugees and asylum seekers, Ethiopia is the second-largest refugee host country in Africa. Most are from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan. They have fled ongoing conflicts in their countries of origin.

Simon is a 35-year-old South Sudanese refugee living in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, since 2015. He left South Sudan because of the war: “I saw killings in front of my eyes, I had lost all my family. And they were killing anyone: children, elderly.

I had to run away. I had nothing left in South Sudan.”

He saw the war was not close to an end. He left the country with 12 other people he did not know. Simon is now a community leader in the South Sudanese community living in the refugee camp. “I like helping people, this is why I do this. I feel it is important. If I am not there, these people would not get any kind of support and would be left alone. And by doing good to them, God will also help me.”

Photo: Francesco Malavolta/ Jesuit Refugee Service



SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT – 8 DECEMBER 2024

Reflection

Transforming spaces of violence and destruction goes beyond resolving conflict and restoring relationships. Reconciliation implies a process directed toward peace and harmony that cannot occur without the restoration of justice and equity.

In Advent, God's promise to us is renewed as he sends us his Son, the Prince of Peace.

- What parts of my life need to be reconciled?
- How can I go about paving the way for God to make a place for Himself in conflict?
- How can I also be a place of peace for others?

Prayer to light the candle

Lord, God of Abraham, God of the Prophets, God of Love, you created us and you call us to live as brothers and sisters.

Give us the strength daily to be instruments of peace; enable us to see everyone who crosses our path as our brother or sister. Make us sensitive to the plea of our citizens who entreat us to turn our weapons of war into implements of peace, our trepidation into confident trust, and our quarreling into forgiveness.

Keep alive within us the flame of hope, so that with patience and perseverance we may opt for dialogue and reconciliation. In this way may peace triumph at last, and

may the words "division," "hatred," and "war" be banished from the heart of every man and woman.

Lord, defuse the violence of our tongues and our hands. Renew our hearts and minds, so that the word which always brings us together will be "brother," and our way of life will always be that of: Shalom, Peace, Salaam!

Amen.

*POPE FRANCIS,
Invocation for peace,
Sunday, 8 June 2014*



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT – 15 DECEMBER 2024



But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.'" Luke 2:10

This Gaudete Sunday we want to join all those who wait in joy for the promise to be fulfilled on the margins and peripheries of our world.

The work of JRS for JOY

In situations of humanitarian crisis, it may seem difficult to find reasons for joy. In JRS, spaces for formal and non-formal education are safe places that leave room for joy. They allow not only access to a fundamental right and a basic need for children affected by situations of forced displacement, but also protection to restore their sense of normalcy and security.

Colombia faces multiple challenges due to armed conflict, natural phenomena and mixed migratory flows. Two out of every three child and adolescent victims of the conflict belong to indigenous communities.

In 2023, violent events in the educational environment increased by 53%. Children and adolescents of the Wounaan indigenous community from the rural parts of Buenaventura have been forced to leave their territories for urban areas due to violence. They live in self-managed spaces where the children find safe spaces, in addition to the possibility of continuing to learn Maach Meu, the

language of their community, and Spanish. The adolescents, meanwhile, find refuge in the 'Asociación Jóvenes Emprendedores de Paz,' where they engage in a variety of creative and enriching activities that serve as protection and prevention against violence.

For Óscar*, a child from the District of Buenaventura, a safe school is "where children can leave their homes and have the certainty that they will get to school without being the object of any confrontation. They can be fully confident that they can go to school to receive a quality and dignified education."

Photo: Sergi Camara/ Entreculturas



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT – 15 DECEMBER 2024

Reflection

Advent reminds us that God's promise is near. Jesus comes to dwell in our home filling it with deep joy, but also with the call to be a refuge and place of joy for people who need a safe space.

- What are safe spaces in my life that leave me room for joy?
- For what specific reason do I feel joyful today?
- How can I be a prophet of joy for others?

Prayer to light the candle

GAUDETE

*It is your Lord, the Son of God,
who comes to make his dwelling
here,
next to you, next to me, next to us.
Rejoice!*

*Your Lord comes incarnate
in the blessed womb of Mary,
to dwell with us,
to feel with us:
He makes our poverties and frailties
his own.*

*Blesses our dreams and desires.
Welcomes our tears and sorrows.*

*Overcomes our fears and ghosts.
Illuminates our shadows and darkness.
Embraces all our flesh.
Rejoice! Be astonished!
Bless! Be thankful!
The Promise is about to be fulfilled.
See that the Covenant does not suffer
and the Truth never perishes.
It is your Lord!
Jesus: poor, small, frail.
Just like you, just like me.
Rejoice and always be thankful!*

*Prayer by
Fr. Genaro Ávila-Valencia, S.J.*



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT – 22 DECEMBER 2024



O King of all nations and keystone of the Church: Come and save man, whom you formed from the dust! "O" Antiphon

The God of history summons us to gather around a simple manger that brought hope for new life. In that manger, in the simplicity of the lives of simple and ordinary people, God's presence brings us the surprise of love.

The work of JRS for LOVE

The use of detention in immigration procedures is widespread in European and American states. In Europe, detention is likely to increase exponentially with the recently approved Migration and Asylum Pact, which introduces mandatory border procedures.

Findings show that a poor environment in immigration detention can cause a decline in the mental health of migrants. The longer migrants are detained, the worse the effects on their mental health – sometimes a lasting effect.

To combat this, JRS provides accompaniment in detention centers in 11 countries in Europe and four U.S. states.

Accompaniment is fundamental for emotional and psychological support, effective advocacy, information dissemination, violence prevention, spiritual guidance, and community building.

Humanizing the process with love helps us to remember that behind every story there is a person with rights and dignity, counteracting the dehumanization that often occurs in detention systems.

“JRS was built to go where others are not,” Fr. Sotelo, S.J. said, “we do the most we can, and we do it with compassion.”



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT – 22 DECEMBER 2024

Reflection

Just as more than 2000 years ago, the Lord is incarnate among us. Jesus invites us to go where others do not go and to reach all the mangers of this world as bearers of the Good News of love for each and every person. To look into the eyes, to connect the heart, and to be able to feel the suffering, the loneliness, and the lack of hope of our brothers and sisters. And let the light that His coming brings grow there.

- What mangers in need of love are there around me?
- How can I too bring light to these places of despair?
- You who became incarnate in the most vulnerable way and in the simplest place out of Love for me, what can I do for you, Lord?

Prayer to light the candle

*Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.
We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.
We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.
We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.
To you we say,
"Come Lord Jesus!"*

Henri Nouwen





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