

## Advent Prayer

Slow us down, O Lord, this Advent,  
So we may understand  
the darkness we are in,  
The darkness of fear  
that comes with wanting more,  
And the fear of having less.  
Grant us the light of transformation,  
As we wait for your true abundance--  
The love of the Incarnation,  
A love that brings us  
true dignity and security,  
A love that embraces all,  
that enriches all,  
That calls us all  
to share justly  
and celebrate joyfully.

## Prayer for Advent: Hope in a Dark Time

In this time of darkness,  
We choose to look toward the Light.  
In this time when so many are suffering,  
We choose faith, not despair,  
We choose the work of compassionate justice.

As we move together,  
Hungry for transformation, for hope,  
Our steps themselves  
Transform us, nourish us.  
We are on constant pilgrimage,  
Moving to the heart of things,  
Reaching beyond what any one of us  
Can accomplish ourselves.

The brightness of the Incarnation  
Guides us as we continue,  
With the promise of the Prince of Peace  
As the bright star in these dark nights.

by Jane Deren, Education for Justice

## Prayer for the True Meaning of Christmas

**One:** O Gracious God, as we recount the story of Jesus' birth, we hear of fear anxiety and uncertainty.

**All:** Help us to remember the hope in Christmas.

**One:** Much like that first Christmas, our celebration of Christ's birth is filled with disarray.

**All:** Help us to remember the true peace in Christmas.

**One:** When we feel overwhelmed by pressures to shop, decorate, bake and cook,

**All:** Help us to find the true joy in Christmas.

**One:** When money dwindles and expectations increase,

**All:** Help us to find the true grace in Christmas.

**One:** When our calendars fill up and our patience runs down,

**All:** Help us to find the true abundance in Christmas.

**All:** O God, this Advent let us embrace the celebration of the birth of a baby In a manger. Help us to experience a Christmas that holds a place for Christ's promise of authentic joy and peace for all.



## A Franciscan Christmas Blessing for Justice and Peace

May God bless you with discomfort...  
at easy answers, hard hearts,  
half-truths, and superficial relationships.  
May God bless you so that you may live  
from deep within your heart  
where God's Spirit dwells.

May God bless you with anger...  
at injustice, oppression,  
and exploitation of people.  
May God bless you so that you may  
work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless you with tears...  
to shed for those who suffer from pain,  
rejection, starvation and war.  
May God bless you so that you  
may reach out your hand  
to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with  
enough foolishness  
to believe that you can make a difference  
in this world, in your neighborhood,  
so that you will courageously try  
what you don't think you can do, but,  
in Jesus Christ you'll have all the strength necessary.

May God bless you to fearlessly  
speak out about injustice,  
unjust laws, corrupt politicians,  
unjust and cruel treatment of prisoners,  
and senseless wars,  
genocides, starvations, and poverty that is so pervasive.

May God bless you that you remember  
we are all called  
to continue God's redemptive work  
of love and healing  
in God's place, in and through God's name,  
in God's Spirit, continually creating  
and breathing new life and grace  
into everything and everyone we touch.

Source: "Troubadour: A Missionary Magazine," published by the  
Franciscan Missionary Society,  
Liverpool, UK: Spring 2005.

## God's Eternal Hope

God keeps on saving history.  
And so, in turning once again  
to the episode of Christ's birth at Bethlehem,  
we come not to recall Christ's birth twenty centuries  
ago,  
but to live the birth here,  
in the twentieth century, this year,  
in our own Christmas, here in [name of your country].  
By the light of these Bible readings  
we must continue all the history  
that God has in his eternal mind,  
even to the concrete events  
of our abductions,  
of our tortures,  
of our own sad history.  
This is where we are to find our God.

Amen.

- Oscar Romero, SJ, December 24, 1978

*Week after week, for three years, Archbishop Oscar A. Romero cried out against the murder and torture practiced by the government's military regime and exhorted his people to seek peace and forgiveness. He was assassinated on March 24, 1980 and became known across the world as a fearless defender of the poor and suffering.*

## Christmas Prayer

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among others,  
To make music in the heart.

by Howard Thurman

## Christmas Season Prayer

May the love that breathes life into all of humanity  
Be born in us this Christmas season.

May the love that brings forth all of creation,  
Be born in us this Christmas season.

May the love that overcomes hatred and brings healing,  
Be born in us this Christmas season.

May the love that forgives and renews,  
Be born in us this Christmas season.

May the love that brings the fruits of justice,  
Be born in us this Christmas season.

May the love that brings the blessing of peace,  
Be born in us this Christmas season.

May that Peace now be the gift we with share with all  
our brothers and sisters.

From "A Gift of Peace," by Richard Becher, in Shine On,  
Star of Bethlehem, CAFOD, 2004

## A Prayer to Mary

O holy Virgin, instrument of our strength and power . . .  
Thou wast the means whereby the salvation of the  
world was accomplished, and through whom God was  
reconciled to the sons of mankind . . .

What an unheard-of thing for the potter to clothe  
himself in a clay vessel, or the craftsman in the handi-  
craft. What humility beyond words for the Creator to  
clothe himself in the body of a human creature.

And now I cry unto thy Son, O Virgin, saying:

. . . Take speed, O Lord, to build me into a fortress for  
the Holy Spirit.

Ethiopian Orthodox prayer

## Compassion & Light

Compassionate and Holy God,

We celebrate with joy your coming into our midst;  
we celebrate with hope your coming into our midst;  
we celebrate with peace your coming into our midst;  
for you have come to save us.

By your grace, we recognize your presence in men and  
women in all parts of your world;

By your power, you free us from all that stands in the  
way of your kingdom coming;

through your strength, our lives can proclaim joy and  
hope;

through your love, we can work for peace and justice.

You are the source of our being;

You are the light of our lives.

A Global Ministries missionary,  
based on a Catholic prayer from Latin America

## Christmas Day Prayer

Christmas Day

You have come as you promised,  
Prince of Peace,  
Savior of the world.

You, through whom we come to be,  
Have come to be with us;  
Power in our weakness,  
Light in our darkness,  
Hope in hearts heavy with despair.

You, Creation's Lord,  
Come for us all,  
For the shepherds and the kings.

In You, we see all are one,  
In need of You and one another,  
Sisters and brothers.

As we gaze at you  
With wonder and joy,  
The world is born anew.

Your kingdom has come.  
And, blessed be God,  
We, too, belong.

O Prince of Peace,  
Savior of the World,  
We celebrate the re-birth  
Of compassion and love.

## Christmas Prayer from India

Leader: This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

People: How can we rejoice? We have brothers and sisters, all over the country, who must face issues which may affect their rejoicing.

Leader: This is a day of opportunity; a time to remember all those people who face oppression and exploitation of various kinds.

People: A time to be challenged to greater action and service, to improve the conditions of all who cry out for justice.

Leader: This is not only a day for rejoicing, but a day to seek the truth and face the truth; a day when we must not turn away into comfortable enclaves of silence.

All: it is a day of hope that the truth will set all people free. Yes, this is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Christian Youth from India

## Prayers for Christmas/Navidad from Latin America

The day when my eyes see light  
In the eyes of a campesino  
In the heart depths of a dictator  
In the smile of a stable child  
That day is Christmas

The day when my ears hear the Messiah  
In the chirp of a sparrow  
In the dim of the market place  
In the lullaby of a young mother  
That day is Christmas

The day when my hands touch the body of a Savior  
In the wounds of a refugee  
In the picking of coffee in the mountains  
In the toes of a new born  
That day is Christmas

That day when my tongue tastes the sweetness of God  
In the honey of a bee  
In the rice and beans of the people  
In the tortillas of covenant and communion  
That day is Christmas

The day when the heart finds peace  
In the struggle and vision  
In the tall palms gentle waving in the distance  
In the swaddling clothes of Bethlehem  
That day is Christmas

Janet Ross-Heiner,  
USA/Nicaragua

## Prayer from India

Lord,  
there is enchantment in the air tonight  
casting a mysterious spell of  
expectancy on all creation  
fulfilling the promise  
of the birth of God  
on earth  
as a human child.  
And as I watch with trembling hope  
the wondrous pageant pass by  
of poor shepherds and powerful kings-  
the radiant serenity of the night  
is suddenly broken by a storm  
of power-drunk winds  
spewing bullets of hatred,  
hurling stones of violence  
on men and women  
on frightened children  
all fleeing  
from the grips of oppressive structures,  
from bondage of sorrow and broken lives,  
from explosive knowledge  
which has not yet solved  
the problems of hunger and poverty,  
from crumbling values  
which confuse the mind,  
from death itself...  
searching for the manger  
where God's love and goodness  
for all humanity  
blossoms in the heart of a Babe  
and lets us know anew  
this Christmas morn  
all people  
as our brother,  
as our sister.

Savithri Devanesen, India

## Christmas Prayer from Spain

O Holy One, Word made flesh, Eternity captured in a life within time, heaven laid in a manger stall; You, the Light dipped down into our darkness: we pray that you will forgive our sins and make us clean and open to receive you at your coming. Loose us today from our treacheries toward you and our cruelties toward one another.

Now we have come again, dear Lord, to the time of the Morning Star, to yourself moving as azure blue into our contamination; as open touch to our fisted exclusiveness; as a carol sung to our meagerness; as Rose to our bitterness; as love to our emptiness. You are upon us as sky, hands, songs, garlands, tastes . . . making us yours in joy. We marvel not that angelic hosts sang and shouted for joy. Amen.

Richard Wilcox, Spain

## Christmas Prayer from Japan

Living Water

One who said I am the eternal water  
Dwelt among us  
Living with us  
Sustaining us  
This is Christmas.

To receive a cup of living water  
Is not only to cleanse ourselves  
But also to cleanse all the waters.  
River and well, lake and ocean,  
And to share them with all.  
This is Christmas.

Masao and Fumiko Takenaka, Japan

## Christmas Prayer from Iran

O People,

Take a notice,  
The Messiah has Come!  
The Saviour of the World Has Come!  
All the Creation testify to his coming,  
Open your hearts and see your Redeemer!  
Don't wait another day,  
open your eyes and see,  
Prince of Peace,  
The Messiah has come.

Gherajeh Da'aghi  
Persia (modern day Iran)

## Christmas Prayers from Africa

Great is Our Happiness

Great is, O King,  
our happiness  
in thy kingdom,  
thou, our king.

We dance before thee,  
our king,  
by the strength  
of thy kingdom.

May our feet  
be made strong;  
let us dance before thee,  
eternal.

Give ye praise,  
all angels,  
to him above  
who is worthy of praise.

Zulu, South Africa

## A Christmas Prayer

"The people who walked In darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who dwell In the land of gloom a light has shone. ... For the yoke that burdened them. . . . You have smashed. . . . For every boot that tramped in battle, every cloak rolled in blood, will be burned. ... For a child is born to us, a son is given us. ... They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful . . . which He confirms by judgment and justice, both now and forever" (Isaiah 2:7).

Lord, we walk in darkness, and our land is in gloom. As we struggle to welcome You, I am reminded of Thomas Merton's prayer: "I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. . . . Nor do I really know myself."

Lord, when David prayed, he questioned You. Let me do the same, for Merton's words fit me, as they do thousands of American Christians, anguished as myself.

Lord, what is the yoke that burdens us, that keeps us fearful and irascible? Is it jingoism? whiteness? property? Or is it simply unfaith? Smash our yoke.

Lord, when will we burn the boots that tramped in battle, and the cloaks that rolled in blood? When will we stop pulverizing Vietnam, stop arms sales to the poor, stop engineering doomsday weapons? War is death to others; spiritual death to us. Be life to us.

Lord, Isaiah called You Wonder-Counselor, peerless in Your wisdom and prudence. Why does our wisdom trade peace for comfort, why does our prudence oppress the weak? Convert us to true wisdom and prudence.

Lord, You are God-Hero — in You God and humanity met. Why do we fear You in ourselves; why do we shrink from Your summons to others? Help us to see You in the suffering. Lord, You are Father-Forever, devoted irrevocably to people. Why do we abandon people to specialists and bureaucrats, or to the sluggish impersonality of the State? Teach us compassion and service.

You are the Prince of Peace, the embodiment of reconciliation. Why is inner peace so elusive to us, community so strange, nonviolence so foreign? Why do we enthrone

ourselves; why do we idolize the State? Give us Yourself; give us peace.

Lord, Your judgment is upon us because we do not accept Your justice. You judge us through the Vietnamese, through poor and black people, through our control of half of the world's wealth, through our sterile, unhappy lives. Be justice to us.

Lord, You stood up in the synagogue of Nazareth to apply the words of Isaiah to Yourself (and to us). "The Spirit of the Lord has been given me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favor." (Luke 4: 18, 19; Isaiah 61: 1, 2)

Lord, why do we resist Your Spirit: why do we defile Your anointing? How can we announce Your good news to the poor when we don't believe it ourselves? How can we free captives when we are captive to delusion and indulgence? How can we free the downtrodden when our lives keep them downtrodden? How can we proclaim Your year of favor when we systematize war, bomb insanely, indict patriots, reward war criminals, jail resisters, reject amnesty, idolize power, and resist resistance as "self-righteous," "impractical" and "violent"?

Lord, will You help us to find room for You to banish the gloom and darkness in our hearts and in our land? "There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as water covers the sea." (Isaiah 11: 9)

"Lord, we have no idea where we are going. We do not see the road ahead of us. We cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do we really know ourselves." "So be it. Come Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20)

*The Rev. Philip Berrigan wrote this Christmas prayer in the Federal penitentiary in Danbury (1972). He was paroled at the end of the year, after imprisonment for destroying draft records.*

## In This New Year

In this New Year,  
We look to an end to violence and war.  
We pray for peace, understanding and reconciliation.

In this New Year,  
We hope for a future where all can have enough.  
We pray for prophetic voices to speak for the poor and the marginalized.

In this New Year,  
We will feel the pain of those dying from preventable diseases.  
We pray that antiretrovirals and other medicines can be available to all.

In this New Year,  
We will breathe air and feel alive.  
We pray to improve our stewardship of God's creation.

In this New Year,  
We wish to start anew.  
We pray for wisdom to acknowledge mistakes and move on.

In this New Year,  
We believe that with God's help, it is possible.  
We pray for justice to reign and dignity for all people.

by Jill Rauh  
Education for Justice

## Epiphany Prayer

May this holy season be for each of us  
A time of moving beyond what is "reasonable"  
And toward the star of wonder;  
Moving beyond grasping tight to what we have  
To unclenching our hands and letting go,  
Following the Light where it leads;  
Moving beyond competition toward cooperation,  
Seeing that all humans are sisters and brothers.  
Moving beyond the anxiety of small concerns  
Towards the joys of justice and peace.  
May the transforming acceptance of Mary and Joseph,  
The imagination of the shepherds,  
And the persistence of the wise men  
Guide us as we seek the Truth,  
Always moving toward the Divine promise.  
Always aware God can be hidden in the frailest among us,  
Always open to the unexpected flash of Grace,  
To the showing forth of that Love that embraces us all.

Adapted by J.M. Deren from "Blessings and Benedictions,"  
by W.L. Wallace in Shine On, Star of Bethlehem, CAFOD, 2004