



# *Welcoming the Light*

Meditations with the Four Candles of Advent

Kate Taliaferro



## *Christmas Day*

The birth of our Savior can never be fully written about or understood. How can it be, that God, I AM, enter into human history? Who could have imagined that a God so powerful would give up so much? I think we have a tendency to focus on what Jesus gave up in His coming to humanity as a baby. In the great Christ-hymn in Philippians 2 we hear how Christ “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave” and “he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross” (2:7a; 8).

Jesus gave up everything. For what? For the ultimate prize a God could want.

For you. For me.

Jesus became a human so you could one day be in heaven with Him. It doesn't get more amazing than that.

Jesus is the hoped for Messiah who brings humanity back into right relationship with Himself. We continue to hope for His return when all will be set right once more. Jesus gives us the gift of faith, so that we can believe in His continued presence in our lives. Jesus is the source and aim of our joy here on this earth. In Jesus, we find true peace and love.

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All Scripture references may be found at [bible.usccb.org/bible](http://bible.usccb.org/bible)

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# *The Angel's Candle*



Advent wreaths come in all shapes and sizes these days. They can be highly decorative, homemade, intended for children to play with, large enough for church celebrations, utilizing real or battery operated fire. Some still use real fir branches while others use green construction paper and kids handprints. No matter if you reuse your Advent wreath that was passed down from your grandparents or you make a new one every year, all Advent wreaths will have the same 4 candles: 3 purple, 1 pink. This Advent, let's take time to consider what these candles represent and how they can draw us closer to the Christ-child, our Savior, who is King of the world.

What does peace mean to you? What lessons from the Angel's Candle will you carry into next week?

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# Introduction



This year, I wasn't sure what I was going to reflect upon for Advent. I tossed a few ideas around that would have been similar to previous journals, but nothing was sticking. As a contributor for Catholicmom.com, I have the opportunity to review books and resources for the website and just so happened to be chosen to review an Advent CD, *Rorate*. The CD is Advent hymns and liturgical music sung in Gregorian chant by the Monks of Clear Creek. Inside the booklet that came with the CD was this introduction that grabbed my attention:

*Out of simplicity there can come music worthy to proclaim the holiness of God.*

This was my launch point for this year's journal. Simplicity. Not overcomplicated or drawn out. I'm not sure when the Holy Spirit turned my attention to the four candles of the Advent wreath but it settled so rightly within the spirit of simplicity. I knew this was the path forward.

What follows is, as you may have guessed, a very simple journal. There is space each day for writing and prayer as well as something to reflect upon that relates to the theme of the week based on the Advent candles. Did you know that each candle has its own name and represents a specific topic for the week?

Week	Color	Title	Topic/Virtue
Week 1	Purple	The Prophet's Candle	Hope
Week 2	Purple	Bethlehem's Candle	Faith
Week 3	Pink	The Shepherd's Candle	Joy
Week 4	Purple	The Angel's Candle	Peace and Love

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# Peace Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love;  
for it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.

(St. Francis of Assisi)

# The Angel's Candle



What does peace look like in your life? How can you actively be a peacemaker today?

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I have included some background information on each candle's virtue on Sundays. Then, as the days progress, there are opportunities to reflect on Scripture verses, Catechism references, and saint quotes and sometimes even songs. I have also included my own personal reflection on the candle. Each week, there is a challenge day to give you the chance to put that virtue into practice based on how your understanding of it has grown over the course of the week. Finally, on Saturday, you have the space to reflect on the week as a whole and how you will carry the virtue into the rest of your Advent journey.

## A Brief History of Advent Wreaths

Lighting candles on wreaths has been a part of human history for many centuries. We aren't exactly certain when this practice was adopted into the Advent season. There is evidence of pre-Germanic peoples lighting candles on wreaths during the long, cold winters as a sign of hope for the coming spring. In Scandinavia, people would light candles on a wheel and pray to the god of light to continue turning the "wheel" back to the warmth of spring and summer. By 1600, Catholics and Lutherans were using Advent wreaths to count the days leading to Christmas when Jesus, the Light of the World, would be born.

While this journal does not reflect upon the greenery traditionally found on Advent wreaths, a note here about it is worth thinking about. Traditionally, wreaths were made of a variety of evergreen branches. Things like laurel, pine, cedar and holly would have been found on many Advent wreaths. Even these various evergreens had significance. "The laurel signifies victory over persecution and suffering; pine, holly, and yew, immortality; and cedar, strength and healing. Holly also has a special Christian symbolism: The prickly leaves remind us of the crown of thorns." The circular shape reminds us that in Christ there is no beginning nor end, God is Alpha and Omega. Any pinecones, seeds or nuts used to decorate the wreath remind us of death and resurrection. These seeds "die" to give life to the new plant which is born.

*For more information, please see <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/the-history-of-the-advent-wreath.html> which is what this brief history is based upon.*

## *About this Resource*

This is a completely free resource. Different from Advent journals of previous years, this journal may be printed at large scale due to the minimal amount of quoted Scripture references. However, please seek the permission of your pastor before doing any amount of printing for your parish community. As always, placing a link to the blog post which contains the journal in your bulletin, on your personal Facebook page, in a text to your Bible Study group, etc. for others to follow and download themselves is perfectly fine and encouraged! Not everyone can afford, or remember to purchase on time, the many published journals and reflections that are available. I desire this to be a resource that you can print today in anticipation of Advent, or on the first Monday of Advent when you realize you forgot to get a reflection series to journey with. It is always available and will not be taken down once Advent begins.

This is my Advent gift to you and whomever you choose to share it with.

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## *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Earthly peace is the image and fruit of the peace of Christ, the messianic “Prince of Peace.” By the blood of his Cross, “in his own person he killed the hostility,” he reconciled men with God and made his Church the sacrament of the unity of the human race and of its union with God. “He is our peace.” He has declared: “Blessed are the peacemakers.”

(#2305)

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## The Angel's Candle

Peace is another tricky word like joy when it comes to the spiritual sense. So often, peace is used to describe the *absence* of something - violence, noise, fear, chaos, etc. "I just want some peace and quiet!" shouts many a parent over the course of a busy weekend. The peace the angels are singing of, however, is so much more than the absence of undesirable circumstances. In the Beatitudes, Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). Peace, then, is made, created. It is something active. And whenever something is created, God is involved.

As all things, peace is first and foremost a gift given to us by God. Jesus, who we call Prince of Peace, is the gift announced by the angels when they announce, "Peace on earth!" Peace has arrived! He is among you! Go and participate in that Peace!

We become peacemakers by uniting ourselves to the Peace of Christ. How? By submitting our will to God's Will. God desires for all of His creation to be actively at peace with one another. A peace where all people work together to understand one another, to make friendships and build bridges between peoples, to learn to live in harmony with the earth. This is more than just avoiding conflict or ignoring tensions between neighbors for the sake of "peace." The peace God desires for us to receive must be actively sought, actively put into practice, each day.

December 20, 2022

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## The Prophet's Candle

### The First Sunday of Advent

November 27, 2022

The Prophet's candle symbolizes hope. All throughout the Old Testament, God was planning and preparing for how He would save His people. Through the prophets, God invited His people again and again to return to Him, to be in right relationship with Him. They were His people and He was there God. The prophets spoke of a time when all creation would live harmoniously under God's just rule. They spoke of the hope for the Messiah who would restore Israel and bring about the time of plenty and peace.

~ What hopes do you have for your day? Your week? Your year? Your life?

Goals for this Advent that have eternal significance

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**So too,  
you  
also must be prepared,  
for at an hour  
you do not expect,  
the Son of Man  
will come.”**  
(Mt 24:44)

November 28, 2022

How can I organize my time this week to better align with God's commands for my life and schedule?

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**“When Joseph awoke,  
he did  
as the angel of the Lord had  
commanded  
and took his wife  
into his home.”**  
(Mt 1:24)

December 19, 2022





## *The Angel's Candle*

### **The Fourth Sunday of Advent**

December 18, 2022

The Angel's Candle represents peace and love. The angels are the first to announce the Good News of Christ's birth to the shepherds. At first, there was only one. But then, St. Luke tells us the whole multitude filled the sky, singing and proclaiming "Peace on Earth!" The angels convey so much in these few verses. They announce the fulfillment of God's promises to His people, they sing glory and praise as has never been heard, and they offer proof so the shepherds know what they announced was truth. Again, a God of overabundance. The Angel's Candle also gives us the reminder to slow down and ponder the angel's message of peace on earth.

~ What is peace? Is it the absence of conflict or something more active?



## *The Prophet's Candle*

The birth of a baby is an incredible moment. It is a classic, "This changes everything" experience we so often see used in stories. It is a pivot point, there is no turning back. No matter if it's your first child or your sixth, a baby brings about a newness that cannot be replicated in the life of the parents and family. If a single new baby can make such a change, can we really fathom just how much changed with the birth of the Savior? Literally, and I do mean literally, the birth of Christ changed everything.

One might think that if the birth of Christ changes everything, then that is what we ought to be spending our all of our energies on during the time leading up to Christmas Day. And yet Advent isn't just a 4 week long baby shower. It is a deeply layered season that starts with Jesus' teachings on the end of time. We cannot remember the first time our lives changed forever (birth) but we anticipate the next transition, death.

Throughout the Advent season the Scriptures reminds us of what awaits us in heaven. A land flowing with milk and honey (Is 35:1), a holy mountain where peace reigns (Is 11:1-11), a place where suffering and violence cease (Is 2:4), a place where death is no more (Is 35:10). Even in the midst of the trials and suffering of life, God's Word offers us hope for what is to come. We believe in a God who keeps his promises, He has been keeping them from the dawn of time. The Prophet's Candle reminds us to hold fast to hope, as the prophets did, that we, too, will see the promises of God fulfilled.

November 29, 2022

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## *St. Teresa of Avila*

Hope, O my soul, hope. You know neither the day nor the hour. Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly, even though your impatience makes doubtful what is certain, and turns a very short time into a long one. Dream that the more you struggle, the more you prove the love that you bear your God, and the more you will rejoice one day with your Beloved, in a happiness and rapture that can never end.

- Excl. 15:3

November 30, 2022

## *The Shepherd's Candle*

What does joy mean to you? What lessons from the Shepherd's Candle will you carry into next week?

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December 17, 2022

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*Amen*

“Christians and Jews alike from ancient times have concluded all their prayers with ‘Amen’, thereby saying, ‘Yes, so be it!’ When a person says ‘Amen; to his words, ‘Amen’ to his life and destiny, ‘Amen’ to the joy that awaits him, then heaven and earth come together and we are at the goal: with the love that created us in the beginning.”

(Youcat #527).

December 16, 2022

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## *The Prophet's Candle*

Looking back at your goals for Advent, choose one dig deeper into in prayer. What do you hope to accomplish by focusing on this goal? What do you hope God will bring forth in your life?

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December 1, 2022

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## *Wood of the Cradle*

Wood of the cradle, wood of the cross,  
Bearing a lifetime of joy and of loss,  
Who is your loved one? Who could it be,  
Born in a manger to die on a tree?

Come, all who hunger, come, all who thirst;  
Come, all who seek him, God's joy on the earth.  
Find him a shelter, bright, safe, and warm;  
See in all people his love being born.

This, this is Jesus the Lord,  
Here in the Body and Blood outpoured.  
Come, come, walk in his ways.  
Kneel at the manger and rise from the grave.

(Francis Patrick O'Brien, 2002. Verses 1, 4 and Refrain)

December 2, 2022

## *The Shepherd's Candle*

Who can you bring Christ's joy to today? Is there a situation waiting for you to infuse with a joy that is rooted in Christ?

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December 15, 2022

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*St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta*

**“Draw your strength simply from your joy in Jesus.  
Be happy and peaceful. Accept whatever he gives.  
And give whatever he takes, with a big smile.”**

- to her coworkers.

December 14, 2022



## *The Prophet's Candle*

What lessons from the Prophet's Candle will you carry into next week?

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December 3, 2022

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## Bethlehem's Candle

### The Second Sunday of Advent

December 4, 2022

Bethlehem's Candle represents faith. This week the candles draw our attention to the faith of Mary and Joseph as they journeyed to Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph each had their own leaps of faith to make, their own individual "Yes" which began the journey to Bethlehem. Mary said yes to a life unknown as the Mother of the Messiah. She had no blueprint, no one who had gone before her as a guide. This was wholly new territory. Joseph, in a similar way, said yes to the angel's request to take Mary as his wife. He said yes to Jesus, this child who was not his by blood but who would be come his Savior. There was no turning back from either choice. Together, Mary and Joseph offer us a model for what it means to rely in faith on God's providence.

~ Is God calling you to step out in faith in order to fulfill his plans? Where is there an opportunity for you to rely more fully on God's goodness?

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## The Shepherd's Candle

Joy is a tricky word. It is different than happy, certainly stronger than contentment or warm feelings. 1 Peter 1:8-9 talks about an "incredible and glorious joy" filling the hearts of believers. I imagine this is how the shepherds described their feelings upon receiving the news about the Messiah and then felt all over again as they passed the threshold to behold their infant King.

The Letter of James also speaks of joy, but perhaps not in a way we hear about today. James says, "Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance" (1:2-3). Joy when we suffer? Joy in moments of pain and loss? This is not the message of the modern world, or even the world surrounding the early Christians.

In order to understand the purpose of joy in our lives, we have to consider the both the source and goal of joy. If we root our joy in passing things, it will fail. If we try to achieve joy only through earthly means, we will never find it. True joy is rooted in Christ, in who *He* is. He is the Savior of the world who redeemed us by His free sacrifice. We did not earn salvation, we did not deserve it. Out of sheer abundant love, Jesus gave Himself over to death for our redemption. If that isn't something to be joyful about, nothing is! And this ought to be the root, the source of our daily joy.

God desires our joy. He wants nothing more for us than to experience His love which will bring us the ultimate contentment, happiness, and joy. If the goal of our life is heaven, then the goal is joy. Discerning what brings us closer to Christ, even if it is a period of suffering or trial, ultimately becomes a source of joy.

December 13, 2022

What brings you joy in this season of life?

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When, where, how or with whom do I rely on God's providence most easily?

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**Say to those  
whose hearts  
are frightened:  
Be strong,  
Fear not!  
Here is your God,  
he comes with vindication;  
with divine recompense  
he comes to save  
you.**  
(Isaiah 35:4)

**Welcome  
one another, then,  
as Christ  
welcomed you,  
for the glory of God.**  
(Rom 15:7)

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## *Bethlehem's Candle*

One of my new favorite phrases I recently heard at bible study is: "Our God is a God of abundance, not a god of scarcity." God seems to be continually reminding me of His generosity and overflowing love for each of His creatures. When God asked Mary to be the mother of His Son, that could have been the end of that chapter of the story. But God told Mary about Elizabeth, demonstrating His power and commitment to His people. God inspired Joseph to unite himself with Mary and to care for her and Jesus for the rest of his life.

While the Church has many examples of hermits, monks and cloistered nuns who choose to remove themselves from the world to be the praying heart of humanity, the life of faith is not solitary. We each come from a family, we are born into a community. We are a community of faith, just as the little house of Bethlehem is the holy model for what the human family ought to look like. Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them." Mary and Joseph were brought together by God for the sake of the Son. And there, in their midst, was Jesus. Jesus continues to promise the same spiritual reality for us. When we gather together in faith, there He is in the midst of us.

Bethlehem's Candle offers us an opportunity to reflect upon what gifts we have received out of God's abundance. We have received the gift of faith, of life, of family, of Jesus. What gifts are you thankful for today?

December 6, 2022

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## *The Shepherd's Candle*

### **The Third Sunday of Advent**

December 11, 2022

The Shepherd's Candle represents joy. I'm not sure we can fully understand the joy the shepherds must have felt as they heard the message of the angels. For generations their people had waited for the promised Messiah. They were fed the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as well as the prophets as often as bread throughout their lives. Beyond that, the message came to them in the form of heavenly angels filling the sky. After recovering from their fear, what joy must have filled them! The very same joy awaits us when we gaze upon our Savior in the manger.

~ Ponder a moment in your life when you felt intense, indescribable joy. Write about it and how it felt.





# Bethlehem's Candle

What does faith mean to you? What lessons from Bethlehem's Candle will you carry into next week?

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December 10, 2022

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# Catechism of the Catholic Church

Now, however, "we walk by faith, not by sight"; we perceive God as "in a mirror, dimly" and only "in part." Even though enlightened by him in whom it believes, faith is often lived in darkness and can be put to the test. The world we live in often seems very far from the one promised us by faith. Our experiences of evil and suffering, injustice, and death, seem to contradict the Good News; they can shake our faith and become a temptation against it.

It is then we must turn to the *witnesses of faith*: to Abraham, who "in hope...believed against hope"; to the Virgin Mary, who, in "her pilgrimage of faith," walked into the "night of faith" in sharing the darkness of her son's suffering and death; and to so many others: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."

(#164-165).

December 7, 2022



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## *Bethlehem's Candle*

What is an act of faith you can make today? What is God asking you to let go of so He can show His abundant love on you and the situation?

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**Faith is the  
realization  
of what is hoped for  
and the  
evidence  
of things not  
seen.**

Hebrews 11:1