



Advent Meditations: A JustFaith Series Week 3: Joy

Dear Member of the JustFaith Network,

We are grateful that you are a part of our JustFaith community. Whether you are a graduate of one of our programs or you are just getting to know us, we hope this Advent meditation will help sustain you spiritually and equip you to work for justice.

Each Monday during Advent, you'll receive a meditation in your email inbox. You can use it for personal reflection, or you can invite your friends, family, Sunday School class, or current or past JFM small group to join you in-person or over videoconferencing. When Advent is over, our weekly resources will continue to appear in your inbox once a week (unless you unsubscribe). These resources cover a variety of topics relating to justice and spirituality, and you can access an archive of past resources by logging onto your JustFaith account. If you are new to video-conferencing, Zoom tutorials are available [on our YouTube page](#).

In the meantime, we're offering tips and tools for facilitating all of our current programs virtually. While we hope that this weekly resource will spiritually sustain your community while distancing, now is also the perfect time to start one of our 8-week programs on racial justice, immigration, nonviolence, eco-justice, hunger, advocacy and organizing, or the integration of spirituality and action. [Click here](#) to explore our program offerings.

Last but not least, generosity is, at its core, a benefit to everyone. When you donate, your gift helps us sustain and equip individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out](#). Also, please feel free to forward this resource to friends and family!

In solidarity,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff



Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

When everyone has dialed in, begin your time together with these or similar words:

Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you, despite that we can't be together in person. Today we'll begin with prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation around a short reflection before closing in prayer. Most importantly, though, this will be a time to care for one another and to be the community we're called to be.

Let's take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the opening prayer.

Star of the new evangelization,
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,
service, ardent and generous faith,
justice and love of the poor,
that the joy of the Gospel
may reach to the ends of the earth,
illuminating even the fringes of our world.
Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones,
pray for us.
Amen. Alleluia!

Pope Francis
[Evangelii Gaudium](#),
11/24/13¹

Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you're by yourself, journal about them.

¹<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/pope-francis-prayer-for-the-joy-of-the-gospel>



Note: If you're with a group, these questions have the potential to take up a lot of time. Some weeks may require more check-in time than others, depending on the needs of the group. To provide a shorter yet meaningful check-in time, choose ONE of the questions below, and ask participants to share a ONE sentence response.

- **Before we begin this week's reflection, let's take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling?** (It will be a bit more difficult via phone to know if someone is being talked over or is trying to get a word in.... Be sure everyone has a chance to speak).
- **What is something you're struggling with this week?**
- **Where have you seen a sign of joy this week?**

Other optional questions include: What is something you've learned about yourself during this time of social distancing? Where have you experienced a "thin place" in the last week? Where have you seen beauty this week? What is one new behavior you'd like to continue doing when the virus has passed us by?

Reflection (15 minutes or so)

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines Joy as "...a state of happiness or felicity : *BLISS*" or "...a source or cause of delight"²; however, the season of Advent teaches us so much more about joy. In fact, "Joy" can also be defined as a verb: "...to experience great pleasure or delight : *REJOICE*".³

Luke's Gospel tells us that in the dark night, shepherds were watching their sheep when angels appeared to announce that the Messiah had come.⁴ A long expectant hope leads to joy when the promise is manifested on Earth. After all, "...on earth as it is in Heaven."⁵

Take turns reading the following Gospel stories:

- 10 Lepers - Luke 17:11-19
- Demon Possessed Man - Mark 5:1-20

² <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/joy>.

³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/joy>.

⁴ Luke 2:8-20

⁵ Matthew 6:9-13

- The Blind Man - Matt 9:27 - 31
- The Widows' Son - Luke 7:11-17
- Deaf and Mute Man - Mark 7:31-37

Then ask a few or all of these questions as you feel led:

- What do the burdens and desires of those healed by Jesus teach you?
- What stood out to you in these stories?
- Where do you see yourself in any one of these stories?
- Have you ever had the experience of being "set free"?
- Who is deserving of joy?
- When have you experienced joy and release from a burden in your life?

Share the following song and quote before closing. You will need to [share your screen](#).



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmYJ8phH5zw>
Oh Come All Ye Faithful, Copyright 2018, David Dunn.

“Joy bursts in our lives when we go about doing the good at hand and not trying to manipulate things and times to achieve joy.” - C.S. Lewis

Announcements (10 minutes-ish)



- Let participants know that JustFaith Ministries offers programs about a variety of topics, including racial justice, immigration, poverty, eco-justice, and spirituality. These programs are easy to facilitate, and you can do them in person or over video-conferencing.
- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff in order to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. In order to support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries through the following link. *If video-conferencing, copy and paste the following link into the chat box:*
<https://justfaith.org/get-involved/donate/>.
- JustFaith Ministries is currently hosting a monthly webinar series called “Acting for Justice While Sheltering in Place,” in which an expert on a justice-related topic will offer tips for taking action during COVID-19. Visit the [JustFaith Ministries Facebook page](#) for more information on times and topics.
- Are there any opportunities for action or advocacy happening in your community this week? Invite participants to share ways to support the work of local groups working for justice.

Closing Prayer (10 minutes-ish)

Then say: Before we join in the closing prayer, let us pause to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is as close as our very breath.

Pause for 30 seconds

Let's pray.

O almighty God, by the birth of your holy child Jesus
you gave us a great light to dawn on our darkness.
Grant that in his light we may see light.

Pause for silence.

Then say:



Bestow upon us that most excellent Christmas gift of love to all people, so that the likeness of your Son may be formed in us, and that we may have the ever brightening hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

United Methodist Book of Worship, 1965

Then, in these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

We are disciples on a journey.

We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.

We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.

If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.

Leader: We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country. Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more just and peaceful world. Amen.