



ADVENT 2026



**A RESOURCE FOR
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

www.caritas.org.au/advent

ABOUT

This resource invites participants to journey through the four weeks of Advent, reflecting on the Scripture readings and sharing in the stories of our sisters and brothers around the world. Each week, one of the Advent themes of hope, peace, joy and love is explored, through quotes, Scripture, reflections, reflection questions, possible actions and prayer.

About Caritas Australia

As the Catholic Church's international aid and development agency, Caritas Australia works hand in hand with the most marginalised and remote communities in Australia and overseas, to confront the challenges of poverty. Through locally-led programs we work with all people, with shared hope and compassion, towards a world where all can thrive and reach their full potential. Through partnerships with local organisations and Church networks, and as a member of Caritas Internationalis, one of the largest humanitarian networks in the world, we are able to reach where the need is greatest and work together for a just future.

About Advent

Advent marks the beginning of the Church's new year and is a season of waiting and preparation. In fact, the season of Advent focuses on Christ's threefold coming—past, present and future.

We await and prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas.

We hope and give thanks for Christ's presence in us and in the Word and sacraments.

We look to the future, waiting for Christ to come again.

In the coming four weeks, we prepare with mounting expectation for the coming of Christ in a spirit of waiting, conversion and hope.

Structure

Each week:

- Pause to contemplate some words of wisdom from Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV and pray the Advent prayer
- Light an Advent wreath candle
- Hear the Scripture readings (*The Jerusalem Bible*)
- Reflect on the theme, following the Cardijn See–Judge–Act–Pray rhythm:
 - See a Caritas story
 - Judge how the Advent theme is at work in this and in your own story
 - Act in response to all you have reflected on
 - Pray to gather your thoughts and intentions and commit them to God.



We are a valued partner of the Australian Government, receiving flexible funding under the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) each year to implement development and poverty alleviation programs overseas.

ADVENT

INTRODUCTION

Welcome

Leader: Explain the structure for each session as outlined on the previous page. Introduce Caritas Australia as the international aid and development organisation of the Catholic Church in Australia. Explain that through sharing the stories of the people with whom Caritas Australia works, we can acknowledge that we are all part of one global family. For more information you could watch [Compassion in Action](#) (2 mins) or use our [Introduction to Caritas Australia](#) PowerPoint presentation.

What is Advent?

Leader: Introduce the season of Advent by watching this video [Advent in two minutes](#).

Advent Pause and Prayer

At the beginning of each session (before lighting the Advent wreath candle) we will read a short quote from Pope Francis or Pope Leo XIV and pause for a moment to focus on the weekly theme (hope, peace, joy, love). We'll close our moment of quiet contemplation by saying the Advent prayer, 'Come, Lord Jesus.'

Lighting the Advent Wreath Candles



The word 'Advent' means 'coming'. Lighting the candles on the wreath symbolises the coming of light (Jesus) into the world. The first candle (violet) represents hope, the second (violet) peace, the third (rose) joy, and the fourth (violet) love. The central white candle is lit on Christmas Day and represents Christ. This Advent, we will learn, act and pray for a more just and fair world – a world full of hope, peace, joy and love, where we realise that 'everything is connected'.

Making the Advent Wreath a daily focus

The Advent Wreath helps us focus on the coming of Christ at Christmas. And, as Pope Francis reminded us, this coming of Christ 'is the foundation of our hope.' (Angelus 27 November 2022).

If you don't have an Advent wreath, consider making one. (Instructions can be found in primary school advent booklet) Everyone gathers around the wreath and someone lights the candle(s). The Leader prays the prayer for the week.



"Your Lord is coming"...
This is the foundation of our hope.

Pope Francis, *Angelus* 27 November 2022



Hope

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT



In the middle of the night, when everything seems to be falling apart, Jesus shows that Christian hope is not evasion, but decision.

Pope Leo XIV, *General Audience* 27th August 2025



Pause and pray

'Come, Lord Jesus.'

Light a candle

As we light this first candle on our Advent wreath, may we be filled with your everlasting hope. Amen.

Hear Scripture *(Readings are from the First Sunday of Advent)*

Leader: Ask the participants to sit comfortably, feet flat on the floor, hands in laps, shoulders relaxed. Explain that you (or someone in the group) will read the Scripture readings and they are asked to listen closely to the words and think about what they are saying to them.

Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

For you are our father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O Lord, are our father; our Redeemer from of old is your name. Why, O Lord, do you make us stray from your ways and harden our heart, so that we do not fear you? Turn back for the sake of your servants, for the sake of the tribes that are your heritage.

We have long been like those whom you do not rule, like those not called by your name.

As when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.



1 Corinthians 1:3-9

A reading from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Mark 13:33-37

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew:

Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."





Rumbidzai's story

Rumbidzai collecting safe and clean water from the newly established borehole.
Photo Credit: Caritas Gweru



Rumbidzai lives in rural Zimbabwe with her two young sons. Her husband works for a dry-cleaning company in South Africa, but the money he earns is not enough to provide everything the family needs. For many years, Rumbidzai relied on his income to pay for food, clothing, medication and other essentials.

Life was challenging, particularly because access to clean water was limited. The nearest water source was two kilometres away, and long queues at the local school borehole consumed valuable time. Fresh vegetables were also difficult to access, with the nearest gardens located several kilometres from her home. As a result, her family often ate vegetables only once or twice a week.

Rumbidzai became involved with Caritas after attending a community meeting in her ward. She joined the Chiriga nutrition garden and participated in training on sunflower production and garden farming practices. She also received sunflower and garden seeds.

Since joining the project, Rumbidzai has gained access to clean and safe water through a newly drilled borehole. She has also developed new skills through the agricultural training she has received.

Although her sunflower crop is still in the early stages of growth and the garden is still being prepared, Rumbidzai is hopeful about the future. She dreams of becoming an experienced farmer and one day owning a business. Through access to water, training and agricultural support, she is building a stronger foundation for herself, her children and her community.

Along with your generosity, this program is supported by the Australian government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).



Judge

Hope is at the heart of Advent. As we wait and prepare for the coming of Christ, we are reminded that God is always at work in our world, bringing light into situations that can sometimes seem difficult or uncertain.

Rumbidzai's story shows us what hope can look like in everyday life. Living in rural Zimbabwe, she faced many challenges, including limited access to clean water and nutritious food. Yet when the opportunity arose to join a Caritas-supported project, she embraced it with enthusiasm. Through access to a solar-powered borehole, farming training and seeds for planting, she is gaining the skills and opportunities needed to support her family and work towards her dreams.

Christian hope is more than simply wishing for a better future. It is trusting that God is present with us and acting on that trust. Rumbidzai's determination to build a better life for her children is a powerful reminder that hope inspires action.

As we begin this Advent journey, may we look for signs of hope in our own lives and communities. May Rumbidzai's story encourage us to trust in God's promises and to play our part in building a world where all people have the opportunity to flourish.

Reflection Questions:

1. What role does hope play in helping people face challenges and uncertainty?
2. How has Rumbidzai shown hope and determination in the way she has responded to the opportunities available to her?
3. Why is access to essentials like clean water, food and education important for human dignity?
4. During Advent, how can we place our trust in God and become signs of hope for others?



Act

- Learn more about the food security and share that with the school or parish community.
- Hope inspires action. Rumbidzai chose to attend training, join her local garden project and work towards a better future for her children. During Advent, choose one action each week that brings hope to others through prayer, generosity or service.
- Reflect on ways in which you can help the school community prepare their heart for Christmas, while reaching out to others with love.



Pray

Lord of all Hope

As we light our first candle, we pray that
All people may carry the flame of hope in their hearts
And bring that hope to others, both near and far,
As they share a vision of a better world.

Amen

Peace

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT



The path to peace demands hearts and minds trained in concern for others and capable of perceiving the common good in today's world.

Pope Leo XIV, *Address to the Movements and Associations of the "Arena of Peace"*, May 2025



Pause and pray

'Come, Lord Jesus.'

Light a candle

As we light this second candle on our Advent wreath, we pray for the many places in the world that are in special need of peace. We pray that we too may be filled with your deep peace. Amen.

Hear Scripture (Readings are from the Second Sunday of Advent)

Leader: Ask the participants to sit comfortably, feet flat on the floor, hands in laps, shoulders relaxed. Explain that you (or someone in the group) will read the scripture readings and they are asked to listen closely to the words and think about what they are saying to them.

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her
that she has served her term, that her penalty is
paid, that she has received from the Lord's
hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the
way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a
highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up, and every
mountain and hill be made low; the uneven
ground shall become level, and the rough
places a plain.

Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together, for the
mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald
of good tidings; lift up your voice with
strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of
Judah, "Here is your God!"

See, the Lord God comes with might, and his
arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and
his recompense before him.

He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will
gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them
in his bosom, and gently lead the mother
sheep.



2 Peter 3:8-14

A reading from the second letter of St. Peter

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish.

Mark 1:1-8

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark:

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'"

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."





Hein and Thandar's story

Hein and his wife Thandar with their two children.
Photo Credit: Jesuit Refugee Service



Four years ago, Hein and Thandar's village was defined by a rhythm that seemed as old as the hills of Kayah State in Myanmar. It was the rhythm of the changing seasons, the steady planting of upland rice, and the sound of children's laughter echoing through the trees.

Hein, now 40 years old, and his wife, Thandar, had built a life rooted in that soil, believing that their hard work would always be enough to protect their family. But that peace was shattered by the mechanical hum of drones and the terrifying roar of jet engines overhead.

When war came to their village, the rhythm was broken forever. They fled with nothing but the clothes on their backs and the heavy weight of uncertainty, becoming one family among 140 households taking refuge in one displacement camp.

Survival in the camp requires a dangerous, desperate kind of courage. For Hein, providing for his family has become a gamble with fate. To farm, he must leave the relative safety of the camp and return to the upland slopes near their old, abandoned village, a journey that takes him dangerously close to conflict areas. He describes his work not as farming, but as living with his life at stake. The fields that once yielded ten bags of rice now produce barely one, a 90% drop that leaves them constantly on the edge of hunger. When the drones appear like metal vultures in the sky above him, he must drop his tools and hide. They are no longer just farmers; they are survivors clinging to a landscape that has become a battlefield.

Yet, in the very heart of the camp, is a community-run nursery school supported by the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and its local partners in Myanmar. The Sustaining Education for Burmese Refugee project works on the Thailand/Myanmar border, assisting local partners in Myanmar and Thailand to implement their education programs for refugees and internally displaced people. This school is like a monument to the resilience of the camp residents. They want to go home, and they want peace, but until that day comes, they will keep planting, they will keep learning, and they will keep surviving.



The prophet Isaiah speaks words of comfort to people who have experienced hardship and uncertainty: "Comfort, O comfort my people." God promises that even in difficult times, He has not forgotten His people. A voice then cries out: "Prepare the way of the Lord."

For Hein and Thandar, peace is something they long for every day. Conflict forced them to leave their home and seek safety in a displacement camp. Yet even in these difficult circumstances, they continue to care for their family and hold onto hope for the future.

Peace is more than the absence of war. It grows when people show compassion, support one another and work for justice. As we prepare for Christmas, we are called to prepare a way for the Lord in our own lives. We can do this by building understanding, showing compassion, and standing alongside those whose lives have been disrupted by conflict and injustice.

Reflection Questions

1. What does peace mean and look like for you?
2. How do the words 'Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight', resonate in your life?
3. It is often said that peace begins at home. How could peace in individual homes all over the world contribute to peace in the wider world?
4. How are we called to be people of peace, for people like Hein and Thandar?



- Is there something that keeps you from feeling at peace in your relationships with family or friends? It might be time to ask for forgiveness.
- Pray St Francis of Assisi's prayer. Spend some time with God reflecting on how you can be an instrument of God's peace.
- Learn more about the experiences of refugees and displaced people and consider how greater understanding can help build peace.
- Be an agent of peace and help others in your school, parish or local community enjoy the spirit of Christmas this year. Volunteer in an outreach program, organise a Christmas hamper or toy appeal in your community.



Lord of all Peace

As we light our candle, we pray that

All people may carry the flame of peace in their hearts

And bring that peace to others, both near and far,

As they dream of a world without violence or aggression.

Amen



Joy



THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT



The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* n1, November 2013



Pause and pray

'Come, Lord Jesus.'

Light a candle

As we light this third candle on our Advent wreath, may we be filled with your overflowing joy. Amen.

Hear Scripture *(Readings are from the Third Sunday of Advent)*

Leader: Ask the participants to sit comfortably, feet flat on the floor, hands in laps, shoulders relaxed. Explain that you (or someone in the group) will read the scripture readings and they are asked to listen closely to the words and think about what they are saying to them.

Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.



1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

A reading from St. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians:

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

John 1:6-8, 19-28

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John:

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.





Rose's story

Rose sitting with her daughter outside a local health care facility.
Photo Credit: Caritas Australia



In remote communities of Papua New Guinea (PNG), limited access to health care services mean that many mothers still face childbirth without proper care. For many women in PNG, giving birth can be a matter of life or death. Complications can quickly escalate and become life-threatening.

Rose lives in the Milne Bay province with her husband and children. A mother of nine, she has seen both the challenges and the importance of safe delivery care firsthand. For the majority of her pregnancies, Rose has chosen to deliver at a local health centre near her home, run by Caritas Australia's local partner Catholic Church Health Services (CCHS). CCHS runs more than 240 health facilities across PNG, with many in some of the most rural and remote villages.

One of the reasons why many women still choose to give birth at home is due to concerns about the quality of the health facilities as most don't have electricity or running water, making it more comfortable to give birth at home even if it is incredibly dangerous.

The Health Strengthening project, supported by the Australian government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), helps upgrade health facilities run by CCHS, many of which have not been updated for more than 50 years. These upgrades are essential in ensuring that health centres are equipped with the necessary medical equipment, infrastructure and training to provide quality health care to rural communities.

For Rose, the health centre run by CCHS has been there through the births of nearly every one of her children. It has provided care, comfort, and confidence during some of the most important moments of her life. Her story reflects the broader reality for women across rural Papua New Guinea: the risks they face, the resilience they show, and the life-changing impact of having safe and accessible healthcare.

Along with your generosity, this program is supported by the Australian government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).



Joy is often linked to celebrations and happy occasions, but Christian joy can also be found in the simple blessings that remind us of God's care. During Advent, we are invited to recognise these signs of joy in our lives and to give thanks for them.

Rose's story reminds us that joy can be found even amid challenges. Living in a remote part of Papua New Guinea, Rose faces many difficulties, including financial hardship and limited access to services. Yet she speaks with gratitude about the health centre that has supported her through the births of her children and helped keep mothers and babies safe.

The improvements made to the health centre have brought comfort, reassurance and hope to families in Rose's community. For Rose, something as simple as access to quality healthcare and a safe place to give birth became a source of great joy.

As we prepare for Christmas, Rose's story challenges us to notice the blessings in our own lives and to share that joy with others, especially those who may be facing hardship or uncertainty.

Reflection Questions

1. What is joy and what does it look like for you?
2. What blessings in Rose's story brought her comfort, hope and joy?
3. Rose expressed gratitude for the care she received at the health centre. What are some things in your life that you are grateful for?
4. Why do you think access to healthcare is important for the wellbeing and dignity of individuals and communities?
5. How can you share joy with others as we prepare for Christmas?



- Spend some time reflecting on the people, places and opportunities that bring joy to your life. Consider how you might express gratitude for these gifts.
- Think of ways you could share active joy with your community and be the Good News as we approach Christmas.
- Reach out to someone who may be feeling lonely or struggling this Advent season. A simple act of kindness can bring great joy.
- Consider sharing the joy of Caritas Australia's work through a [Global Gift](#) or by supporting a Caritas Australia appeal.



Lord of all Joy

As we light our third candle, we pray that
All people may carry the flame of joy in their hearts
And bring that joy to others, both near and far,
As we share our gratitude for the gift of life.

Amen

Love

FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT



This is why the Lord commands us to love one another as he has loved us (cf. Jn 13:34): it is Jesus' love that begets love within us.

Pope Leo XIV, *Regina Caeli*, May 2026



Pause and pray

'Come, Lord Jesus.'

Light a candle

As we light this fourth candle on our Advent wreath, may we be filled with your restoring love. Amen.

Hear Scripture (Readings are from the Fourth Sunday of Advent)

Leader: Ask the participants to sit comfortably, feet flat on the floor, hands in laps, shoulders relaxed. Explain that you (or someone in the group) will read the scripture readings and they are asked to listen closely to the words and think about what they are saying to them.

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16

A reading from the second book of Samuel:

Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you."

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in?

Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of

the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies.

Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings.

Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.



Romans 16:25-27

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans:

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

Luke 1:26-38

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke:

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.





Nadia's story

Nadia stands with her family outside their tent home in Sudan.
Photo Credit: George Wambugu/CAFOD



Nadia lives in Sudan with her ten children. When conflict forced them to leave their home, the family fled in search of safety. After spending time hiding in the mountains, they eventually arrived in a displacement camp, where life remained difficult and uncertain.

With her husband missing, Nadia carries the responsibility of caring for her children on her own. To earn money, she collects firewood and harvests okra when she can, but providing enough food and other essentials for her family is a constant struggle.

Life in the camp brought many challenges. Families faced a shortage of clean water and safe sanitation facilities, increasing the risk of illness. Alongside other residents, Nadia helped keep the camp clean and worked to create a healthier environment for children and families.

Through support provided by Caritas Australia and its partners, new bathrooms were built and regular water deliveries began. These improvements helped make daily life safer and healthier for Nadia, her family and many others in the camp.

"We trust in God, but we hope that God will stop the war so we can return to our homes and normal lives," Nadia said.

Although Nadia's future remains uncertain, she continues to care for her children with courage and determination. She dreams of the day her family can return home, rebuild their lives and live in peace once again. Her story is a powerful reminder that love is often shown through everyday acts of care, sacrifice and perseverance. It also shows how practical support and compassion can help families facing hardship experience dignity, hope and God's love in action.



Christmas can be a busy and distracting time of year. There are presents to buy, events to attend and countless things competing for our attention. Yet Advent invites us to slow down and reflect on what Christmas is truly about: God's love made visible in Jesus.

In this week's Gospel, the angel Gabriel brings Mary the extraordinary news that she will play a special role in God's plan. Faced with uncertainty and many unanswered questions, Mary listens and places her trust in God.

Nadia's story reminds us that love is often shown through everyday acts of care and sacrifice. After conflict forced her family to flee their home in Sudan, she continued to do everything she could to care for her ten children and keep them safe. Even in the face of hardship and uncertainty, she did not give up.

The support provided through Caritas Australia and its partners also reminds us that love is more than a feeling. It is shown through actions that help others live with dignity and hope. Through access to clean water, improved sanitation facilities and other essential support, families like Nadia's can experience care when they need it most.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, may Nadia's story inspire us to recognise God's love in our own lives and share that love through our words, actions and care for others.

Reflection Questions

1. What does the love we see in Nadia's story, look like in your own life?
2. Mary is invited to trust God's plan even when the future is uncertain. How can her example inspire us when we face challenges or uncertainty?
3. How did Nadia show love and care for her children during difficult times?
4. In a season that can be busy and distracting, how will you make time to recognise and share God's love?



- Take time to thank someone who has shown you care, encouragement or support this year.
- Nadia's story reminds us that love is often expressed through practical actions. Think of one way you can help someone in your family, school, parish or local community this week.



Lord of all Love,
As we light our fourth candle, we pray that
All people may carry the flame of love in their hearts
And bring that love to others, both near and far,
In our generous and compassionate living.

Amen.



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