

ADVENT 2026



# Make Our Hearts Like Yours

Keep the Season of Advent  
with the Sacred Heart

A Four-Week Small Group Reflection Guide



Archdiocese  
of Seattle

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Keeping the Season of Advent with the Sacred Heart of Jesus

*A Four-Week Small Group Reflection  
for the Archdiocese of Seattle*

*Advent 2026*

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**What:** Four 60-90 minute small group sessions of prayer and reflection, focused on Scripture and readings on the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

**When:** The four weeks of Advent, 2026

**Why:** This small-group reflection is intended to help us prepare both individually and as communities for the great feasts of Christmas. This shared experience of prayer and reflection is a way for people to come together and build relationships with others.

**Who:** The simple format will require a facilitator and 4-8 participants for each group. This is ideal for small groups at a parish family, for families and groups of friends. Given the focus on sharing and listening, larger groups could be challenging. It would also be possible to open and close prayer in a large group and then break into smaller groups for the sharing.

**How:** The sessions can be held in the parish, in homes, in offices or in online meetings.

## Format for each session / Facilitator's Guide

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### Opening prayer (about 10 minutes)

- Sign of the Cross
- The designated Scripture passage\* is read aloud slowly by one of the participants. Follow with a few moments of silence.
- Read the passage on the Sacred Heart of Jesus.
- Follow with an extended time of silent prayer – 3-5 minutes.

### First round of sharing (about 20 minutes)

- The facilitator introduces the reflection question for the first round of sharing. (Sometimes there are two questions – choose just one for your group). Then, for 2-3 minutes, each person in the group shares *once* in response to the prompt. After each person shares, there is a moment for quiet reflection before the next person shares. *You are encouraged to listen in silence, with no back-and-forth or dialogue at this point.*
- After each person has shared, the facilitator invites all to reflect in silence for about 1 minute.

### What we heard (about 5 minutes)

- The facilitator now invites each person to name one thing that struck them in the first round of listening. It could be something they heard or something that occurred to them as they listened. Each person shares *once*, briefly.

### Second round of sharing (about 20 minutes)

- The facilitator shares the *second* question for reflection. Again, for 2-3 minutes, each person in the group shares *once* in response to the prompt. After each person shares, there is a moment for quiet reflection.

### What we heard (about 15 minutes)

- After the second round of sharing has concluded, the facilitator invites a conversation about what was heard in this gathering. What challenged you? What will stay with you? Where did you sense the Holy Spirit moving in our listening and sharing?

### Concluding prayer (about 10 minutes)

- The facilitator closes with prayer and offers petitions. Then invites *each* person to lift up ONE intention for which they would like the group's prayers.
- Closed the intercessions with the Lord's Prayer.
- After the Lord's Prayer, all join in praying the concluding prayer together.
- If desired, close by sharing a gesture of peace.

*\*Scripture passages are taken from the New American Bible-Revised Edition (NABRE), used by the USCCB.*

## **Prayer to the Sacred Heart**

Lord, I come to Your tender Heart today,  
to You who have words that set my heart ablaze,  
to You who pour out compassion on the little ones and the poor,  
on those who suffer, and on all human miseries.

I desire to know You more,  
to contemplate You in the Gospel,  
to be with You and learn from You  
and from the charity with which You allowed Yourself  
to be touched by all forms of poverty.

You showed us the Father's love  
by loving us without measure  
with Your divine and human Heart.

Grant all Your children the grace of encountering You.  
Change, shape, and transform our plans,  
so that we seek only You in every circumstance:  
in prayer, in work, in encounters, and in our daily routine.

From this encounter, send us out on mission,  
a mission of compassion for the world  
in which You are the source from which all consolation flows.

Amen.

*A prayer offered by Pope Leo XIV, Pope's Prayer Network, June 2025*

## **Week 1 – Disciples of the heart**

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### **Sign of the Cross**

#### **Scripture**

Isaiah 63:19, 64:2-4

From the prophet Isaiah.

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,  
with the mountains quaking before you  
While you worked awesome deeds we could not hope for,  
such as had not been heard of from of old.  
No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen, any God but you  
working such deeds for those who wait for him.  
Would that you might meet us doing right,  
that we might be mindful of you in our ways!

#### **Reading on the Sacred Heart: From St. Margaret Mary Alacoque**

One day, having a little more leisure, I was praying before the Blessed Sacrament, when I felt myself wholly penetrated with that Divine Presence, but to such a degree that I lost all thought of myself and of the place where I was, and abandoned myself to this Divine Spirit, yielding up my heart to the power of His love. He made me repose for a long time upon His Sacred Breast, where He disclosed to me the marvels of His love and the inexplicable secrets of His Sacred Heart. Then it was that, for the first time, He opened to me His Divine Heart in a manner so real and sensible as to be beyond all doubt, by reason of the effects which this favor produced in me (...)

He asked me for my heart, which I begged Him to take. He did so and placed it in His own Adorable Heart where He showed it to me as a little atom which was being consumed in this great furnace, and withdrawing it thence as a burning flame in the form of a heart, He restored it to the place whence He had taken it saying to me: "See, My well-beloved, I give you a precious token of My love, having enclosed within your side a little spark of its glowing flames..."

### **Silence**

#### **Round one of sharing**

- Most of us don't experience the extraordinary visions of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. But all of us are loved by God. When was a time you felt that love in a powerful way? How did it change you?

### **Round two of sharing**

- What does it mean to be a “disciple of His Sacred Heart”? What does the Sacred Heart have to teach our parish community—our world?

### **Concluding prayer**

*Leader:* To Christ, whose coming is certain, whose day draws near, we pray in hope.

For this local Church, and for our parish family, that we may know Christ’s love for us in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and be transformed. We pray to the Lord.

For all of us, during these holy days of Advent, that we may find time to pray in the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. We pray to the Lord.

For what else do we pray this Advent?

*After each has offered one intention, the leader continues:*

With longing for the coming of God’s kingdom,  
let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Lord’s Prayer

Pope Leo’s Prayer to the Sacred Heart (see page 3) - prayed by all

Sign of the Cross

## Week 2 – Loving as he loved

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### Sign of the Cross

#### Scripture

2 Peter 3:11-14

From the second letter of Saint Peter.

Since everything is to be dissolved in this way,  
what sort of persons ought [you] to be,  
conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion,  
waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God,  
because of which the heavens will be dissolved in flames and  
the elements melted by fire.

But according to his promise we await new heavens  
and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.  
Therefore, beloved, since you await these things,  
be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace.

#### Reading on the Sacred Heart: From Pope Francis

In a world where everything is bought and sold, people's sense of their worth appears increasingly to depend on what they can accumulate with the power of money. We are constantly being pushed to keep buying, consuming and distracting ourselves, held captive to a demeaning system that prevents us from looking beyond our immediate and petty needs. The love of Christ has no place in this perverse mechanism, yet only that love can set us free from a mad pursuit that no longer has room for a gratuitous love. Christ's love can give a heart to our world and revive love wherever we think that the ability to love has been definitively lost.

The Church also needs that love, lest the love of Christ be replaced with outdated structures and concerns, excessive attachment to our own ideas and opinions, and fanaticism in any number of forms, which end up taking the place of the gratuitous love of God that liberates, enlivens, brings joy to the heart and builds communities. The wounded side of Christ continues to pour forth that stream which is never exhausted, never passes away, but offers itself time and time again to all those who wish to love as he did. For his love alone can bring about a new humanity.

--Pope Francis, *Dilexit Nos*, 218-219

#### Silence

### **Round One of Sharing**

- What does it mean to love as Jesus did?
- In my life, who are the individuals who have shown me what that kind of love looks like?
- Do I recognize myself in the passage from Pope Francis? Are there aspects of my life that especially need to be touched by the loving heart of Jesus this Advent?

### **Round two of sharing**

- As the sounds and signs of Christmas are all around us, what are ways we can focus less on “buying, consuming, and distracting ourselves” and more on making our hearts like Jesus?
- Are there ways we (our family/our parish) could be more loving to each other or to our broader community?

### **Concluding prayer**

*Leader:* To Christ, whose coming is certain, whose day is close at hand, we pray in hope.

For the Church, that we may always love as Jesus loved. We pray to the Lord.

In thanksgiving for those who taught us what it means to love. We pray to the Lord.

For what else do we pray at the end of this Advent season?

*After each has offered one intention, the leader continues:*

Let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Lord's Prayer

Pope Leo's Prayer to the Sacred Heart (see page 3) - prayed by all

Sign of the Cross

## Week 3 – A missionary love

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### Sign of the Cross

#### Scripture

Isaiah 61:1-2

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 afflicted,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives,  
release to the prisoners,  
To announce a year of favor from the LORD  
and a day of vindication by our God;  
To comfort all who mourn;

#### Reading on the Sacred Heart: From Archbishop Paul D. Etienne

The love revealed in the Sacred Heart of Jesus is never self-referential. It is, by its very nature, missionary. The Heart that was opened on the Cross remains open in the life of the Church, sending her forth as a sacrament of Christ's love for the world. True devotion to the Sacred Heart does not withdraw the believer from the world but configures the Church for her evangelical mission....

When the Heart of Christ becomes the treasure of the Church, her mission takes on his form — marked by humility, mercy, patience and self-giving love. Evangelization ceases to be strategy and becomes witness, born of communion. The Church does not invent her mission; she participates in the mission of the Son of God, Jesus.... The Church evangelizes effectively only to the extent that she draws from the inexhaustible love of Christ and allows that love to shape her words, her works and her witness. Mission without communion is merely activism. This has concrete implications. Where the Sacred Heart is known and loved, families find unity, communities are reconciled and hardened hearts are softened — not by force, but by mercy. The tradition speaks of the fruit of devotion to the Sacred Heart, “to establish union and peace in the most divided families” and “to obtain victory over the strongest passions.” These are not private benefits; they are evangelical signs in a fractured world.

--Archbishop Paul D. Etienne, *“Learn from Me for I Am Meek and Humble of Heart”:  
A Pastoral Letter on the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

#### Silence

### **Round One of Sharing**

- “He has sent me.” So said the prophet Isaiah, and so said Jesus, who read this very passage in the synagogue at Nazareth as he began his public ministry. Do I feel “sent”? How has God impelled me from contemplation to action? To do what?
- In what ways do I make the Sacred Heart known and loved in my home/family/community?

### **Round two of sharing**

- How does my family or parish family carry on the mission of Jesus? Where do I see love in action and how can participate in that love?

### **Concluding prayer**

Leader: Since the love of Christ has gathered us together, let us pray.

For the Church, that the love of Christ may draw us to the Lord and strengthen us for mission. We pray to the Lord.

For all who are burdened with grief or loneliness during these festive days, that God may touch their hearts and bring them joy. We pray to the Lord.

For what else do we pray this Advent?

*After each has offered one intention, the leader continues:*

With longing for the coming of God’s kingdom, we pray:

Lord’s Prayer

Pope Leo’s Prayer to the Sacred Heart (see page 3) - prayed by all

Sign of the Cross

## Week 4 – No greater love

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### Sign of the Cross

#### Scripture

Luke 1:26-33

From the holy Gospel according to Luke.

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God  
to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,  
to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph,  
of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.  
And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you."  
But she was greatly troubled at what was said  
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.  
Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary,  
for you have found favor with God.  
Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,  
and you shall name him Jesus.  
He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High,  
and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father,  
and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,  
and of his kingdom there will be no end."

### Reading on the Sacred Heart: From Blessed Fulton Sheen

From Blessed Fulton Sheen's *The Divine Romance: The Pulpit Of The Cross*

Love as the world understands it means to have, to own, to possess: To have that object, to own that thing, to possess that person, for the particular pleasure which it will give. That is not love; that is selfishness; that is sin. Love is not the desire to have, to own, to possess. Love is the desire to be had, to be owned, to be possessed. Love is the giving of oneself for the sake of another. Love as the world understands it, is symbolized by a circle, which is always circumscribed by self. Love as our Lord understands it, is symbolized by the Cross with its arms outstretched even unto infinity to embrace all humanity within its grasp.

...Love did not keep the secret of its goodness — that was creation. Love became one with the one loved — and that was the Incarnation. But if Love had merely stopped with God becoming man, we might say that God did not do everything He could do to show His love.... If Divine Love stopped after merely appearing amongst us, man might say that God could never understand the sufferings and the loneliness of a human heart.... No longer can men say that God has a heart that cannot understand, for now His own Sacred Heart understands what it is to be abandoned by God and man as He suffers — suspended between

the kingdoms of both, between heaven and earth, rejected by one and abandoned by the other. Now it is true to say of Love itself that it is really dying for us, *for greater love than this no man hath that a man lay down his life for his friend.*

## **Silence**

### **Round One of Sharing**

- What stood out to you in Blessed Fulton Sheen's passage about love?
- What is your own favorite image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus? Why? What does it reveal about Jesus for you?

### **Round two of sharing**

- Blessed Fulton Sheen speaks of "the pulpit of the Cross." As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, what does Jesus preach from "the pulpit of the manger"?
- In this last week of Advent, what is one way I can grow closer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

## **Concluding prayer**

*Leader:* To Christ, whose coming is certain, whose day draws near, we pray in hope.

For our Church and our parish family, that we may hear what Christ speaks to us from the pulpit of the manger and the cross. We pray to the Lord.

For all of us, that during these holy days of Advent, that we may seek reconciliation in our relationships with one another and with God. We pray to the Lord.

For what else do we pray this Advent?

*After each has offered one intention, the leader continues:*

With Christ, our savior and our brother, let us call upon God as Our Father.

Lord's Prayer

Pope Leo's Prayer to the Sacred Heart (see page 3) - prayed by all

Sign of the Cross