

Scripture:

[Romans 15:12-13](#)

Prayer:

O God, by whose Word all things are made holy, pour forth your blessing upon this wreath, and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus. Amen.

Sight:

Blessing of Nativity/Manger scenes

“Lord, bless all who look upon this manger; may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus.” The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has created a [blessing](#) for Nativity/manger scenes in the home.

Sound:

What is a Prayer Walk?

On a prayer walk, you might hear children laughing and pray that God would show himself even to the young people of the area. You might hear a snowplow or a garbage truck going by and pray that God reveal to them the importance of their work. You may hear neighbors shoveling or snow blowing their driveway, and you pray that God bless their family. When you prayer walk try and be aware of all that is going on around you, and simply pray for it. I invite you to use the Advent reflection below written by Fr. Henri Nouwen as you do your prayer walk. It helps you to see the simplicity and hiddenness around us. Things we sometimes miss as we go through our busy days. Advent is that time to slow our pace, to look around, and to see the hope.

An Advent reflection by Henri Nouwen:

"A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him." (Isaiah 11:1-2).

Our salvation comes from something small, tender, and vulnerable, something hardly noticeable. God, who is the Creator of the Universe, comes to us in smallness, weakness, and hiddenness. I find this a hopeful message. Somehow, I keep expecting loud and impressive events to convince me and others of God's saving power; but over and over again I am reminded that spectacles, power plays, and big events are the ways of the world. Our temptation is to be distracted by them and made blind to the "shoot that shall sprout from the stump." When I have no eyes for the small signs of God's presence - the smile of a baby, the carefree play of children, the words of

encouragement and gestures of love offered by friends - I will always remain tempted to despair. The small child of Bethlehem, the unknown young man of Nazareth, the rejected preacher, the naked man on the cross, he asks for my full attention. The work of our salvation takes place in the midst of a world that continues to shout, scream, and overwhelm us with its claims and promises. But the promise is hidden in the shoot that sprouts from the stump, a shoot that hardly anyone notices.

Taste and smell:

Offer a taste of hope by donating food to one of these parishes or Catholic Charity organizations to start your Christmas giving....

Touch:

Cut 24 strips of red and green paper, or, if you're a liturgical purist (you know who you are!), you'll want to use purple and white. Each day as you gather for dinner or prayer, and as you light the candle of the Advent wreath, write something that you want to pray for this Advent season. An example could be: For all those who are alone in nursing homes during this season. At the end of the 24 days, you will have a prayer chain that you can place on your Christmas tree. With the strips of paper, alternate red/green or purple/white. Maybe add a note about why you chose those colors! This activity is easy and satisfying.

The book *Faithful Families* has a variety of different ways to use the paper chain and variations on it.