



# *They Shall Beat Their Swords into Plowshares - Advent Calendar 2017*

This Advent, at time of polarization in our country and frequent recourse to violence in our world, we pray and act to make real the vision of Isaiah to beat swords into plowshares – as individuals, communities, nations, and with Earth. The quotes that begin each week of Advent are from *An Appeal to the Catholic Church to re-commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence* released at the end of the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference in Rome, April 2016. <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/final-statement-an-appeal-to-the-catholic-church-to-re-commit-to-the-centrality-of-gospel-nonviolence/>

*“In his own times, rife with structural violence, Jesus proclaimed a new, nonviolent order rooted in the unconditional love of God. Neither passive nor weak, Jesus’ nonviolence was the power of love in action.”*

## **December**

**3 First Sunday of Advent** Place a photo of a situation of violence near your Advent wreath and hold that situation in prayer during this season.

**4 Churchwomen of El Salvador (+1980)** “In El Salvador, a country named for the savior, they lived an Advent life, waiting for Christ to arrive amidst grave suffering, injustice and violence.” Annie Wim

**5 Monitor your speech this week for angry or violent expressions and ask the Prince of Peace to give you a peacemaker’s lips.**

**6 Anniversary of the death (2002) of peace activist Philip Berrigan:** “We Christians forget (if we ever learned) that attempts to redress real or imagined injustice by violent means are merely another exercise in denial - denial of God and her nonviolence towards us, denial of love of neighbor, denial of laws essential to our being.”

**7 Feast of St. Ambrose** “If you have two shirts in your closet, one belongs to you and the other to the person with no shirt.” Clean out your closet today and give to those who suffer the systemic violence of poverty.

**8 Feast of the Immaculate Conception** “Mary has the interior peace which we ought to have amid the sometimes tumultuous and confusing events of history, events whose meaning we often do not grasp and which disconcert us.” Pope Benedict XVI. Today by tradition the Sisters of Charity renew their vows. Renew today your promise to be an active force for peace in the world.

**9 Feast of St. Juan Diego** “Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to build up the kingdom by reminding poor people that they are worthy of an apparition.” Mark Zwick

*“Clearly, the Word of God, the witness of Jesus, should never be used to justify violence, injustice or war. We confess that the people of God have betrayed this central message of the Gospel many times, participating in wars, persecution, oppression, exploitation, and discrimination.”*

**10 Second Sunday of Advent** Today is the UN Human Rights Day. Reflect on a human right you cherish and pray/act for those who are deprived of this right.

**11** Chose a Christmas card that reflects a message of peace or include a quotation about peace and non-violence in your card.

**12** Gaze at the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe and pray to become, like her, a bridge between cultures.

**13** Think of ways you can give yourself rather than things as a gift this Christmas.

**14** 150,000 Americans have been killed by gun violence since Newtown (Dec. 14, 2012). Meditate on the numbers. Contemplate the people.

**15** Chose some act of penance today for the ways in which Christians have promoted violence, injustice, and war.

**16** “People will approach their work for justice in different ways; lighting small fires wherever they are. Ultimately the small fires will catch.” Mary Ann Coyle, SL

*“In every age, the Holy Spirit graces the Church with the wisdom to respond to the challenges of its time. In response to what is a global epidemic of violence, which Pope Francis has labeled a “world war in installments”, we are being called to invoke, pray over, teach and take decisive action.”*

**17 Third Sunday of Advent** This weekend many houses of worship celebrate a “Gun Control Sabbath.” Encourage your place of worship to do so.

**18** Ask someone you know who speaks another language to teach you to say “Peace be with you” in that language.

**19** In the winter, St. Francis would leave out wine and honey for the bees. How can you live in a more peaceful relationship to Earth this Advent?

**20** Send a Christmas card to someone who has worked for peace.

**21** Winter Solstice – Light a candle and prayer in thanksgiving for the sun and the gift of fire.

**22** “Fears and terror came to my door. Love answered and there was no one there.” Rumi

**23** Hold in prayer a situation of war or other violence and pray as a mantra in rhythm with your breath the words of the angels of Bethlehem...Glory to God...peace on earth.

*“We believe that there is no “just war”. Too often the “just war theory” has been used to endorse rather than prevent or limit war. Suggesting that a “just war” is possible also undermines the moral imperative to develop tools and capacities for nonviolent transformation of conflict.*

**24 Forth Sunday of Advent** Pray for expectant parents today and advocate for just pre-natal and maternal health care and for maternity/paternity leave for new parents.

**25 Christmas** Spend time gazing at the figure of the baby Jesus in the manger. Pray to know the vulnerability of God who took on human flesh and who chose to suffer violence rather than inflict it.