

# Best prayer for Advent easy to find

What's the perfect prayer for Advent? Ironically, it's right under our noses.

Most of us would concede that the greatest prayer is the Our Father, the Lord's Prayer, the one Jesus personally taught us. Curiously, the perfect Advent prayer is the one we say at Mass right after the Our Father.

It goes as follows: "Deliver us Lord from every evil, and grant us peace in our day. In your mercy keep us free from sin, and protect us from all anxiety, as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our savior, Jesus Christ." Even if we aren't a part of daily Mass, can't we all make that our personal prayer for Advent?

"Deliver us Lord from every evil" picks up the last line of the Our Father, "deliver us from evil." Evil is real. We are told about it daily in our newspapers and newscasts. We know its potential in our daily life.

But while evil is real, God is 'more real.' Put simply, the breaking of God into our world permanently defeated evil. God is our savior. One black man who was a janitor summed it up so well: "If God don't come in power, it won't do me any good." Advent tells us that God is coming, coming with power to defeat evil permanently.

"Grant us peace in our day." At Christmas, the angels will sing: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth." Peace is our deepest longing. We pray for the peace that is the absence of war. We pray for peace in our hearts. One personal practice during Advent might be to release every negative feeling as soon as you feel it. As soon as you experience any feeling you don't want to carry - fear, worry, guilt, shame, anger - just say: "I release you." Keep repeating that until you feel lighter. Or, "Lord, I'm giving this to you. I'm putting it on your list." God wants to give us peace. Too often we don't receive it because we're too busy holding onto other "stuff."

"In your mercy keep us free from sin." The original sin was separation from God. We ask God to free us from anything that separates us from him! And we ask him to "keep" us free. Just as we are freed from our negative emotions, the positive emotions are signs that we are holding onto God - love, joy, peace, gentleness,

kindness and the like. God doesn't just free us from evil, but also frees us for love and joy.

"Protect us from all anxiety." That's a tall order. Anxiety almost seems hard-wired into me - perhaps for you as well. So I usually add the word 'needless.' Free us from all needless anxiety. Good anxiety, creative anxiety, can motivate us: to do good for others; to get this article in before the deadline; to respond to a baby crying; to work with concentration.

The "needless" anxiety that I pray to be freed from is the worry, the doubt, the trepidation that makes doing good harder and often dissuades us from taking on new challenges.

A simple technique to deal with anxiety is to ask myself a simple question: "Am I focusing on God, or am I focusing on the problem?" Focusing on the problem expands the problem and the anxiety. Focusing on God brings the answer to the problem and peace.

Finally, "as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our savior, Jesus Christ." During Mass, that final petition has at least two meanings. We await first in joyful hope for Christ coming to us in Holy Communion. Second, we await in joyful hope for his return at the end of time. During Advent, we can add a third meaning - the celebration of Christ's first coming into human history.

Hang onto this last petition. Advent is about joyful hope. So is life.