



Slide 1 Welcome: Introductions and outline of the retreat

Slide 2 Light the first two Advent candles; Open our Bibles at the Book of Isaiah.

Gathering in the presence of God.

God our Father, Your promises of old gave your people hope that you would come into their lives again.

We rejoice that Jesus, your Son, who fulfilled your promise, can be found among us today.

We ask you to help us to open our hearts to him.

Finding stillness

Sit comfortably – two feet on the floor, back straight, hands on your lap. Close your eyes or keep your eyes focused on the candle or centrepiece. Enjoy the silence. Let go of the distractions. Breathe in. Hold. Breathe out. Breathe in. Hold. Breathe out.

Be still. Relax. Let all your worries fly away. Breathe in. Hold. Breathe out. Breathe in. Hold. Breathe out.

Listen to the sounds around and then let the sounds go – Choose a word/mantra e.g. Maranatha, Jesus, peace, love, shalom.....as you breathe in, say the word slowly to yourself, as you breathe out let any thoughts that come to you – flow out... Eventually just be still....

Slide 3 Music: Magnificat (Jo Boyce) performed by the Choir of St John Bosco Arts College

Slide 4 TAKE TIME TO REFLECT

- What am I waiting for?
- What am I looking forward to?
- A couple of weeks off school or work at Christmas?
- Remembering family and friends at this time?
- Maybe something more, something deeper inside me – inner peace, transformation,
- change?
- Am I prepared to change?

Music: O Come O Come Emmanuel, played by Dan Antonio

Slide 5: Sharing

Slide 6: Look at our world ... Think of its mountains ...

We have already begun our Advent journey: we are nearly beginning the 3rd week. – and as with any journey – things don't always go as we expect ... there are twist and turns, hills and valleys ...

I think one of the most awe-inspiring features of our world – are mountains, particularly those that tower high about us so that they can be seen and experienced from miles away.

While there is an attraction to them, (indeed some climbers see one and it's there to be climbed with ropes and grips...for others of us – standing and craning our necks upwards is about as much as we can do! But there is also a fear – they can be hostile, inhospitable and dangerous.

There is a mystical element about them – they stand strong and majestic, pointing beyond themselves, set apart and yet constantly inviting us, drawing us in to their silence and strength; they demand respect and concentration; they teach balance, resilience, perspective. They can invite us to become alive, be refreshed, remember our potential and deepest values. Here one can encounter God.

John Muir – Scottish Born American naturalist , born in the 19th century.

“Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.”

And also - “ the mountains are calling and I must go”

Slide 7: Time and again, Mountains are mentioned in the Bible., they dot the landscape where the stories in the Bible take place. As a result, mountains and hills are mentioned more than 500 times in Scripture. Mountains have a logical religious symbolism for Jewish and Christian cultures since they are “closer to God” who dwells in the heavens (as in the sky). Mountains do not move – they are the ultimate symbol of stability. As a result, God often reveals himself on a mountain.

Slide 8 So , let us invite each other and support one another as we continue our
Advent journey and say together
On the slide- COME LET US GO UP TO THE MOUNTAIN OF THE LORD

Slide 9: Isaiah 2:1-5

This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, ***“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.”*** The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many

peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord

Slide 10: ***IN YOUR OWN HEART - CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN OF THE LORD***

- Realise that God wants to meet you this day
- Realise that God is there to support and listen to you on this Retreat day.
- Be aware of your giftedness today

Slide 11: **NOW: TAKE TIME**

- Read the passage again
- Which words strike you?
- REFLECT
- Why did those words strike you?
- What do want to achieve this Advent?
- REFLECT
- Read the passage once more

Music: Mizerna Cicha (Traditional Polish Carol) Public Domain via Mfiles.co.uk

20 minute break and reflection time

Slide 12: **Sharing ...what struck me? what is staying with me? What am I wondering about?**

Slide 13: **Holy Mountains in Scripture**

Mountains are often used as poetic symbols when describing God or his dealings with his people. Specific mountains are remembered because of their association with important events in the history of Israel. Some of the key events in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ take place on mountain sites. We will reflect on some of them this morning...

(spend approx.. 3 mins with each of the following slides)

Slide 14: **Mount Moriah is in Old City Jerusalem – somewhere between the**

Temple Mount and the Dome of the Rock
and you'll see from the picture – the golden dome mosque in Jerusalem - -
the mount is sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims

- this is where the Jewish temple once stood
- for the Muslims – the dome of the rock – celebrates the place where Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac
- Jesus crucifix took place near here
- so it has a strong link to the concept of sacrifice - Isaac/lambs at the temple/Jesus

Abraham was asked to take his only son, Isaac up to Mount Moriah and offer him to God

How do you put your trust in God in these days of pandemic?

S: Slide 15 **Mount Sinai**, rises like a soaring monument to what God revealed here. His name – I AM WHO I AM. He is the God who comes to meet us but will not be possessed
Here God commissioned Moses to set his people free. Here the people of God pitched their tents; here God gave his Law, the Ten Commandments of the Covenant.

The encounter of God and Moses on this mountain enshrines at the heart of our religion the mystery of liberating obedience

here a host of pilgrims through the ages have scaled what St Gregory of Nyssa called "the mountains of desire"; here generations of monks have watched and prayed.

Where are the strange places you might discover God?

SLIDE 16 MOUNT HOREB – SITUATED CLOSE TO MT. SINAI – BOTH SAID TO BE THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD! Mount Sinai and Mount Horeb are the same mountain- , the two names come from alternate exodus traditions, which were weaved together by the editorial process which produced 'the Torah'.

It was here Elijah, the prophet, searched for God on Mount Horeb. God was not found in the spectacular like wind, earthquake and fire-God was found in the still gentle breeze.

Where is your still, gentle place?

SLIDE 17 MOUNT TABOR : significant event in the NT - Mount Tabor...if you go to the Holy Land – this is a very distinctive mountain as one travels up from Jerusalem to the Galilee.

Jesus climbed this mountain with three special friends, who saw him in the glory of Transfiguration on the top they saw him in the glory of Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah.

Here God speaks from the cloud, as he had done on Sinai. Now, God commands us to listen to his Son because "no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him".

And so we learn that the true name of God is FATHER . The name which is beyond all other names: ABBA. And in Jesus we learn that our true name is SON, DAUGHTER. We learn that the God of the Exodus and the Covenant sets his people free because they are his sons and daughters, created not for slavery but for "the glorious liberty of the children of God".

They then had to come down and get on with life.

What is your very special place where you feel close to God

SLIDE 18 MOUNT OF BEATITUDES – overlooks the Sea of Galilee and is a natural outdoor amphitheatre. The spacious slope of the Mount of Beatitudes (also known as Mount Eremos, a Greek word meaning solitary or uninhabited) would have provided ample space for a large crowd to gather to hear Jesus. Jesus gave one of his greatest teachings on the Mount of the Beatitudes. He shared those attitudes that should mark a Christian.

What is your most positive attitude?

SLIDE 19 MOUNT OF OLIVES The hill, also called Mount Olivet, takes its name from the fact that it was once covered with **olive** trees. It offers an unrivalled **vista** of the Old City and its environs. Jesus often travelled over the Mount of Olives on the 40-minute walk from the Temple to Bethany. He also went there to pray or to rest. He went down the mount on his triumphal entry to Jerusalem on **Palm Sunday**, on the way weeping over the city's future destruction. Tradition holds that Jesus gave his disciples the 'OUR FATHER' here. In the Garden at its foot, he agonized and prayed on the night before he died.

What is your favourite type of prayer?

Slide 20 **SLIDE 20 - CALVARY** Calvary or Golgotha, was according to the Gospels, a site immediately outside Jerusalem's walls. In the fourth century C.E., the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built at the site of Golgotha as identified by Roman emperor Constantine's mother, Helena.

Jesus received his cross in the courtyard of Pontus Pilate; he carried that cross through the streets of Jerusalem up to the place of execution, Golgotha, the Hill of the Skull - the place of Jesus' death. This place shows the reality of Incarnation; it was the place of pain, hurt, rejection, anger and death that did lead to glory and redemption.

Pope Francis - The suffering unleashed by the virus raises questions about God, "What is He doing in the face of our pain? Where is He when everything goes wrong? Why does He not solve our problems quickly?"

He goes on to say..... The isolation and abandonment Christ experienced takes on new shades in a world where people admitted to hospitals are prohibited from having visitors and those living in nursing homes and on their own are confined by mandatory lockdowns, let alone the many who are dutifully obeying stay at home orders. In these situations, the isolation of the cross becomes more real, contrasted with the sacrifice made by those whose jobs and livelihoods won't allow them to enter such isolation.

Offering His life on the cross, Jesus conquered even death. From the open heart of the Crucified one, God's love reaches each one of us. Only love protects the life that we have because it embraces our weaknesses and transforms them. Easter tells us that God can turn everything into good, that with Him we can truly be confident that all will be well.

Covid 19 is not God's judgement – it is a call to life differently

**In life, who can you identify with on the road to Golgotha:
The soldiers and jeering crowd?
Mary, Veronica or Simon of Cyrene?**

What strength has this time of pandemic brought out in you?

SLIDE 21 even in these days ... we can trust, in the words of Julian of Norwich (an English mystic who lived at the time of the Black death in England) – ***that “all will be well and all will be well and all manner of things will be well”***

SLIDE 22: REFLECT AND SHARE YOUR WISDOM

MUSIC: The Wexford Carol Public Domain via Mfiles.co.uk

What struck you as we looked at the things that happened
on the mountains of Scripture?

In these past ten months, we have seen pain, hurt, rejection, anger and death as the pandemic hit the world. We have been asked to climb a real mountain of suffering and have shared that suffering across the world. Covid-19 has been a difficult mountain to climb, but it has also brought out the best in us: we have seen a strength that we didn't know we had.

What strength has this time of pandemic brought out in you?

Slide 23 Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.

Come – the invite that echoes still through the ages and we hear again this Advent

We have Come – in the spirit of Abraham , Moses, Elijah, Jesus.

We have come TOGETHER – NOT ME, NOT YOU – but US —Abraham , Sarah and Isaac; Moses and Aaron and the Israelites, Elijah and the prophets; Jesus, apostles and followers

As community – we have come together and climbed the mountain of the Lord, As pilgrims – looking ahead, looking up

Supporting each other; carrying each other; encouraging each other

Sensing the presence of God in

- being prepared to sacrifice all
- in hearing and receiving God's word
- in the gentle breeze
- in the way to live as a disciple with Jesus

That we may learn the ways of God

To be ready to give all

To converse with God

To sit at the mouth of our cave and listen

To re-fashion our swords into ploughshare

To do love

To be transfigured

To be commissioned

SLIDE 24 : COMING DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN – we must come down from the mountain, transformed ... and return to our everyday:

- Aware of your glory **ALL: Take us down the mountain**
- With love in our hearts **ALL: Take us down the mountain**
- To our homes and streets **ALL: Take us down the mountain**
- Stand us firm on our feet **ALL: Take us down the mountain**

Slide 25 Reader: Heavenly Father, together we resolve to turn our faces to your light, that we may be transformed into the likeness of your son.
ALL: May it be so, for your name's sake.
Reader: Heavenly Father, together we resolve to turn our faces to your world, that, with reflected glory, we may think and work and speak for you.
ALL: May it be so, for your name's sake.
Reader: Heavenly Father, we await that moment when, face to face we shall gaze with unclouded sight and worship you for ever and a day.
ALL: May it be so, for your name's sake.

Slide 26 Music: The Angel Gabriel, played by Dan Antonio

The gift of Advent is a gift to connect with the beauty that life brings us; it is a gift to share, with our sisters and brothers, the fullness of our lives.

The gift of Advent is a gift to connect with the beauty that life brings us; it is a gift to share, with our sisters and brothers, the fullness of our lives. What a fantastic gift to bring to your loved ones on this day of retreat. Think of the mountains you have climbed in these past few months; this crisis has been hard, but it has brought the best in you; you have discovered resources and inner strength that you did not exist. Use that strength as you face the challenges that 2021 will undoubtedly bring but, in your hard times, go up to that mountain of the Lord in your mind; concentrate on your 'happy place' and all will be well, as Julian of Norwich reminds us: all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well

Slide 27 Moments of Thankfulness – opportunity to share what we are thankful for

Slide 28 Closing Prayer:

We await your coming and with joyful hearts we pray:
Come, Lord Jesus.
You come to bring us hope and courage:
May our actions of justice and care reflect this same love.
You come as a reflection of God's love:
May our actions of justice and care reflect this same love.
You come to show us ways of compassion and mercy:
May we reach out to all people in our society with that same spirit of compassion and mercy.

Slide 29: Thank you for taking part and for your generosity in the times of sharing, whether you spoke or listened

Closing Blessing

May God himself kindle a flame in us that will burn on from heart to heart until Jesus comes again.

May Jesus the morning star rise in our minds, our hearts and our lives.

May the Holy Spirit - the light-maker of fire and glory; bless this day and everyday.

Amen

On Sunday 21 December, those of you who are subscribed to our Advent Camino will receive a link to a Christmas Eve Vigil Service (pdf format) to pray with your families at home, created by Sr Susan. This will be available to everyone else from 23 December, in the Downloadable Resources area of our website. <https://www.salesians.org.uk/downloads>

Credits for music and images – on Slide 30

Music

Slide 3: Magnificat (Jo Boyce) performed by the Choir of St John Bosco Arts College (Salesianlink)

Slide 4: O Come O Come Emmanuel, played by Dan Antonio (Salesianlink)

Slide 11: Mizerna Cicha - Traditional Polish Carol (Public Domain via Mfiles.co.uk)

Slide 22: The Wexford Carol (Public Domain via Mfiles.co.uk)

Slide 26: The Angel Gabriel, played by Dan Antonio (Salesianlink)

Images

Slide 3: The Road to Bethlehem by Joseph Brickey

Slide : Grayson Joralem on Unsplash

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