

Opening Prayer

God of all stillness and all silence,
You speak in the whisper of breath,
in the pause between heartbeats,
in the space we create by simply being here.

As we enter this Advent retreat,
help us to release our need to perform,
to achieve, to impress, or to fix.

Help us instead to receive:
to receive your presence,
to receive ourselves as we are,
to receive this moment as gift.

Open our hearts to the joy that comes
not from doing more
but from being fully awake
to your presence already here.

We ask this through Christ our Lord,
who breathed his Spirit into our lungs
and called us beloved.
Amen.

Closing Prayer

Emmanuel, God-with-us,
You chose not to remain distant but to dwell
among us.

Teach us the sacrament of presence—
to be fully here, fully alive, fully awake.

We have rushed here tonight,
carrying the weight of unfinished tasks,
the noise of our endless doing.

But in nine simple breaths,
you reminded us:
we are more than what we accomplish.
We are beloved.
We are held.
We are here.

Help us to carry this presence beyond this church
first to ourselves, honoring our own sacred worth,
then to you, resting in your companionship,
and finally to others, offering the gift of truly
seeing them.

Help us to stop performing and start being,
to stop rushing and start noticing,
to stop fearing silence and start resting in it.

This Advent, as we prepare for your coming,
prepare our hearts to be present—
present to you, ourselves, to others.

For in presence, we find joy.
In presence, we find you.
In presence, we find home.

Amen.

Finding Joy Advent Retreat Session #1

Theme: Joy As Presence

This Week's Practice:

Choose ONE Tiny Habit of Presence and practice it daily. Consider practicing the Nine Breath Prayer each morning or evening.

Daily Examen Questions:

- Where was I most alive today?
- Where was I most present to myself, to God, to others?
- What is God inviting me to notice?

Reflection Questions:

- Who needs the gift of my presence this week?
- What one small step can I take to offer it?

Quote to Carry:

- *"To be in your presence is its own abundance."* — John O'Donohue