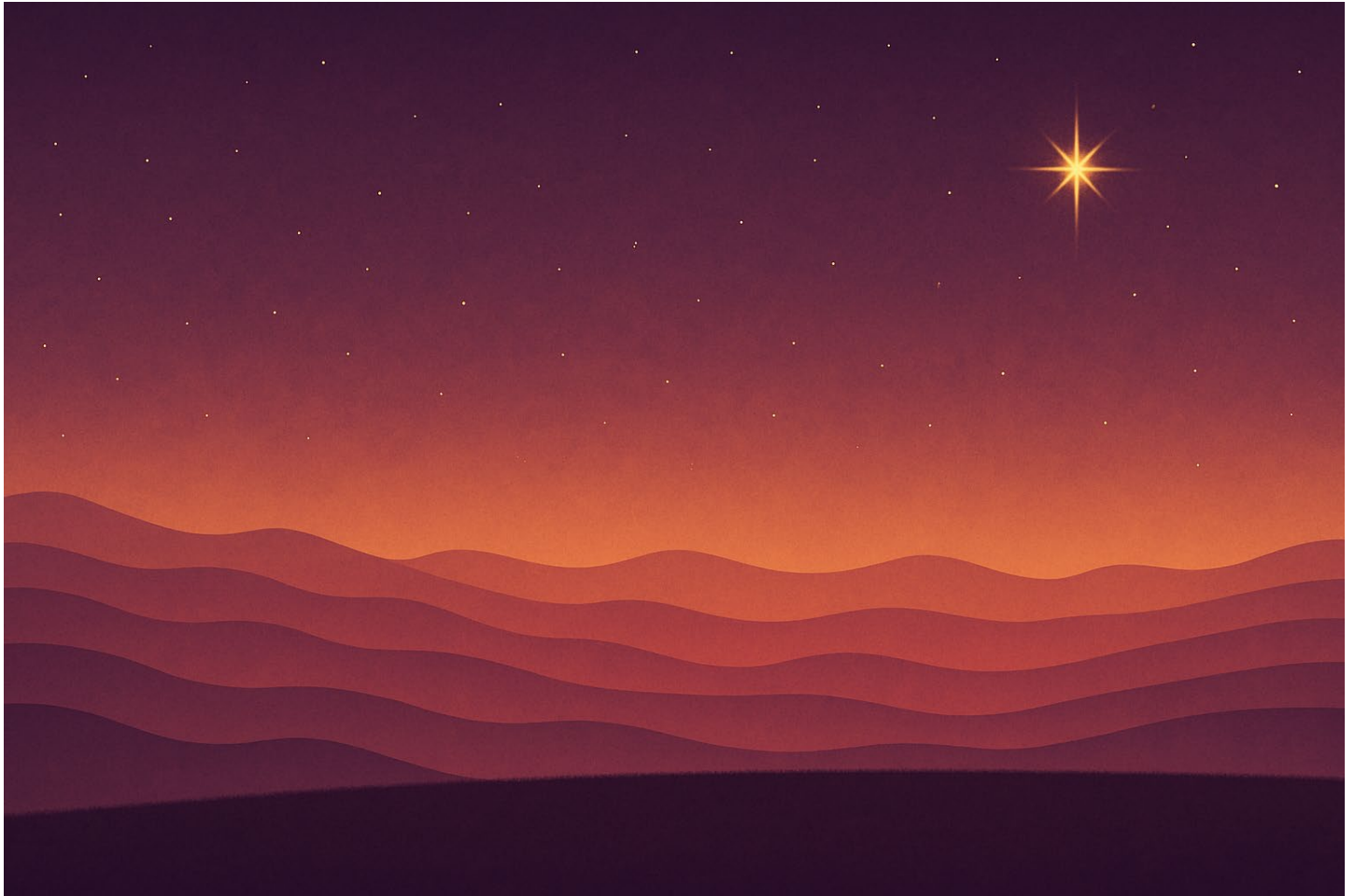




# Advent Reflections at St Michael's



As we approach Advent, we are invited once again into a season of watchfulness, wonder, and holy attentiveness. This year's Advent reflections, **The Present of the Journey**, centre on a simple yet profound idea: **that God meets us not only at the destination but also in the very moment we are living now.**

Drawing on Scripture, Ignatian spirituality, and the beautiful poem included in the series — “there’s a present we’re offered in Advent, a gift that no money can buy” — each week invites us to slow down and receive the grace of the present moment:

Week 1: Hope — beginning the journey with trust

Week 2: Faith — walking through uncertainty with God beside us.

Week 3: Joy — recognising God in the small and unexpected.

Week 4: Peace — resting in the stillness before Christ's arrival.

Each reflection includes a short Ignatian practice, an echo of the poem, and a focus point from the Holy Family's journey.

To help you enter more deeply into each week's theme, an audio version of every reflection will be made available online. You are warmly invited to join us each Sunday at 2pm, when a new recording will be released each week.

This can be accessed via this link:

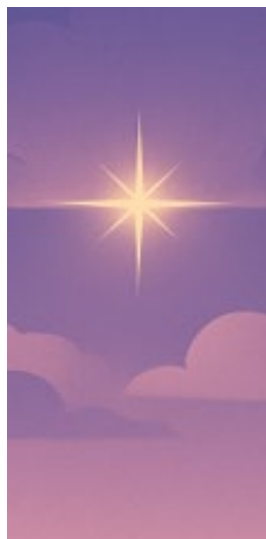
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/115nzelQgiPKkFrbW9jGSNisguHEV843Z/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/115nzelQgiPKkFrbW9jGSNisguHEV843Z/view?usp=drive_link)

**Or**



Simply visit our online reflection page at that time, settle into a quiet space, and listen at your own pace. Whether you are at home, out for a walk, or taking a moment of stillness in the middle of a busy day, these audio reflections are offered as a gentle companion for your journey through Advent.

May this weekly rhythm become a space of calm attentiveness, drawing you more fully into the grace of the present moment.





There's a present we're offered in  
Advent, a gift that no money can buy.  
Amazon doesn't stock it,  
Black Friday can't flog it,  
but its value no one can deny.

This gift doesn't come in fine  
wrapping, it's not covered in tinsel or  
bows.  
It's not under the tree,  
nor in ads on TV, it's not dusted with  
glitter or snow.

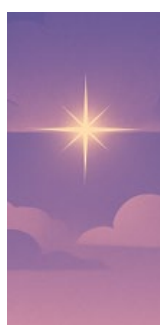
This gift is the gift of the present,  
it's the moment before us right now.  
To open our eyes  
to the fullness of life  
that's available when we slow down.

Don't be preoccupied with the future,  
or get stuck in regrets of the past.  
Don't long for some gadget  
you'll regret once you have it,  
it's the gifts you can't see that will  
last.

So plant yourself deep in this  
moment. Give thanks for each  
blessing, each beat. Be absorbed in  
the present,  
it's a gift straight from heaven.

This Advent, be content, be  
complete.

*© Sam Hargreaves/Engage Worship, more like  
this from [engageworship.org](http://engageworship.org)*



## Week 3 – Joy Finding God in the unexpected



Welcome to Week Three of our Advent journey in The Present of the Journey.

This week, we arrive with Mary and Joseph at the edge of Bethlehem — tired, hopeful, and perhaps unprepared for what awaits them. Instead of warm hospitality, they meet closed doors; instead of comfort, a stable. And yet, in this unlikely place, joy begins to take shape.

Advent joy is not the loud, glittering kind the world advertises. It is quieter, humbler, often wrapped in surprise. It meets us not in perfect conditions but in the places we least expect God to appear.

The Holy Family teaches us that joy is born not from circumstances going our way, but from discovering God present within them — even when they are messy, disappointing, or unfamiliar. As the poem reminds us, this gift “doesn’t come in fine wrapping,” but in the unadorned present moment where grace quietly shimmers.

So as we enter this week, I invite you to soften your gaze and widen your attention. Notice the small, hidden, unexpected ways that God is near. Joy often slips in gently — through a gesture, a breath, a spark of gratitude, a moment of connection.

Let us begin by opening ourselves to the possibility that joy may be waiting for us right here, right now, in the very places we might overlook.

[Read The Poem – The Advent Present](#)

### *Reflection:*

Joy in Ignatian spirituality is rarely loud or flashy; it is discovered through attentiveness, even in hardship. The Holy Family arrived weary, only to find closed doors. Yet within the disappointment, God prepared a quieter, humbler space, a place where divine joy would take flesh.

The poem reminds us that joy does not come wrapped in glitter:  
“This gift doesn’t come in fine wrapping... it’s not dusted with glitter or snow.”  
Joy is the grace found in the simple, hidden, overlooked corners of life —  
presence, connection, breath, compassion.

This week, we practice noticing the joy that quietly fills the stable-like places of our own lives.

### *Ignatian Practice (Contemplation in Action – Seeing God in the Small):*

1. Recall three small moments of joy from this week — even tiny ones.
2. Sit with each moment; notice how God was present in it.
3. Ask God to help you recognize joy more easily in the days ahead.

### *Echo of the Poem:*

“So plant yourself deep in this moment.  
Give thanks for each blessing, each beat.”  
Joy is the fruit of gratitude rooted in the present moment.

### *Closing*

As you end this time, let your heart rest for a moment on the small joys that surfaced — the ones that often go unnoticed, yet carry the warmth of God’s nearness.

Joy is found in the humble, the simple, the unexpected — just as it was in Bethlehem’s stable.

May this week open your eyes to those quiet sparks of grace:

in a kind word,

in a moment of laughter,

in a breath of stillness,

in the presence that meets you right where you are.

Carry these small joys with gratitude.

May they lead you deeper into God’s tender delight.

**Join us again next week for ‘Peace – waiting at the threshold of birth**