

pastoral prayer: O our God, we need to be honest with ourselves; yet, that can come discomfort when we take a close and candid look at ourselves. It is only in knowing your mercy that we have the courage to pray. Being aware that you call us to integrity, we pray together now.

We confess that we continue to celebrate Advent we are less concerned about our spiritual shape than about our preparations, which often become frantic. We recognize that we are more excited about our round of parties presents, and all we will consume than about attending to our inner hunger. We even confess that there are days when we wish Christmas would go away!

We admit, as we anticipate the coming of the Prince of Peace, that it is easier to blame the world for military build-up and war than to realize that we ignore the build-up of anger within our homes.

We acknowledge that, rather than seeking peace by walking in your way, we are wayward, straying from your course, or running toward other paths.

May our confession not be a ritualistic response or thoughtless repetition, but a freeing of our souls from slavery to sin - a resolute quest and an opportunity for self-emancipation. May this awareness not be a despair, but a spring of hope.

of renewal and forgiveness we pray.

Opening Prayer: O God, we thank
you for the lives of your faithful
servants, who waited for the advent
of your Son. We thank you their witness
speaks to us today. We give thanks
that we do not have to wait as did Abram-
ham and Sarah, and Ruth and Boaz. We
do not have to rely on the prophecy
as did Isaiah. Their prophecy is the
source of our memory.

While we wait, again, in expectation,
knowing the outcome, and the miracle,
our excitement should not be diminished. Al-
though it's with sadness that we ~~do~~ admit
even with that knowledge, we often act
as if there has been no revelation.

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