

## Children's Moment

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The second week of Advent is grounded in peace. Sometimes peace is talked about by what it isn't. It's not war, violence, harm. But I wonder if this makes it hard to understand what peace actually is. Or, connecting it to the first week of Advent, what do we hope for peace to be? Jesus is said to be the Prince of Peace, and the way he lived his life was in intentional community, caring for others, and service. What could that reveal about peace?

This brings us to Hawaiian Monk Seals (ilio-holo-i-ka-uana in Hawaiian, meaning "dog running in the rough water"). These beautiful beings spend their lives both on land and deep under water—as far as 1,800 ft. to search for food on the seafloor. Something special about these seals is their mothers, who have been known to foster their fellow seal's babies. They nurse them, tend to them, and make sure they're safe as they would their own pup. One study found that nearly 90% of Hawaiian monk seal mothers fostered pups! What makes this even more interesting is that these seals are generally solitary creatures when they're adults—which is how they got their name from being like monks who often spend time alone. This is unlike many other types of seals who live in colonies their whole lives.

What might these monk mothers have to teach us about peace, about what it means to care in a way that reduces harm and increases connection? After Mary became pregnant with Jesus, she knew how dangerous it was for her to be an unwed pregnant person in her time and place. She sought safety with her cousin Elizabeth and was able to receive the refuge she needed. I wonder how they experienced peace with each other during that unique time. Perhaps, peace in their love for each other, peace in their bodies, peace as a hope for the world?

What's your favorite way to care for others? To receive care? What makes you feel peace, harmony, and safety in your body, in your spirit? How might you find more of that this week, and what does support look like to make that happen?



*"...THE GLORY OF GOD SHONE AROUND THEM..."*

LUKE 2:9

# Spiritual Exercise

## Instructions:

Today's exercise might look like the familiar childhood Mad Libs. It takes today's second Christian scripture reading, removes certain words, and invites you to fill in the blank spaces to make it your own. You can fill out the whole passage or just a line or two that moves you. What might God be stirring in your heart when you consider, I thank God every time I....

### Philippians 1:3-11

I thank my God every time I remember you,  
constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you,  
because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus.

### Philippians 1:3-11

I thank my God every time I \_\_\_\_\_,  
constantly praying with \_\_\_\_\_ in every one of my \_\_\_\_\_ for  
\_\_\_\_\_.

because of \_\_\_\_\_ sharing in \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ until now.

I am confident of this, that the one who began \_\_\_\_\_ among \_\_\_\_\_ will bring it to  
\_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_.

It is right for me to think this way about \_\_\_\_\_, because you hold me in \_\_\_\_\_, for  
you share in God's \_\_\_\_\_ with me, both in my \_\_\_\_\_ and in the  
\_\_\_\_\_ of the gospel.

For God is my witness, how I long for \_\_\_\_\_ with the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ Jesus.

Example:

I thank God every time I see you laugh,  
constantly praying with my smile in every one of my breaths for life,  
because of your courage, sharing in parenthood from their adoption until now.

I am confident of this, that the one who began love among families of all kinds, will bring it to joy by grace.



*"...THE GLORY OF GOD SHONE AROUND THEM..."*

LUKE 2:9