



Advent: The Way of Peace

Advent Week 1 Practice: Visio Divina

Visio Divina invites us to the practice of "divine seeing." Be mindful of what stirs within you as you spend time gazing at this painting, and bring awareness to the artist's intention (printed on the back of this page) as you feel led.

Visio Divina Process:

Settling and Shimmering

Breathe deeply. Move your awareness down to your heart center. Settle into this moment. Gaze on the image with a soft focus. Release any thoughts or expectations.

Explore all of the details, colors, movements, and shapes. Notice what shimmers for you. Let your eye rest somewhere on the image.

Savoring and Stirring

Staying with what shimmers, close your eyes and allow it to unfold in your heart, savoring your experience. Make space within for images, feelings, and memories to stir. How does your body respond?

Summoning and Serving

Slowly shift your awareness to a sense of invitation or summoning which rises up from your meditation. How does the prayer stirring in you meet you in this particular moment of your life?

How might you be called into a new awareness or kind of service through this experience?

Slowing and Stilling

Release all of the words and images and slow down even more deeply.

Allow yourself some time for silence and stillness. Breathe gratitude in and out.

At the end of your prayer you might gaze one more time on the image just to see if you see anything new there.

As an invitation of sending forth, consider the question of the artist, "Can we experience peace while also experiencing life?"

Artist's Statement- Alli Arnold

Advent Painting: "Peace" 2023

As I began to imagine what this painting could be, I spent time with a portion of the focus scripture from Mark for this week - "Keep awake." I couldn't help but feel the call to action in these words. This intentional ask of increased self awareness and the loving caution that encourages us to live on purpose and with great care felt like a warm reminder. In the midst of our routines; be they daily, seasonal or life-long - are we subconsciously or consciously staying in the dark?

I then spent some time with the overarching Advent theme "The Way of Peace." The first image that came to mind was the lighting of the peace candle and how that illuminates a space of unknown. There is a burning of hope inside that light. It symbolizes a way of peace to be created through all of us.

Peace.

In honest moments, Peace can feel impossible at times.

And then I started to realize what I wanted to paint...

This painting is meant to be experienced in the creation of its three layers and how they work together and build upon one another.

The first layer begins with the blank canvas. I start by writing "Keep Awake" across the entire surface. Then I begin to fill in the geometric shapes created by the lines of these letters and words with the cool toned colors. These are the colors of night, of darkness, of the automatic pilot mode that can lull us to sleep as we navigate.

Then the second layer begins where I once again write on the canvas. This time I write our Advent theme "The Way of Peace" and with the same technique I begin to fill in the shapes created by these words. But this time it is being done with the colors of the flame of the peace candle. The warm, glowing tones that light the way for us to hope for something better and to see a future where peace can exist.

Now it was time for the final layer. I wanted to express my belief that Peace doesn't only exist when we no longer experience chaos, disruption or conflict. But rather, it is the deep breath that roots us in the present moment. It is the hug that embraces us in the midst of all our hardship. It is being held together while we feel fragmented and broken inside the world we live. We have now created two layers full of colors and lines and shapes, and it was time to quiet everything all in a hush of white. It was time to remind ourselves that we aren't going to have a human experience without trials and tribulations but rather how do we fully embrace each layer and then wrap ourselves in a blanket of true peace? The final layer of this painting does just that, all that is going on underneath the surface, all that is there and has been foundational to this work now receives layers of white paint. Some color and texture peeks out here and there on the canvas just as it all does in our life. But each of us has a deep knowing and connection to the truest form of Peace through the Divine. This already lives within us and strongly centers Peace in our hearts. Amidst the noise and the clutter, everything is blanketed in calm, loving presence. And at its core, Peace can still feel messy and colorful and imperfect. But it is there in our inhale, in the pause, in the remembering that we are truly connected in Peace. It is there in our acceptance of each other's layers and in the collective exhale of all expectations and judgements.

I don't think this imagery looks like a traditional painting of Peace or even Advent for that matter. But I think that is part of the journey we must take in understanding our role in Peace and how it exists inside the struggle as well. It may look different than we expect. It may have bright colors and messy beginnings but it can also be as simple as the pause you take in this new moment to take a deep breath and be fully present. It is an exploration of the question - "Can we experience Peace while also experiencing life?"