

Advent service 2015: Gifts of hope

NB: This service outline may be freely adapted for your own use in parishes, groups and communities. Hymns are suggestions, so please feel free to replace with those your congregation or community prefers.

Preparation: On the altar, please place some candles and elements of the earth, such as flowers and pebbles at the front. For the offertory procession, you will need to prepare gifts of water, bread, seeds, and a photograph of Juana from Guatemala- find this at worldgifts.cafod.org.uk

Please stand for the opening hymn.

Hymn: My soul in stillness waits (111, Laudate)

Reader:

Praised be you, my Lord, with all your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun
who is the day and through whom you give us light.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Moon and stars,
in heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Water,
who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.¹

Leader: *Welcome everyone to the service*

As we journey through Advent, we await with hope the coming of Christ, who is our light and our salvation. The Lord comes to redeem the earth, to set us free.

In the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reminds us that creation is a gift from God. Through the mystery of the Incarnation, Christ is intimately present in the world around us. When we see the gifts of the earth in the light of the Lord, we have a deeper understanding of how to care for our common home.

Yet, many in our world today are held back from receiving God's gifts. Many of our sisters and brothers do not have enough food or water, and struggle to provide for their families. Several of our fellow creatures are endangered and are not treated with respect.

Let us call to mind the times we have held our neighbours or other creatures back from blossoming. We ask God for forgiveness:

For the times we have wasted your gifts,

All: Lord have mercy.

For the times we have not considered the needs of others,

All: Christ have mercy.

For the times we have we have despaired and given up our hope in you,

All: Lord have mercy.

¹ Extract from the *Canticle of the Sun*, Saint Francis of Assisi

Opening prayer

Leader:

God of all,
you embrace all of creation.
Fill us with the wisdom to see
how every person and every creature
is precious in your sight.
Inspire us to give ourselves to one another,
in hope that all may live life to the full.
We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,

All: Amen.

First reading: Proverbs 3:13-20

Psalm: Psalm 32 (33) (45b, Laudate)

Reader: We wonder at the mysterious pattern of creation. The trees and the birds, the moon and the sun, all creatures and all people depend on the Lord. Like the wellsprings, God's abundant love makes all things beautiful.

In these few moments, think about what gifts the Lord has blessed you with in your life. How has the hand of God been outstretched to you?

Silent reflection

Gospel: Mark 10:17-21

Homily notes:

You may like to prepare your own, or you can use and adapt the notes below:

The rich young man in today's gospel left Jesus with a heavy heart. He wasn't a bad man; he was honest and he followed God's commandments. He had built his life around material things, but in the end this didn't make him happy.

Like the rich young man, it is easy to think we are good. We try to do the right things and follow the rules as far as we are able. But God asks of us something much deeper.

As we prepare for Christmas, we can become caught up in being busy: so many presents to get, so much food to prepare. But in this constant rush of wanting to buy and to be more, we are often tempted to look past one another.

In the gospel, "Jesus looked steadily at the man and was filled with love for him."

For a few moments, be still and let the eyes of the Lord look upon you. What is God asking of you?

Pause for a few moments to allow people to reflect

Like Jesus, we are called to be present to each other and to every part of God's creation. Let us ask the Lord to help us to look at the world with the eyes of love.

Leader:

Let us pray.
Lord, we offer you these prayers
for the needs of our sisters and brothers
and of all your family.

Reader: We pray for the Church: that the Holy Spirit may continue to move her to reach out to poor communities, and to serve the Lord with humility and integrity.
Lord, hear us...

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Reader: We pray for our world: that the Lord may bring healing to places which are broken and abandoned. We pray that goodness may still shine throughout the world, and that we might hear the song of creation. Lord, hear us...

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Reader: We pray for our sisters and brothers living in poverty. May God bring them strength and comfort in times of trial. May all of us share God's gifts of hope and joy. Lord, hear us...

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Reader: We pray for our local community: that the Lord may inspire us to respect the gifts of the earth for the sake of other creatures, our neighbours, and future generations. Lord, hear us...

All: Lord, graciously hear us.

Invite the congregation to pray their own intercessions, either aloud or in silence.

Reader: Mary, Mother of God, you bear witness to all things. We ask you to help us to see the world through the eyes of wisdom, and to intercede for us as we pray:

All: Hail Mary...

Leader: We ask these prayers through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Reader: “Grace, which tends to manifest itself tangibly, found unsurpassable expression when God himself became man and gave himself as food for his creatures. The Lord, in the culmination of the mystery of the Incarnation, chose to reach our intimate depths through a fragment of matter. He comes not from above, but from within, he comes that we might find him in this world of ours”.
Laudato Si’ #236

Leader: The Lord is with us here and now; through the trees, through the stars, and through the person next to us.² We are called to see God reflected in all that exists. In this way, the Lord brings us together into a deep communion. We are part of the earth, and we belong to each other as children of God.

As a sign of our thanksgiving, we offer gifts of the earth and we place them at the Lord’s feet.

Gifts of water are brought to the front.

First reader: God of life, by this gift of water, cleanse and refresh us, that we may see your goodness present throughout creation.

All: Thanks be to God.

Gifts of bread are brought to the front.

Second reader: God of fullness, by this gift of bread, we remember that you give yourself as food for all your creatures. Nourish and sustain us, so we may seek to pour your love into the hearts of others.

All: Thanks be to God.

Gifts of seeds or plants are brought to the front.

Third reader: God of hope, you bring all of creation into beauty and fullness. Where we see only the waste of our desires, sow in us a thirst for deeper meaning. Grant us the gift of hope to see that in you, all of the earth is set free.

All: Thanks be to God.

A photograph of Juana and her family in Guatemala is brought to the front.

Fourth reader: God of justice, you long to see sorrow turned into dancing. By your grace, let justice flow like running streams, so all may live life to the full.

All: Thanks be to God.

Hymn: Bless the Lord, my soul (813, Laudate)

² See *Laudato Si’* #88.

Reader:

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls us to a conversion, a change of heart, so as to see Christ present in the world around us.

The Holy Father says, "This conversion calls for a number of attitudes which together foster a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness. First, it entails gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God's loving gift, and that we are called quietly to imitate his generosity in self-sacrifice and good works" #220.

We are called to respond to God's love. One way of doing this is to give gifts of hope to our sisters and brothers living in poverty.

Juana [pronounced hw-anna] lives with her daughter and her three sons in Guatemala.

Every day, Juana and her children used to walk miles and miles to collect water, because there was no water supply in her village. The burden of having to collect water weighed heavily on Juana, and her children often became ill from the dirty water.

Thanks to a *World Gift* given by a group of parishioners through CAFOD, Juana and her children now have their own clean water supply. Now her children are healthier, and they have more time to spend together as a family.

Juana says, "I am very happy that my children don't have to walk long distances to pick up water, nor to wash clothes in the river. Thank you very much to CAFOD. God bless you."

God blesses us all with gifts of life. Let us share God's gifts with each other joyfully, giving thanks and praise to God.

Please stand for the final prayer.

Final prayer and blessing

God of hope,
we cling to you,
for you renew the face of the earth.

Through the gift
of your Son, our Lord Jesus,
we follow you on the path of dawn.

Enlightened by your love and wisdom,
help us to lead each other
and all creatures
back to your open arms.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us go forth this Advent, radiant with the love of Christ, to share gifts of hope and joy with our global family.

All: Amen

Leader: And may God bless us all, in the name of the Father +, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen

Final hymn: Be not afraid (964, Laudate)

Retiring collection: There will be a retiring collection for CAFOD's World Gifts, which will help give hope to Juana and many of our sisters and brothers across the world. Please give what you can. Thank you.

*If, after the service, your community would like to continue supporting CAFOD World Gifts, please visit: **worldgifts.cafod.org.uk***