



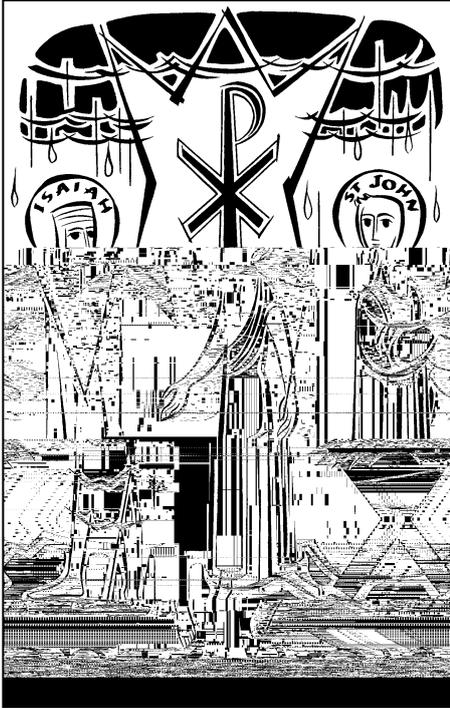
**To Heads of Rel Ed.**

**Please find enclosed some resources gathered from various web sites and from some RE Departments within the Archdiocese.**

**Chaplains and Clergy may find these of use too in planning liturgies for Advent and Christmas.**

**Would appreciate receiving any resources you may have to add to the list.**

**Declan O' Loughlin**



**Advent**, the four weeks before Christmas. It is a time of preparation, waiting and hope. The Advent liturgy resounds with the longing cries of the Hebrew prophets, the voice of Jesus, and John the Baptist's preaching that the Lord is near. Hear their message still ringing through today's dark winters. The brief meditations on the Gospels for the Sundays of Advent found in this section may help you listen to their voices.

Among the customs of Advent, the Advent wreath is probably the most important. Lighting the Advent candles each day with a prayer can prepare your household for Christmas. For children, an Advent calendar marking off the days before Christmas can be an aid for living the season.

And since Santa Claus suddenly appears everywhere at this time, why not remember the saint who is likely his original-- St. Nicholas, whose feast day is December 6th? His example of quiet, generous

giving is worth recalling, especially for children.

The origins of the Advent wreath are found in the folk practices of the pre-Christian Germanic peoples who, during the cold December darkness of Eastern Europe, gathered wreaths of evergreen and lighted fires as signs of hope in a coming spring and renewed light.

Christians kept these popular traditions alive, and by the 16th century Catholics and Protestants throughout Germany used these symbols to celebrate their Advent hope in Christ, the everlasting Light. From Germany the use of the Advent wreath spread to other parts of the Christian world.

Traditionally, the wreath is made of four candles in a circle of evergreens. Three candles are violet and the fourth is rose, but four white candles or four violet candles can also be used. Each day at home, the candles are lighted, perhaps before the evening meal-- one candle the first week, and then another each succeeding week until December 25th. A short prayer may accompany the lighting.

### **A Rite for the Beginning of Advent at Home**

*The first day the wreath is in the home, the leader may say:*

As our nights grow longer and our days grow short,  
we look on these earthly signs--light and green branches--  
and remember God's promise to our world:  
Christ, our Light and our Hope, will come.  
Listen to the words of Isaiah the prophet:

The people that walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those who lived in a land as dark as death  
a light has dawned.  
You have increased their joy  
and given them gladness;

They rejoice in your presence  
as those who rejoice at harvest,  
as warriors exult when dividing spoil. *Is. 9:1-2*

*Then all pray:*

O God,  
rejoicing,  
we remember the promise of your Son.  
As the light from this candle,  
may the blessing of Christ come upon us,  
brightening our way  
and guiding us by his truth.  
May Christ our Savior bring life  
into the darkness of our world,  
and to us, as we wait for his coming.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

*Then the first candle is lighted.*

Each day at home, the candles are lighted, perhaps before the evening meal -- one candle the first week, and then another each succeeding week until December 25th. The rose candle is usually lighted on the third Sunday of Advent. As the candles are lighted, a prayer may be said.

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### **Daily Prayers for Lighting the Advent Wreath**

#### **First Week**

O Emmanuel, Jesus Christ,  
desire of every nation,  
Savior of all peoples,  
come and dwell among us.

#### **Third Week**

O Key of David, Jesus Christ,  
the gates of heaven open at your  
command,  
come and show us the way to  
salvation.

#### **Second Week**

O King of all nations, Jesus Christ,  
only joy of every heart,  
come and save your people.

#### **Fourth Week**

O Wisdom, holy Word of God, Jesus Christ,  
all things are in your hands,  
  
come and show us the way to salvation.

If you're curious about the use of color in worship, you can [read more about colors](#).

Here are the five candles and their symbolism:

**First Candle**

Color: Purple  
Theme: Hope  
First Sunday in Advent

**Second Candle**

Color: Purple  
Theme: Love  
Second Sunday in Advent

**Third Candle**

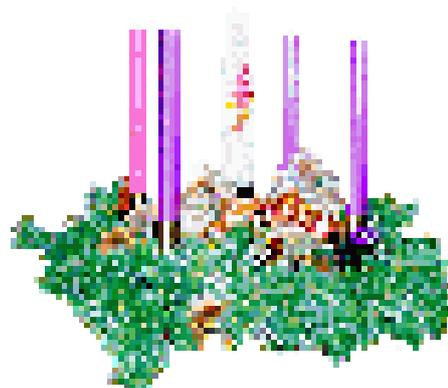
Color: Purple or pink  
Theme: Joy  
Third Sunday in Advent

**Fourth Candle**

Color: Purple  
Theme: Peace  
Fourth Sunday in Advent

**Optional Center Candle**

Color: White  
Theme: Christmas  
Christmas Day



## What the Advent Wreath Means

Historically, the candles have no more meaning than a countdown. That is, they originally stood for 4, 3, 2, and 1. However, people like for things in the church to have symbolic meanings, so the candles have gradually acquired the meanings I gave you above. If someone in your church tells you that the candles have some other meaning than Hope, Love, Joy, or Peace, they aren't wrong, they are just different. The meanings are so new that they aren't completely standardized.

In some locations, the third candle is pink, in others the fourth candle is pink; in still others, all four candles are purple. The purple candles are lit during Advent, when the liturgical color is purple, and the white candle is lit on Christmas Eve (that is, after sundown), when the liturgical color is white. So that explains the colors of the purple and white candles—they just match the liturgical decor. But what about the pink candle, if there is one?

The pink candle is becoming more and more popular, but it has a strange origin. Long ago, the pope had the custom of giving someone a rose on the fourth Sunday in Lent. This led the Roman Catholic clergy to wear rose-colored vestments on that Sunday. The effect was to give some relief to the solemnity of Lent, so this was a very popular custom. Originally—before shopping malls—Advent was a solemn fast in preparation for Christmas, so the custom was extended to the third Sunday in Advent to liven it up a little

bit, too. Somewhere in there the third candle of the Advent wreath turned pink. Meanwhile, Advent is no longer solemn and the pope no longer has the custom of giving out roses. It is kind of odd to think that a Methodist would put a pink candle in a Lutheran Advent wreath because the pope used to have the custom of giving out roses, but sometimes we're a little more ecumenical than we realize!

Remember, if 24 December is a Sunday, it is the Fourth Sunday in Advent until sundown, at which time it becomes Christmas Eve. (Eve means evening, after all!)

### **How to Use Your Advent Wreath**

The idea is to use the wreath in conjunction with worship services or personal or family devotions on the four Sundays in Advent. You light candles at the beginning of each service and snuff them out at the end.

- On the first Sunday in Advent, you light the first candle. Have your service, then snuff out the candle.
- On the second Sunday in Advent, you light two candles, first the one from the previous Sunday, then the second one. Have your service, then snuff out the candles.
- On the third Sunday in Advent, you light the two candles from the previous weeks, in the order you lit them before, then you add the third one. Have your service, then snuff out the candles.
- On the fourth Sunday in Advent, you light the three candles from the previous weeks, in the order you lit them before, then you light the fourth one. Have your service, then snuff out the candles. You should get a stair-step effect, since each candle is a different length by now.

If you have a fifth candle in the center, then on Christmas Day you light the four candles in the order you lit them before, and then you light the center candle. Have your service, then snuff out the candles.

You notice how I emphasize snuffing out the candles at the end of each service? This has absolutely no liturgical significance whatsoever, but it is vitally important and you must not leave it out. It prevents the candles from burning your house down.

I recommend that you snuff out the candles, rather than blowing them out. The reason is that if you blow them out, you might spray hot wax over everything.

## **Prayers for Use with the Advent Wreath**

When you use an Advent Wreath in personal or family devotions, you can use whatever scriptures and prayers you like. If you need a point of departure, here is something to get you started. Please don't take it as a set form. You can use different readings, you can modify the prayers, and you can add hymns, carols, or other prayers as you like.

### **On the first Sunday in Advent**

- Light one purple candle
- Read Isaiah 60:2-3
- Pray something like this:

Lord God, we light this candle to thank you for your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world. We who have sat in darkness have seen a great light, the light of Jesus Christ, our salvation. We give you thanks and praise in Jesus' name, because he lives and reigns with you in your glory, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

### **On the second Sunday in Advent**

- Light two purple candles
- Read Mark 1:4
- Pray something like this:

Lord God, we light this candle to thank you for your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who is the way. We who like sheep have gone astray have found the way to you through Jesus Christ. We give you thanks and praise in Jesus' name, because he lives and reigns with you in your glory, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

### **On the third Sunday in Advent**

- Light three purple candles
- Read Isaiah 35:10
- Pray something like this:

Lord God, we light this candle to thank you for your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who brings us great joy. We who have walked in the shadow of the valley of death have found life in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We give you thanks and praise in Jesus' name, because he lives and reigns with you in your glory, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

### **On the fourth Sunday in Advent**

- Light all the purple candles

- Read Isaiah 9:6-7
- Pray something like this:

Lord God, we light this candle to thank you for your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who is the Prince of Peace. We who live in discord and strife have found peace in the promise of eternal life, through Jesus Christ. We give you thanks and praise in Jesus' name, because he lives and reigns with you in your glory, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

**On Christmas Eve after sundown or on Christmas Day  
(if you have a fifth white candle in the center)**

- Light all the purple candles and the white candle
- Read Luke 1:68-79 and Luke 2:1-20
- Pray something like this:

We praise you, Lord God, because on this day, your Word became flesh in our Savior Jesus Christ, was born of a woman, and walked among us as a man. Help us to imitate your incarnation, by manifesting our faith in our conduct as well as in our speech. To you, O Lord, we give our honor, praise, worship, and love, in the most holy and precious name of the One who is born today; because He lives and reigns with you in your glory, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit, Amen.



## **Prayers Around the Christmas Tree**

*The leader may begin:*

In the beginning God made the world and saw it was good. Long ago, God placed a tree in the garden of paradise as his gift to all human beings, a tree of wisdom and knowledge and laden with every good thing. Our Christmas Tree reminds us of that tree. Long ago too, God's kindness appeared in the coming of Christ, who is our hope of eternal life. This tree is a sign of Christ's blessings.

### **A Reading from the Book of Genesis**

This is the story  
of the heavens and the earth  
after their creation.

When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens,  
there was neither shrub nor plant growing on the earth,  
because the Lord God had sent no rain;  
nor was there anyone to till the ground...

The Lord God formed a human being  
from the dust of the ground  
and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,  
so that he became a living creature.

The Lord God planted a garden in Eden  
away to the east,  
and in it he put the man he had formed...  
and in the middle of the garden he set the tree of life.  
*Genesis 2: 4-9 Then all pray:*

Lord  
our God,  
the heavens are  
the work of your hands,  
the moon and the stars you  
made;  
the earth and the sea, and every  
living creature came into being  
by your word. And all of us, too.  
May this tree bring cheer to this house  
though Jesus Christ your good and holy Son,  
who brings life  
and beauty to us  
and to our world.  
Lighting this tree, we hope in his promise.

The lights of the tree are illuminated and a carol may be sung.

## The annunciation



In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, "Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favour! The Lord is with you."

She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, "Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. . Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign

will have no end."

Mary said to the angel, "But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God."

Mary said, "You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said." And the angel left her.

## *The visitation*

Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a town in Judah.

She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth.

Now it happened that as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

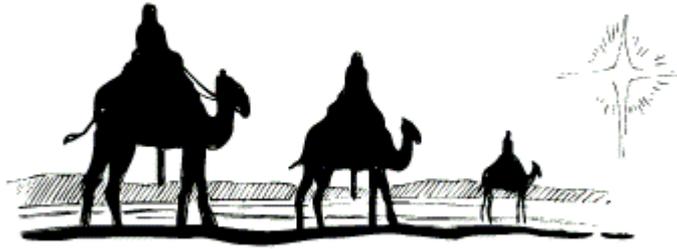
She gave a loud cry and said, "Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord?

Look, the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy.

Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled."

**Mantra "Be it done unto me according to your word."**



## The visit of the Magi

After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during

the reign of King Herod, suddenly some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east asking, "Where is the infant king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem.

He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "At Bethlehem in Judaea, for this is what the prophet wrote: And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are by no means the least among the leaders of Judah, for from you will come a leader who will shepherd my people Israel."

Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared and sent them on to Bethlehem with the words, "Go and find out all about the child, and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage."

Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And suddenly the star they had seen rising went forward and halted over the place where the child was.



The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

But they were given a warning in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own

country by a different way.

**Mantra Lord Jesus lead me by your light always.**

## Christmas Vigil Mass.

Coming as it does in the middle of winter the Feast of Christmas for me is always a nostalgic time .. a time when the spirits of past Christmas's flood back not to haunt me but rather to embrace me.

In every child's eye I see reflected back my own strong memories , the gradual build up of excitement and expectations , posting our letters to Santa Claus up the chimney, the lights and tinsel decorations and even cribs in shop windows, the trip into town to visit Santa's grotto, the frame of the crib appearing in the chapel, groups of carol singers huddled in doorways in out of the rain and wind, the cleaning that went on in the home , the scent of cedar polish on the good dining-room table, the making of puddings and being let lick the spoon.

And then there was the incredible excitement of Christmas Eve, the only night in the year when we went to our beds willingly. Long before first light we awoke and checked that he had indeed come. No matter what he brought, it didn't matter. It was personal from Santa to me.



As we grew up we were never allowed to forget what lay at the heart of Christmas. We always headed out together for Christmas Mass to celebrate the Birthday of Jesus. Mass was followed by a visit to the crib. At some time during the next few days we always got to visit all the cribs in town. Each one had its own magic and we would argue about which was the best.

After all the rush and panic that adults go through getting ready for Christmas I have often come back into the Chapel when all are gone home seeking to rediscover again the wonder and excitement of those early Christmases. However only a child's eye and a child's heart can capture a child's wonder. Age and experience begin to strip away the veil that separates the Christ-child story from the harsh world in which we live out our lives.

Bethlehem was but the beginning of the story. The Cross and Calvary was the human end of it. And it was a love story from start to finish. "The word became flesh and dwelt among us." God became fully human, earth-bound like us all.

He became subject to fear, to pain, to betrayal by friends, to the hurt of ingratitude , to the prejudice of small minded people, to misunderstanding, to torture , even to death. All because God loved the world so much that he sent his only Son. Its astonishing, maybe even ridiculous yet God came among us, not as a dazzling deity, but in the least pompous of human shapes, as a baby. That he spent his short human life between these two great indignities .. an incontinent baby in the manger and a naked criminal on the cross is perhaps part of the whole mystery of how much we are loved.

Tonight let us set aside our pride, our notions about ourselves and come and kneel in wonder before what seems ridiculous and with all our hearts proclaim “ Yes Lord, you are the Christ , the Son of the living God... you are indeed the Way, The truth and the Life .. where else can we go, you alone have the message of eternal life.”

With Mary we must ponder these things in our hearts and go away like the Shepherds “ Glorifying and praising God for all we have seen and heard.” God Bless you all and from the Community here ...a very happy and Peaceful Christmas to each and every one.

Declan.



**Music: O Little Town of Bethlehem.**

**INTRODUCTION: The Very Important Guest.**

The Christian Church calls the four weeks before Christmas ‘Advent’ and that word means ‘coming’. It is the time of year when we get ready for the coming of the most important guest of all time – Jesus Christ.

Advent reminds us of three different ‘comings’ of Jesus. The first is in the past. It happened long ago at the first Christmas. Jesus, God’s son, came to live with us. The second coming refers to the present, because Jesus is waiting to come now to every person who invites him into his heart and life. The third coming of Jesus is in the future. One day Jesus will come back to our world, not as a helpless little baby, but as a king and judge of all.

So Advent is the season of getting ready – ready to understand the true meaning of Christmas, ready to ask Jesus into our lives and ready for the time when he will come again.

**Reflection: Reader 1**

**Quite Music**

I settle into the stillness. I am part of a great and mysterious history. My heart beats with the rhythm of the universe. It is that time of year when living things settle down and so on this Advent day I try to be still, in my heart, in my soul. My breath is Gods breath. It fills my body; it holds me together’. I am aware of this breath; it connects me to God. It is my most intimate link with God. I now turn to God in the quiet space of my heart and I say the words: **I belong to God and God belongs to me.**

*A reading from the Gospel according to Luke. Priest*

*In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a young girl betrothed to a man named Joseph. Her name was Mary. The angel said to her,*

*" Don't be afraid, Mary. You have been greatly blessed, for the Lord is with you. You are to conceive and bear a son and you must name him Jesus." " I am the handmaid of the Lord" replied Mary, "Be it done to me according to your word."*

In this time of prayer I feel Gods presence near me. I feel the peace of Gods strength flowing through my veins. I feel the healing of Gods love taking away my pain and sorrow. I am not afraid. **I belong to God and God belongs to me.**

*A reading from the gospel according to Luke. Priest*

*So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her baby. She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger – there was no room for them to stay in the inn.*

**When the road before me is difficult; when friends let me down; when I feel alone and confused I will raise my eyes to God, the One who called my name before I was born. It is Advent. I am watching with all people of good will for the Light of the world, for the hope of history. I am not afraid because I belong to God and God belongs to me.**

### **The Christmas Story – according to the angels!**

Narrator : God called a meeting of angels and archangels.

God : ‘I have decided that my Son Jesus will be born tonight as a human child in a stable in Bethlehem.’

Angel 1: ‘Did he say, “stable”?’

Angel 2 : ‘Yes, but I’m sure he meant to say, “palace”!’

God : ‘Make sure that there is plenty of hay for the manger, and clean strips of cloth handy for Mary his mother to wrap him in,’

Narrator : The angels ruffled their feathers in disbelief and were deeply concerned.

Angel 1 : ‘There must be some mistake! Surely God doesn’t mean this very night! There is far too much to arrange beforehand. The angelic choirs will need more time for rehearsals, and there is so much to organise and plan before the whole world can celebrate such a unique and joyful event properly. And as for the idea of setting all this in a smelly old stable!’

Narrator : And great debates about God’s low-key plans broke out among the ranks of angels.

To put an end to all this squabbling, the angel Gabriel, who was one of God’s favourite messengers, decided to check out God’s plan and get some answers from the Boss himself. God smiled and listened patiently as Gabriel carefully explained the angels’ concerns.

Gabriel : Perhaps a palace would be more appropriate for the birth of Your beloved Son than a stable with hay and strips of swaddling; and we need more time to arrange suitably important visitors to welcome this very special child into the world, because an ox and ass are all that are available at such short notice; and then there is the problem of...’

Narrator : But God stopped Gabriel before he could go any further.

God : ‘My Son will be born in humility to serve the world in humility Do not worry, Gabriel, his glory and power will be revealed all in good time and according to my carefully prepared plan’

Narrator : Now Gabriel knew that although he seldom understood God's plans for the world and that people He loved above all else, normally things seemed to work out just fine. After all, God had made rather a good job of creation! So after further discussion with God, Gabriel returned to the hosts of angels and explained everything the Almighty had told him.

Later that same night, everything came to be just as God had planned. Christ the Saviour of the world was born in the humble surroundings of a simple stable, and wrapped in swaddling cloths by Mary his loving mother.

## **choir : Silent Night**

God was so touched by the concern of Gabriel and the other angels that he was persuaded to make one final adjustment to his perfect plan. And so it came about that Gabriel and his fellow angels were allowed to announce their news of great joy to an unsuspecting group of shepherds on a hillside — the only available audience at that time of night — and, despite a serious lack of rehearsal time, wow them with their enthusiastic heavenly tunes as together they sang:

Angels : 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace to all people on earth'.

**Reader 2** : More than two thousand years have gone by since the Son of God was born in a place called Bethlehem, and laid lovingly in a manger by Mary his mother. Every year, during the season of Advent, we remember and retell the events that led up to the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. We recall that God's love for the world was, and still is, so great that he sent his only beloved Son to show us the way to his love and his kingdom.

And yet, as we are caught up in the busy preparations for the Christmas celebrations, we need to remind ourselves that Jesus isn't simply someone who belongs in the past events of two thousand years ago, or someone who has promised to return at some unknown time in the future. He is here now — God living with us in the present. We bump into him every day in the people we meet all around us. So perhaps as Christmas draws closer, we should ask ourselves, 'Do we welcome Jesus into our lives every day or do we restrict our welcome to this special time once a year?'

## **choir : Away in a manger**

### **Prayers of Intercession.**

**Response:** O Lord hear our prayer! O Come to us

Abide with us, our God, Emmanuel.

Jesus is coming. We watch and wait. In this Advent time the whole Christian world is silent with expectation. Jesus is coming to you and to me. With all our faith in this moment that changed the face of the earth, we now offer our prayers of intercession.

1. For the Church (candle): God of our Advent watch, come to your Church at this fragile and difficult time. Give us strength to keep a faithful watch until you come again in glory. (Response)
2. For those who watch (candle): God of our Advent search, take care of all those who watch out for us. For our parents, families, friends. We pray also for doctors, nurses, police, traffic controllers and for all who watch through the night to keep us safe. (Response)
3. For the poor (candle): God of our Advent darkness, hear the cry of the poor this

Advent season. Come into their hunger and their pain and let them know the hope of Christmas. (Response)

4. For those who are lonely, sick and afraid (candle):

God of our Advent silence, stay with your people who are isolated by sickness and old age. Come into their emptiness and fear, and till their hearts with your peace.  
(Response)

5. For people at war (candle): God of our Advent peace, help us to be instruments of love and forgiveness. Heal the bitterness that separates brother from sister and lead us in the ways of peace and justice. (Response)

6. For those who have died (candle): God of our Advent hope, we place those who have died in your heart of mercy and love. Give them rest in your house forever. (Response)

**all:**

***C*** is for the *Christ child lying in the crib*

***H*** is for the homeless who really need your help at this time of year.

***R*** is for the risen Christ.

***I*** is for the ivy that twists around the holly.

***S*** is for the singers under the bright shining star.

***T*** is for the tinsel and toys under the tree.

***M*** is for Mary, the mother of Jesus.

***A*** is for Advent and the Advent Wreath.

***S*** is for Santa and his sack full of toys.

Choir – Once in David’s Royal City.

**Assembly Title**

Christmas Mass 3

**Age Group**

8-14

**Aim**

To celebrate the arrival of Christmas

**Faith Group**

Catholic

Christian

**Resources**

Hosts, wine, water, candles, chalice, ciborium, cloths, crown, crucifix, Infant Jesus from the Nativity crib, Advent wreath, altar frontal showing a scene from the Gospel

Large sheets of paper showing the Responsorial Psalm and Bidding Prayers responses

**Time of Year**

The end of the autumn term, just before Christmas

**Other Details**

This is written as a Mass for a Catholic school, but could be adapted for other services

If your school has an Advent wreath, all four candles could be lit for this Mass as the children will not be in school at the correct time for the fourth candle to be lit. This can be explained to the children

The theme is Light

**Script**

**ENTRANCE HYMN** - When the Lord returns

**PRIEST - Idea for Penitential Rite**

As we call to mind the goodness of God and the value of each person, we confess that we have not always treasured that dignity, and have not treated people with the respect that is their due.

Lord Jesus, you are our Light and the Prince of Peace:

Lord have mercy...

Lord Jesus, you come with hope and goodwill for all your people:

Christ have mercy...

Lord Jesus, you are the Saviour of the world:

Lord have mercy...

**PRIEST - First Prayer**

God our Father, we are getting ready to welcome your Son.  
Help us.

You sent him to bring us your love. During this time, when we celebrate his first coming, help us to remember that we must listen to what he teaches, otherwise our rejoicing and our welcome are not what you want.

We ask for your help through this same Son, Jesus ...

**CHILD - First Reading** (Is. 9:2-3 60:1, 26, 29)

The First Reading is from the prophet Isaiah. He wrote this a long time before Jesus was born. He was looking forward to the new life that Jesus would bring, like a new day dawning. Jesus is like the sun that fills the world with daylight. He fills the world with happiness, goodness and joy.

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. They lived in a land of shadows, but now light is shining on them. You have given them great joy, Lord; you have made them happy. They rejoice in what you have done.

In the beginning, the world was filled with darkness, and it was as black as night. But God came and changed all that! He filled the world with his light instead, just like the sun that shines in the sky every morning."

This is the word of the Lord...

**CHILD - Responsorial Psalm**

The response is: Lord, you are my light.

I love you, my Lord,  
for you have made me strong.

Response...

I thank you, my Lord,  
for you have heard my prayer.

Response...

You have been like a light before my eyes.  
You have made my darkness into light.  
Response...

**CHILD - Second Reading**

The Second Reading is from one of St. Paul's letters. He is reminding us how much we need Jesus.

"My friends, there was a time when we knew nothing and spent all our time choosing to do wrong. Now the love and kindness of God has sent Jesus to help us. He has come to bring us the chance of a new kind of life with God. Now we can share God's own life, and look forward to living for ever with Him. You can be sure of this."

This is the Word of the Lord...

**HYMN** - Alleluia (8 fold) first 3 verses, (Celebration Hymnal for Everyone number 36)

**PRIEST - Gospel** (Luke 2:1-20)

When it was nearly time for Mary's child to be born, a law was announced by Augustus Caesar that all the people in the world should be registered. Everybody had to go to the town where they had been born, for this registration. Joseph and Mary went from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

Although they looked everywhere for a room the town was full, so they had to sleep in a stable. Here Mary's baby was born, and she wrapped him up and laid him in a manger.

Not far away, there were some shepherds looking after their sheep. Suddenly an angel appeared before them and there was a great light. The shepherds were very frightened.

The angel said: "Do not be afraid. I bring you wonderful news. Today in David's city a Saviour has been born for you. He is Christ the Lord. You will find him wrapped up and lying in a manger."

Then there appeared with the angel a great throng of angels, saying, "Glory to God in Heaven and on earth peace to men who are good."

The angels left, and the shepherds said to each other, "Let's hurry to Bethlehem and see this for ourselves."

They travelled quickly and found Mary, Joseph and the baby. Having seen them, they told everybody about the child. They returned to their sheep, marvelling at what had happened.

This is the Gospel of the Lord...

**CHILDREN - Prayers of the Faithful**

1. The response is... hear our prayer.

Lord, in the darkness, it's easy to feel that you are not there. But you made a world with light AND darkness.

You are always there,  
like a hand to guide our steps,

like a voice to tell us the way,  
like a light in the darkness.  
May we always be ready to accept your help.  
Lord in your mercy...

**2.** We think of candles, sometimes difficult to light - and easily blown out.  
We are like those candles, sometimes slow to spread cheer and goodwill, sometimes quick to give up.  
Help us to shine this Christmas.  
Help us to make this a happy Christmas for everyone.  
Lord in your mercy.

**3.** We think of God the Father, who always keeps his promises. He promised Isaiah the prophet that he would send a saviour to put right the wrong in the world and to forgive us all the wrong we do.  
Lord help us to admit when we are wrong and to ask for and accept your forgiveness.  
Lord in your mercy...

**4.** We think of the fun of Christmas:  
presents and parties,  
secrets and surprises,  
Christmas trees and coloured lights,  
stockings stuffed to the toe,  
exploding crackers full of gifts,  
children singing carols,  
delicious and unusual food.  
Amid all the hustle and bustle, Lord, help us to remember that we do it all in honour of you and your birthday.  
Lord in your mercy...

**5.** We think at Christmas time of those who have little or no food.  
We also pray that they will find warmth, shelter and something to eat.  
Those of us who have food, help us not to take it for granted.  
Lord in your mercy...

**6.** We think of people who have died or been injured in recent world disasters. Help the injured to recover and the bereaved to be comforted.  
May they find peace this Christmas.  
Lord in your mercy...

**7.** We pray that while we enjoy ourselves this Christmas we do not forget the true meaning of the celebrations. Make us realise that without Christ there would be no Christmas.  
Lord in your mercy...

Now let us think of Mary, who gave us her son at Christmas.  
Hail Mary...

**HYMN** - Come, come, come to the manger, (Celebration Hymnal for Everyone number 124)

**CHILDREN - Offertory**

1. We bring Jesus. Jesus our friend has come.
2. We bring candles. Jesus our Light has come.
3. We bring a crown. Jesus Prince of Peace has come.
4. We bring a crucifix. Jesus our Saviour has come.
5. We bring our love, with the bread, the wine and the water.

**PRIEST - Second Prayer**

Father, we bring you bread and wine. We bring too some of the things that remind us of Christmas. Accept our offerings, as we celebrate the birth of your Son, Jesus. Let us be ready to receive him, who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever. Amen.

**PRIEST - Eucharistic Prayer for children**

**HYMN** - Echo Our Father (Songs of the Spirit number 100)

**HYMN AFTER COMMUNION** - O little town of Bethlehem, P. Brooks (Celebration Hymnal for Everyone number 540)

**PRIEST - Third Prayer**

We pray, Lord God, that each person here may have a happy Christmas, and bring that happiness to family, friends and all we meet. Help us to stay close to Jesus and to try to help other people to know him.

We need your help for this, through the same Jesus, your Son...

**HYMN** - Ding dong! Merrily on high, by G. Woodward (Celebration Hymnal for Everyone number 146)

**Assembly Title**

Christmas Mass 2

**Age Group**

8-14

**Aim**

To celebrate the arrival of Christmas

**Faith Group**

Catholic

Christian

**Resources**

Hosts, wine, water, candles, chalice, ciborium, cloths, Advent wreath, altar frontal showing the people who welcomed Jesus in Bethlehem

Large sheet of paper showing the Bidding Prayers responses

**Time of Year**

The end of the autumn term, just before Christmas

**Other Details**

This is written as a Mass for a Catholic school, but could be adapted for other services

The Prayers of the Faithful were written by children

If your school has an Advent wreath, all four candles could be lit for this Mass as the children will not be in school at the correct time for the fourth candle to be lit. This can be explained to the children

The theme is Welcome

**Script**

**ENTRANCE HYMN** - O Come, all ye Faithful, by F. Oakeley (Celebration Hymnal for Everyone number 520)

**PRIEST - BEFORE MASS**

Today, we are thinking about the happiness that Jesus brought to our world, when he came so long ago in Bethlehem.

During this Mass, we will think about the kind of WELCOME he had then and the kind of WELCOME that WE give him, when he comes today.

**PRIEST - FIRST PRAYER**

God our Father, you sent joy into the world, through the birth of your Son, Jesus. May we give him a ready WELCOME during this season - and throughout the whole year; for he lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

**CHILD - FIRST READING** (1 Cor. 1:4-9)

This reading is from a letter written by Saint Paul. He is telling his friends, in

Corinth, to live always as though Jesus were about to visit them.

"Dear friends, I often thank God for all the things he has done for you. He has given you such good teachers. They help you live like Christ our Lord. You are filled with God's Spirit of love and truth. You must always be ready to welcome our Lord Jesus, whenever he may come. God's Spirit will help you be strong Christians, until the very day that Jesus comes. You can trust God. He will never let you down."  
This is the Word of the Lord.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM AND GOSPEL ACCLAMATION - replaced by HYMN - When the Lord returns.**

**PRIEST - GOSPEL (Luke 2: 1-20)**

When it was nearly time for Mary's child to be born, a law was announced by Augustus Caesar that all the people in the world should be registered. Everybody had to go to the town where they had been born, for this registration. Joseph and Mary went from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

They looked everywhere for a room, but the town was full. Two innkeepers turned them away. Then the third innkeeper WELCOMED them. He had no empty rooms, but let them sleep in his stable. Here Mary's baby was born. She wrapped him up and laid him in a manger.

Not far away, there were some shepherds looking after their sheep. Suddenly, an angel appeared before them and there was a great light. The shepherds were very frightened.

The angel said, "Do not be afraid. I bring you wonderful news. Today, in David's city, a saviour has been born for you. He is Christ the Lord. You will find him wrapped up and lying in a manger."

Then, there appeared with the angel a great throng of angels, saying: "Glory to God in heaven and on earth peace to men who are good."

The angels left, and the shepherds said to each other, "Let's hurry to Bethlehem and see this for ourselves." They travelled quickly and found Mary, Joseph and the baby. Then they told everyone about the child. They returned to their sheep, marvelling at what had happened.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**CHILDREN - THEIR OWN PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL** on the themes of welcome and Christmas.

1. The response to these prayers is ... hear our prayer.  
One day, an angel came to Mary. She said, "Will you agree to have a baby?"  
Mary said, "Yes."

Then the angel said, "He'll be the Son of God."  
Mary told Joseph. Joseph was happy and full of light. Then Mary had the baby one night.  
We thank Mary and Joseph who gave the baby Jesus such a welcome.  
May we be as welcoming.  
Lord in your goodness ...

2. Thank you, God, for Mary and Joseph who took good care of Jesus.  
Joseph helped Mary look after Jesus, even though Jesus was not his own baby boy.  
Please help us to help people, even though we sometimes find it difficult.  
Lord in your goodness ...

3. We think of the innkeeper who welcomed Jesus. He let Mary, Joseph and Jesus stay in his stable because there were no rooms left. He could have refused them, but he didn't.  
Thank you, Lord Jesus, for coming into our lives. Help us to make room for you in our lives. Help us give you a real welcome this Christmas and throughout the year.  
Lord in your goodness ...

4. Thank you, God for sending us your Son. May we worship you with the angels, who welcomed Jesus, singing, "Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth."  
Lord in your goodness ...

5. We think of the shepherds who welcomed Jesus by giving him a sheepskin to keep him warm. May we give Jesus whatever we can afford.  
Lord in your goodness ...

7. In the countdown to Christmas, we think of the Wise Men who welcomed Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. May we welcome Jesus with gifts of love, peace and sharing.  
Lord in your goodness ...

8. May we give Jesus a welcome this Christmas. May we not just think of presents and food.  
Lord in your goodness ...

9. Let us be like the people who welcomed Jesus, that first Christmas.  
If anyone wants to be friends with us, let them come and be our friends.  
Lord in your goodness ...  
We will now ask Mary to help carry our prayers to heaven. Hail Mary...

**OFFERTORY HYMN** - Little Jesus, sweetly sleep (Celebration Hymnal for Everyone number 372)

**PRIEST - SECOND PRAYER**

Father, accept this bread and wine, which we offer as we celebrate the birth of your Son, Jesus. He comes to show us your love. Let us be ready to

WELCOME him, who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**PRIEST - EUCHARISTIC PRAYER FOR CHILDREN**

**HYMN** - to conclude the Sign of peace - Shalom, my friend by S. Jones  
(Celebration Hymnal for Everyone number 639).

**CHILD - AFTER COMMUNION REFLECTION**

Why did you come, Lord, the way you did? Poor, homeless, not welcomed by all.

Born, not among leaders and princes - but born among the outcasts of society.

The silence of your birth broken only by the cry of a child, the noise of an animal and the hymn of the angels.

No welcoming fanfares for you.

Why did you come, Lord, the way you did?

**PRIEST - THIRD PRAYER**

Loving God, we are happy to share in this Eucharist - and to celebrate our joy at the birth of your Son, Jesus. We wish that everyone could know him and WELCOME him. Help US to WELCOME Jesus into our lives this Christmas and help US stay close to him. We need your help for this, through the same Jesus, your Son, who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever. Amen.

**HYMN** - O little town of Bethlehem, by P. Brooks (Celebration Hymnal for Everyone number 540)

**Assembly Title**

Christmas Mass 1

**Age Group**

8-14

**Aim**

To celebrate the arrival of Christmas

**Faith Group**

Catholic

Christian

**Resources**

Hosts, wine, water, candles, chalice, ciborium, cloths, crown, crucifix, Advent wreath, altar frontal showing a large golden sun surrounded by several red candles with golden flames i.e. (God and us)

Large sheets of paper showing the Psalm and Bidding Prayers responses

**Time of Year**

The end of the autumn term, just before Christmas

**Other Details**

This is written as a Mass for a Catholic school, but could be adapted for other services

The Prayers of the Faithful were written by children

If your school has an Advent wreath, all four candles could be lit for this Mass as the children will not be in school at the correct time for the fourth candle to be lit. This can be explained to the children

The theme is the usual Christmas one of light

**Script**

**ENTRANCE HYMN:** "How dark was the stable" by Michael Cockett  
(Celebration Hymnal for Everyone number 267)

**PRIEST:** The theme of the Mass is the usual one of light. (Explain the importance of using light as a symbol at the darkest time of the year.)

**PRIEST: Idea for Penitential Rite**

As we call to mind the goodness of God - and the value of all his children - we confess that we sometimes forget God.

We forget that he made us.

We forget that he gave us his special son, Jesus.

We forget that he wants us to be kind to others, like Jesus.

We forget to follow the good example of Jesus.

Now we ask Jesus to help us to remember all these things, especially at this busy time leading up to Christmas.

Lord Jesus, you are our light and the Prince of Peace;  
Lord have mercy ...

Lord Jesus, you come with hope and goodwill for all your people;  
Christ have mercy ...

Lord Jesus, you are the Saviour of the world;  
Lord have mercy ...

**PRIEST: First Prayer**

God our Father, we thank you for the brightness of light.  
We thank you too for sending us Jesus - a light for us to follow.  
Jesus is the true light which leads us from the darkness of sin, to the  
brightness of your kingdom.  
Help us to follow him always. We make our prayer through Jesus, your son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever  
and ever. Amen.

**CHILD: First Reading** Gen 1: 1-4

The First Reading is from the Book of Genesis, which tells us how the world  
was created. God knew how terrible it would be without light, so he gave us  
light.

"In the beginning, God made the world.  
The earth lay empty and dead. Everything was dark and gloomy.  
Darkness blacked out the deep seas. Great winds lashed the water.  
But God was there - and God spoke. "Let there be light!"  
And the world was filled with light. God was pleased."

This is the Word of the Lord ...

**CHILD: Responsorial Psalm** Ps 17: 2, 4, 29

The response is: Lord you are my light.

1. I love you, my Lord,  
for you have made me strong.  
Response ...

2. I thank you, my Lord,  
for you have heard my prayer.  
Response ...

3. You have been like a light before my eyes.  
You have made my darkness into light.  
Response ...

**CHILD: Second Reading** 1 Jn 1: 5-7

We need light to see what we are doing - and we need to follow God's light to  
make sure we are doing the right thing.

In the Second Reading, Saint John tells us that if we follow God's light we will be staying close to God.

"Dear friends, God is light! There is no darkness at all in him. But if we do wrong, we turn away from the light of God - and go off into the dark. Some people think they can be close to God and still do wrong. But they are making a mistake! The light of God shines on us, to help us to do things right. Then we will be close to God - and we will be happy with everyone."

This is the Word of the Lord ...

**HYMN:** Alleluia (8 fold) first 3 verses (Celebration Hymnal for Everyone number 36)

**OR**

**ALL: Spoken Alleluia**

Alleluia, alleluia,  
I am the Light of the World,  
Says the Lord,  
Anyone who follows me will have the light of life.  
Alleluia.

**PRIEST: Gospel Lk 2: 23-32**

When Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary took him to the Temple in Jerusalem, and offered him to God, as the Bible told them to do. When they came to the Temple, they met an old man called Simeon. Simeon was a good man and the Holy Spirit was very close to him. As soon as he saw Jesus, he took him in his arms and said,  
"Thank you, God our Father. Now I am happy to die, for I have seen Jesus, the Light of the World!"

This is the Gospel of the Lord ...

**PRIEST:**

God our Father, we know you are with us, and that you listen to us. We bring our needs before you now, in prayer...

**CHILDREN: Prayers of the faithful**

**1.** The response is... "Hear our prayer."

We think of you God, at Christmas time. It was you who sent Lord Jesus our Saviour, on that special day. We are sorry if we sometimes forget the real Christmas.

Lord, in your mercy... hear our prayer.

**2.** We think of light. Light is important to us. We need light so we can see what Jesus wants us to do. We will try harder to follow Jesus.

Lord, in your mercy... hear our prayer.

**3.** We pray for the people who will not be able to celebrate Christmas as we do, because they are too poor. We also pray for the people who are in hospital and cannot celebrate in the usual way.

Lord, in your mercy... hear our prayer.

**4.** We think of people living on the street. They will not have a Christmas like ours, with celebrations, decorations and presents. May we think of a way to help them.

Lord, in your mercy... hear our prayer.

**5.** We think of people in other countries, who do not know what Christmas means. Help us not to be selfish at Christmas, but to spare a thought for others.

Lord, in your mercy... hear our prayer.

**6.** We pray for the children who have no place to live this Christmas, because they have no mum or dad.

Lord, in your mercy... hear our prayer.

We now pray with Mary, who first showed us Jesus, the Light of the World.  
Hail Mary...

**(Alternative Prayers of the Faithful, to use instead of the prayers above.)**

**1.** We pray for our Pope, our bishops and our priests.

Be a light to them, and help them as they lead us to you.

**2.** We pray for our country.

Be a light to our leaders, and bless their work for peace and happiness.

**3.** We pray for our families.

Be a light to us in our homes, and help us to follow your way of love.

**4.** We pray for missionaries.

Be a light to them, and help them to bring your light to people in faraway places.

**HYMN:** "Come, come, come to the manger" (Celebration Hymnal for Everyone number 124)

**CHILDREN - Offertory**

**1.** We bring candles. Jesus our light has come.

**2.** We bring a crown. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, has come.

**3.** We bring a crucifix. Jesus our Saviour has come.

**4.** We bring our love, with the bread, the wine and the water.

(The word 'bring' can be replaced by the word 'offer'.)

**(Optional Offertory prayer, to come after number 1 above)**

We bring a torch (or Christmas lantern). We will walk in the light.

**PRIEST: Second Prayer**

God our Father, take our gifts of bread and wine. Take our lives too, and help us to live in the light of Jesus. We ask this through Jesus, your son, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

Amen.

**PRIEST: Eucharistic Prayer for children**

**HYMN:** "Echo Our Father" (Songs of the Spirit number 100)

**HYMN AFTER THE SIGN OF PEACE:** "Shalom" by Steven Jones  
(Celebration Hymnal for Everyone number 639)

**HYMN AFTER COMMUNION:** "O Little Town of Bethlehem" by Phillips  
Brooks (Celebration Hymnal for Everyone number 540)

**PRIEST: Third Prayer**

Father, in this Communion, you have filled us with the light and love of Jesus.  
May this light always burn brightly within us, so that everyone may see your  
glory.

We ask this through Jesus your son ...

**(Alternative Third Prayer, to replace the prayer above.)**

God our Father, you have given us Jesus, our Light. May we follow his way of  
life, and find true peace and happiness in our lives. We make this prayer  
through Jesus, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy  
Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

**HYMN:** "Ding dong! Merrily on high" by George Woodward (Celebration  
Hymnal for Everyone number 146)

**Assembly Title**

ADVENT PENITENTIAL SERVICE:

**Aim**

To prepare for Christmas by examining our consciences

**Faith Group**

Catholic

Christian

**Resources**

Taize music

**Time of Year**

Advent

**Other Details**

This can be a penitential service, or, if priests are available, private confessions can be offered near or at the end of the service. If private confessions are held, Taize music could be played quietly in the background during the time of private reflection

If priests are available, they can be allocated parts of the following to read. The service could be posted to them in advance, so they have a chance to prepare

If not, children or teachers can read the following

The reading from Matthew could be replaced by the parable of the Lost Sheep, if this service is held for younger children (Luke 15. 3-7)

This could be adapted to be used during Lent

**Script**

**HYMN:** "The Servant King" by Graham Kendrick (Celebration Hymnal for Everyone number 187)

**ALL:**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

**INTRODUCTION:**

Advent is a time of preparation. The word advent comes from the Latin word venio, which means come. We are using it now to mean the coming of Christ. Jesus has already come of course. He is here with us now.

But, once a year, we celebrate when he came to us, as a baby in Bethlehem. We need to prepare ourselves to celebrate this great event. We are human and have human weaknesses. We need to stop from time to time to reflect on our weaknesses and to ask God's help to be and to say sorry for them.

**OPENING PRAYER:**

Father, through your Son you have made us a new people. Look on us now

as the new creation of your love, and by the coming of your Son cleanse us from every stain of sin.  
We make our prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**READING:**

(Alternative reading for younger children - Luke 15. 3-7)

A reading from the gospel of Matthew (Matthew 5.1-9)

How happy are the poor in spirit:  
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy the gentle:  
they shall have the earth for their heritage.

Happy those who mourn:  
they shall be comforted.

Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right:  
they shall be satisfied.

Happy the merciful:  
they shall have mercy shown to them.

Happy the pure in heart:  
they shall see God.

Happy the peacemakers:  
they shall be called sons of God.

**HOMILY:** (Ad lib - if there is a priest available.)

**CONFESSION OF SIN:**

Father, we confess that we have not always been POOR IN SPIRIT.

We have sometimes gone our own way and tried to build our own happiness,  
without giving much thought to you or your plans for us.

We have sometimes been arrogant and made others feel small.

We have insisted on what we want and made others unhappy.  
(Pause for silent prayer.)

Father we confess that we have sometimes lacked GENTLENESS.

We have been harsh in our judgement and treatment of others.

We have not always accepted the faults and failings of others with patience  
and gentleness.

We have spoken harshly and acted harshly to others.

We have not always listened to others.

We have not always shared the pain and suffering of others.  
(Pause for silent prayer.)

Father, we confess that we have not always HUNGERED AND THIRSTED FOR WHAT IS RIGHT.

We confess that in lots of little ways we have added to the injustice, oppression and poverty of our world.

We confess that we have not always been just. We have behaved unfairly to others, even those we love dearly.

We confess that we have forced others to fit in with our plans. We have oppressed others with our own fears and anxieties.

We confess that there have been times when we have given way to greed and over-indulgence. We have not always been generous in sharing our riches with those in desperate need.

We admit that there have been times when we have passed by those who needed our help.  
(Pause for silent prayer.)

Father, we have not always been PURE IN HEART.

We confess that we have not always told the truth or been honest in our dealings with others.

We have sometimes pretended to be what we are not.

We confess that we have led others astray and involved them in our lack of openness and honesty.  
(Pause for silent prayer.)

Father, we have not always been PEACEMAKERS.

We have quarrelled and argued.

We have been moody, irritable and jealous.

We have sometimes caused misunderstanding and strife in our home and our world.

Father, we realise that in these and many other ways we have not lived your life of love. We have disfigured the presence of your own Beloved Son within us and in our world. We have damaged others who are precious to You. We ask for your forgiveness and healing.

**PRAYER OF SORROW:**

My God, I know that you love me and I know that your love for me is not a changeable love, but an eternal love.  
I know that you love me just as I am -  
that I may be foolish or unintelligent -

that I may be weak or strong -  
that I may be stable or rather unbalanced.  
That doesn't matter - I KNOW THAT YOU LOVE ME.  
Better still - I know that you are happy to love me.  
I know that you love me when I feel lost - when I realise I am a sinner - when I  
am poor not only in worldly goods but in virtues.  
I know that you love me and you are happy to search for me.  
I know that you are there like the shepherd searching for his sheep.  
I know that I can give you a marvellous sense of joy when I let you find me  
again.

**SIGN OF PEACE:**

Let us all now share a sign of peace with the people near us. (Shake hands.)

**BLESSING:** Go forth in peace, have courage, hold on to what is good;  
return no one evil for evil;  
strengthen the faint hearted;  
support the weak;  
help the suffering;  
honour all men and women;  
love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.  
May Almighty God bless you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
AMEN.

**HYMN:** "God forgave my sin" by Carol Owens (Celebration Hymnal for  
Everyone number 209)

