

# Advent Penance Service

## WAITING:

Waiting is essential to the spiritual life. But waiting as a disciple of Jesus is not an empty waiting. It is a waiting with a promise in our hearts that makes already present what we are waiting for. We wait during Advent for the birth of Jesus. We wait after Easter for the coming of the Spirit, and after the Ascension of Jesus we wait for his coming again in glory. We are always waiting, but it is a waiting in the conviction that we have already seen God's footsteps.

Waiting for God is an active, alert—yes, joyful—waiting. As we wait we remember him for whom we are waiting, and as we remember him we create a community ready to welcome him when he comes.

## Litany for Christ's Coming

As Christmas comes around year by year, Lord, we're tempted to say, We've heard all this before. We know the story off by heart. Forgive us, Lord, and remind us of the difference between knowing it and letting it speak to us again and again.

Lord, help us to see ourselves and our own attitudes lived out by people in the Christmas story.

The inn-keeper couldn't find room for you in his inn. Lord, stop us from cluttering up our lives with things that don't really matter, things that crowd you out.

Lord, lots of people missed the glory when it came to Bethlehem, but the shepherds saw it because they were at their jobs. Lord, we pray that we may get a glory in our daily work when we do it as a service to you and to those around us.

Lord, the wise men from the east journeyed hundreds of miles and went to endless trouble to track you down. Lord, you taught us that those who really seek will find. In all times of difficulty and doubt, never let us rest content till we have worked our way through to the Christian answer.

Lord, they brought you gifts of gold and frankincense. Lord, keep our eyes fixed on the great goal of life, to bring you the gold of our

loving service and the incense of our worship and adoration.

Help us to see where Herod is present in our hearts. Set us free from jealousy and envy, may we always seek to recognise your presence in the faces we daily meet and in serving them give you true homage and adoration. Amen.

## Reader The Nativity from St Luke's Gospel.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

## Response to the wonder of the Incarnation:

Lord, help me to take time to wonder, during this Advent season, at the mysterious miracle of the Incarnation. You came down so far, and gave up so much, to rescue lost humanity, even my lost humanity. I pray that you would continue to reach out to lost people through me; flesh out your love through my life that others, too, might be caught up in wonder at the God who was born as a human baby in Bethlehem. Amen.

## EXAMINATION OF LIFE

*What kind of Christian am I in:*

### My religious practice:

Do I give time to God in my life?

Do I pray regularly?

Do I join my parish community for Sunday Mass or other Sacraments?

*What kind of Christian am I in:*

### My home life:

What am I like to live with? Do I make my home a happy place?

Am I selfish or moody?

Do I cause serious problems in for my family? Am I violent, lazy or selfish?

*What kind of Christian am I in:*

## **My relationship with others:**

Am I tolerant of others? Do I treat others with respect?  
Am I bitter towards anyone? Do I hold a grudge against anyone?  
Do I forgive those who hurt me?  
Do I look down on any group or individual or mistreat them because they are different?

*What kind of Christian am I in:*

## **My practice of justice:**

Am I too fond of material things?  
Do I respect the needs, rights and property of others?  
Am I honest in my relationships?  
Do I pay my debts and return things I borrowed ?  
Do I cheat or steal?  
Do I respect the environment and all God's wonderful creation?

Let us kneel together and confess our sins.

**All:** I Confess to Almighty God, and to you my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

**Leader:** To express our sorrow for our sin, let us pray together the *Act of Sorrow*.

**All:** O my God, I thank you for loving me. I am sorry for all my sins, for not loving others and not loving you. Help me to live like Jesus and not to sin again. Amen.

## **Absolution**

Reflection:

## **CELEBRATE YOU**

You are worth celebrating. You are worth everything. You are unique. In the whole world, there is only one you. There is only one person with your talents, your experiences, your gifts. NO ONE CAN TAKE YOUR PLACE God created

only one you, precious in His sight. You have immense potential to love, to care, to create, to grow, to sacrifice if you believe in yourself. It doesn't matter your age, or your colour, or whether your parents loved you or not. (Maybe they wanted to but couldn't.) Let it go. It belongs to the past. You belong to the now. It doesn't matter what you have been. The things you've done. The mistakes you've made. The people you've hurt. You are forgiven. You are accepted. You're okay. You are loved in spite of everything. So love yourself, and nourish seeds within you. Celebrate You! Begin now, start anew. Give yourself a new birth today. You are you, and that is all you need to be. You are temporary. Here today and gone tomorrow. But today - Today can be a new beginning. A new thing, a new life. You can deserve this new life. It is given freely.

That is the MIRACLE CALLED GOD, SO  
CELEBRATE THE MIRACLE AND  
CELEBRATE YOU!

**Leader:** Now let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us:

*Our Father...*

*Let us all now share the sign of peace.*

## **Concluding Prayer:**

**Leader:** Loving and merciful God, you show us the power of your great love. In forgiving us you give us a freedom to forgive others. As we journey together towards Bethlehem, may we draw closer to you and to one another. We ask this prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

*Sign of the Cross*