

7. Closing Prayer

As winter comes, on hills, fields, rooftops,
gateways, streets,
may we sharpen our grasp of reality
seeing clearly what is around us,
what needs healing, mending,
minding, brightening, comforting.
Let us keep our hearts, our homes
welcoming,
our hands ready to give and receive.

As we wait in the shortening days
may we spread the magic of warmth
and light around us
as your love surprises and transforms us.

S. Ni Ch.

Rue

Ruta graveolens [L. strong smelling rue], commonly known as rue, common rue or herb-of-grace, is a species of *Ruta* grown as an ornamental plant and herb. It is native to the Balkan Peninsula. It is now grown throughout the world in gardens, especially for its bluish leaves, and sometimes for its tolerance of hot and dry soil conditions. Biblical reference, Luke 11:42.

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Sadhbh Lawlor & Gareth Gowran 2020



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Making Space for Light
First Sunday of Advent 2020



1. Welcome and opening prayer

Holy God, in this quiet season of the earth,
the season of waiting,
We rest in the shelter of your love.

In this season of darkness
of guiding stars,
we trust in the light of your promise.

In this season of solitude, when we listen
for our own hearts' rhythm,
we find warmth in the signs of your
presence.

In this season when nature cradles seeds
in gentle readiness
we look forward to the dawn
of your loving-kindness.

2. Texts

Old testament
'O Lord, you are our Father
we are the clay and you are
our potter; we are all the work
of your hand.'

Isaiah 64:8

'Restore us, O Lord, God of Hosts'
let your face shine
and we will call on your name.'

Ps. 80:19

Gospel text: Mark 13:33-37

Be on your guard! Be Alert! You do not know
when that time will come. It's like a man
going away: he leaves his house and puts his
servants in charge, each with their assigned
task, and tells the one at the door to keep
watch.

Therefore, keep watch because you do not
know when the owner of the house will come
back - whether in the evening, or at mid-
night, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn.
If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you
sleeping. What I say to you, I say to every-
one: "Watch!"

3. Quiet time...

*People can read over the texts again and
pick out a word or short phrase that strikes
them and say it out loud. When
everyone has had a chance to speak, people
can silently listen to what God is saying to
them in their hearts linking it with
themselves, their community, society or the
world. Then some sharing.*

NB This is not time for argument.

4. Background notes for Mark 13:33-37

When Jesus speaks these words he is in
Jerusalem and will not leave it alive. He has
enraged the Jewish elders overturning the
changing tables in the Temple, publicly and
provocatively. They are more determined
than ever to get rid of him. At the time of
Mark's writing, two traumatic events were
affecting the Christians, most of whom were
of Jewish origin: the destruction of
Jerusalem - and the Temple and Nero's
horrific persecution of Christians in Rome.

Mark is urging them to trust in God's
faithfulness, a faithfulness that accompanied
Jesus on the cross and will accompany them
through everything, even suffering.

They need to watch out for signs of God's
faithfulness in their own times in whatever

mysterious way it may be visible to them.

The Temple has been the symbol of every-
thing that oppressed people. Now it has
come to an end. And God is in control, the
God who is about restoration and flourishing
not destruction.

Through their faith they can find the
capacity to trust God in the face of terror
and be about helping life flourish, creating
places of healing and friendship, where food,
shelter and peace can be taken for granted.
Making new spaces, replacing the old.

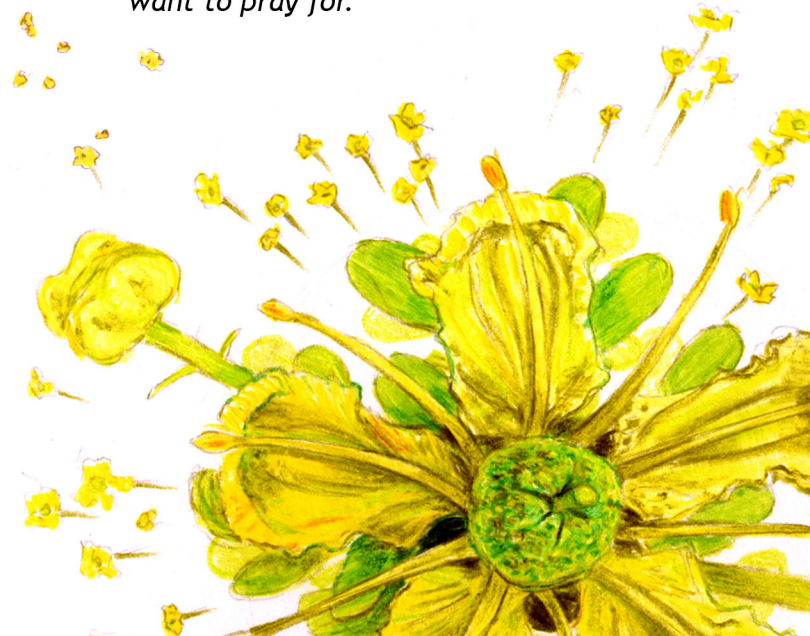
5. Reflection Questions

'We need to save Christmas'. Comment

'Making new Spaces' - are you aware of any?

6. Prayers

*Mentioning the people and situations we
want to pray for.*



6. Prayers

Mentioning the people and situations we want to pray for.

7. Closing Prayer

Lord we long for the day
when we can gather
again in safety
when we can look into our friends'
eyes and not be afraid,
when we can celebrate together
your love for us
in circles of joy and song.

We know you are looking out for us
through our carers and cleaners
artists and scientists.
Let us respect the rhythm of these days
that
are different,
let us welcome the gifts you grace us with
each day.
Let us remind each other of your
unfailing love.
May we reach out from our own
security to ease the pain and fear of
others.
And may we let our friends comfort
and strengthen us when we falter.

S. Ni Ch.

Rue

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Making Space for Light
Second Sunday of Advent 2020

1. Welcome and opening prayer

O God, we live in a world that needs to change,
We are part of that world and we do things
and let things happen that hurt people.

O God, help us to change our ways.

O God we live in a world which pretends
that nothing can ever really change
and that things can never be fair.
But you have promised a different world,
a world of Good News.

O God, help us change our ways.

O God
Give your light to make us unafraid,
your power to protect us
your joy to heal us
your grace to bless us
your courage to challenge
your hope to keep trying.

Iona

2. Texts

Old testament

'Comfort, O comfort my people, says your
God'

Isaiah 40:1

'He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms...
and gently lead the mother sheep.'

Isaiah 40:11

'Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss.'

Ps. 85:10

Gospel Text: Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus
Christ, the Son of God, as it is written in
Isaiah the Prophet:

"See, I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
A voice of one calling in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"

And so John the Baptist appeared in the
wilderness, preaching a Baptism of
repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The
people of Jerusalem went out to him.
Confessing their sins, they were baptized by
him in the River Jordan. John wore clothing
made of camel's hair, with a leather belt
around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild
honey. And this was his message:
"After me comes the one more powerful than
I. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie
the thong of his sandals. I baptize you with
water, but he will baptize you with the
Holy Spirit."

3. Quiet time...

*People can read over the texts again and
pick out a word or short phrase that strikes
them and say it out loud. When
everyone has had a chance to speak, people
can silently listen to what God is saying to
them in their hearts linking it with
themselves, their community, society or the
world. Then some sharing.*

NB This is not time for argument.

4. Background notes for Mark 1:1-8

These first verses of Mark sound an
irresistible note of hope. The desert setting
is well outside the sphere of influence of the
religious and political leaders. God's coming
is not the dreaded approach of a victorious,
conquering army. His messenger is not an

imperial herald but a man who has lived in
the desert, depending on it for food and
clothing.

People went out to him in the desert, far
from Roman activity and the bustle of the
Temple. John's way of baptizing was a new,
startling ritual. People usually washed and
purified themselves with some water but
John plunged them into the strong current of
the Jordan river. This was a different way of
being cleansed, echoing Isaiah's words:
'preparing the way', 'making straight paths'.

Old ways could be left behind. New freedom
and purpose could come into their lives.

'*Son of God*' - The Roman emperors were
often called 'son of god' but their power
was neither protective or healing.

'*By the Holy Spirit*' - Mark's readers and
listeners were familiar with the reference
to the Holy Spirit, part of the Christian
baptism ritual.

'*repentance*' - changing your way of seeing
things; acting differently, following God's
vision for the world and all of us in it.

5. Reflection Questions

Which of the images in the Old Testament
texts appeals to you? Why?

Has the 'social distancing' we have had to
practise made anything clearer to you?

7. Closing Prayer

Lord, let us be attentive to your presence
shining on us all the day through.
Let us remember your tender love
Your desire to restore
your healing caress.

Help us to love with tenderness -
a love close and real,
using our eyes to see others,
our ears to hear others,
to listen to the children, the poor, those
who
are afraid of the future.

To listen also to the silent cry
of our common home,
of our sick and polluted earth.
Let us be tender towards
the earth and
tender towards ourselves

(Based on a Ted talk by Pope Francis)

Rue

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Making Space for Light
Third Sunday of Advent 2020

1. Welcome and opening prayer

As Advent continues may we join with you in bringing your light into this world
May we be bearers of your light and love by doing special acts of kindness, not cursing the darkness.

May every candle we light symbolise our longing to brighten a world of darkness
and bring hope into a world of despair.
May we never give up trusting in the power you give us to act with courage and wisdom.

May our presence in work, at home, wherever we go, bring blessings of hope and restoration.

2. Texts

Old testament

'....a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.'

Isaiah 61:3

'Those who go out weeping, bearing the seeds for sowing, shall come home with shouts for joy, carrying their sheaves.'

Ps. 126:6

Gospel Text: John 1:1-6; 19-28

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the Light; he came only as a witness to the light.

Now this was John's testimony when the

Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely." I am not the Messiah." They asked him, "Then, who are you? Are you Elijah? He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'make straight the way of the Lord.'" Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

3. Quiet time...

People can read over the texts again and pick out a word or short phrase that strikes them and say it out loud. When everyone has had a chance to speak, people can silently listen to what God is saying to them in their hearts linking it with themselves, their community, society or the world. Then some sharing.

NB This is not time for argument.

4. Background notes for John 1:1-6; 19-28

The Jewish authorities are disturbed by all the people streaming out to John, leaving Jerusalem and the Temple. Unnerved, they send down Levites, Priests and Pharisees,

armed with a string of loaded questions based on their sacred history.

John's answers, based in the same sacred history, go far beyond their expectations or what they could have understood. A new era is dawning inevitable and unstoppable.

The light will conquer darkness. and have power to open hearts, to uncover truth and energise people to be sources of goodness.

5. Reflection Questions

Isaiah 61 and Psalm 126 speak of happiness, joy and confidence.

Where are these around you?

Sunrise, noontime, twilight and sunset, starlight, moonlight: which kind of light attracts you?

6. Prayers

Mentioning the people and situations we want to pray for.



6. Prayers

Mentioning the people and situations we want to pray for.

7. Closing Prayer

May the lockdown bubbles be banished
May our words come with freedom and grace

May our thoughts be as clear
as the morning light

and our arms not afraid to embrace.

May we value the small things we managed
to keep ourselves happy and sane
and return to the woods and the wayside
to thank them for easing our pain.

As we gather together this Christmas
with family and friends we hold dear
May we honour the work of so many
who carried us safe through the year.

G. McKenna

May we be blessed with the Spirit of the
season - peace

May we be blessed with the gladness of the
season - hope

May we be blessed with the heart of the
season - love

Traditional Irish

Rue

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Making Space for Light
Fourth Sunday of Advent 2020

1. Welcome and opening prayer

God our hope and our desire,
we wait for your coming
as a woman longs for her child
as an exile longs for home
as a lover for the touch of the beloved
as the disturbed mind for peace.

Stir up our complacency
brush away our fear
whisper through our numbness
energize our love
so that we can bring light to darkness,
hope to despair
warmth to the cold,
safety to those at risk
shelter for the wandering.

S. ni Ch

2. Texts

Old testament

'I will appoint a place for my people,..
and will plant them, so that they may
live in their own place, and be disturbed
no more'.

2 Samuel 7:10

'God has filled the hungry and sent the rich
away empty.'

Luke 1:53

Gospel Text: Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy
God sent the angel to Nazareth to a town in
Galilee, to a virgin pledged to a man named
Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's
name was Mary. The angel went to her and
said, "Greetings, you who are highly
favoured! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and
wondered what kind of greeting this might
be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be
afraid, Mary; you have found favour with
God. You will conceive and give birth to a
son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be
great and will be called the Son of the Most
High. The Lord will give him the throne of his
Father, David, and he will reign over Jacob's
descendants forever; his kingdom will never
end."

"How will this be", asked Mary, "since I am a
virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy
Spirit will come on you, and the power of the
Most High will overshadow you. So the holy
one to be born will be called the Son of God.
Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have
a child in her old age and she who was said
to be unable to conceive is in her sixth
month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered,
"May your word to me be fulfilled."
Then the angel left her.

3. Quiet time...

*People can read over the texts again and
pick out a word or short phrase that strikes
them and say it out loud. When
everyone has had a chance to speak, people
can silently listen to what God is saying to
them in their hearts linking it with
themselves, their community, society or the
world. Then some sharing.*

NB This is not time for argument.

4. Background notes for

Luke 1:26-38

Luke traces the emergence of the man from
the wilderness back to a young girl living in
the back of beyond, far from any sources of
power. An unlikely starting place for a
world-shaking event. The young girl is con-
fused by the words of the angel and
disturbed. She has none of the certainty of
John the Baptist or the Jewish authorities.

But as she listens she chooses to believe,
opening her heart and mind to co-operate.

Saying 'Yes' put Mary in a difficult position
socially, culturally and religiously but she
goes on her way to Elizabeth's pondering
what has happened.

Again, as in all the Gospel narratives of the
Incarnation it is two women- regarded in
Jewish society as insignificant- who really
understand what's happening and respond
with joy, trust and hope. They bring blessings
to each other and their lives change forever.

5. Reflection Questions

Mary and Elizabeth blessed each other.
Who has been a blessing in your life?
To whom have you been a blessing?

As you put up the Christmas
lights, what will your thoughts be?

