



7. Closing Prayer

The love of God comes close
where stands an open door
to let the stranger in
to mingle rich and poor.
The love of God is here so stay
Oh, let us walk God's way.

The peace of God comes close
to those caught in the storm
forgoing lives of ease
to ease the lives forlorn.
The peace of God is here to stay
Oh, let us walk God's way.

The joy of God comes close
where faith encounters fears
where heights and depths of life
are found through smiles and tears;
The joy of God comes close
Oh, let us walk God's way.

The grace of God comes close
to those whose grace is spent
where hearts are tired and sore
and hope is bruised and bent
The grace of God is here to stay
Oh, let us who walk God's way.



Meaning of the Advent Wreath:

- The 1st **purple** candle is lit on the 1st Sunday in Advent, Nov 29th, and is the candle of HOPE.
- The 2nd **purple** candle is lit on the 2nd Sunday in Advent, Dec 6th, and is the candle of PEACE.
- The 3rd **pink** candle is lit on the 3rd Sunday in Advent, Dec 13th, also known as Gaudete Sunday, and is the candle of JOY.
- The 4th **purple** candle is lit on the 4th Sunday in Advent, Dec 20th, and is the candle of LOVE.
- The central white candle is lit on Christmas Day as the light of Christ enters the world when Jesus is born.
- The wreath is **evergreen** symbolising everlasting life, and in the shape of a circle because a circle has no beginning and no end. It goes on forever, just like God's love for us.



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Making Space for Wisdom Fourth Sunday of Advent 2015



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1. Welcome and Opening Prayer

May the Spirit touch our lives
May we open ourselves to God's breathing.
May we honour the flame of love that
burns inside us,
May our voices this day be voices of
encouragement,
May our lives be an answer to someone's prayer,
May we own grateful hearts
May we have enough joy to give us hope
Enough pain to make us wise,
May there be no room in our hearts for hatred
May we be free from violent thoughts
When we look into the window of our souls
may we see the face of God
May the lamps of our lives shine on all
we meet this day
May our lives become a song for the Beloved.

*Adapted from Seven Sacred Pauses –
Macrina Wiederkehr*

2. Gospel Text: Luke 1:39-45

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. in a loud voice she exclaimed:

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her".

3. Quiet Moment

People can take time to read over the text again for themselves and pick out words or short phrases that strike them and say them out loud. When everyone has had a chance to say their word/phrase, they can briefly say why such a word/phrase struck them, in relation to themselves or their community or the world.

(NB This is not a time for argument or discussion)



4. Reflection Questions for Luke 1:39-45

1. What is your song of joy?
2. What things that Mary and Elizabeth did are important to you in friendship?
 - a shared experience
 - taking time to visit each other
 - talking about our faith
 - noncompetitiveness
 - other
3. What do you really want to wish your friends this Christmas?

5. Prayers

Mentioning situations and people we would like to pray for.

6. Background notes for Luke 1:39-45

The other three gospels underline the resistance to accepting and appreciating God's plan of restoration. But in this homely, natural, gentle, and peaceful scene two pregnant women are filled with joy as they sense God active in their lives through their experience of pregnancy.

Again it is insignificant people in that society – two women – who realise what is happening and who respond with trust and joy.

Not far from where they met a grandiose monument was being built by Herod. But around them there is no military action or forced labour or oppressive action; just two women responding in an ordinary human way as friends and cousins.

Luke ends this meeting with Elizabeth confirming that Mary is especially blessed by God and Mary singing a revolutionary song of God's praises with words taken from traditional Hebrew poetry. It is the song of the poor who rejoice that littleness has been blessed because God is a keeper of promises;

God has succeeded in establishing a kingdom where the forgotten and lowly are held precious, the proud toppled, the mighty unseated, 'scattered, put down and sent empty away'.

