

## 7. Closing Prayer

God of Presence, with us here and now  
through your abiding Spirit, open our minds  
and hearts to learn from the times we are  
living through.

May the hard lessons of these days teach us  
how to prepare for a better tomorrow  
in which the people of the earth  
share their gifts for the well-being of all.

Enlighten us as we search for truth  
amidst the clamour of war.  
May we have the courage to proclaim peace  
act justly and open our hearts to people  
distressed.

### Flax Plant

(*Linum usitatissimum*), plant of the family  
Linaceae, cultivated both for its fibre, from  
which linen yarn and fabric are made, and  
for its nutritious seeds, called flaxseed or  
linseed, from which linseed oil is obtained.

Biblical Reference,  
Proverbs 31:13



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Making Space for Trust  
First Sunday of Advent 2022



## 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. Gospel text: Matthew 24:37-44

As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the days Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen, until the flood came and took them all away.

Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day our Lord will come; if the owner of the house had known at what time the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you must also be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

## 3. Quiet time...

*People can read over the text 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 Matthew 24:37-44

When Matthew wrote his Gospel between 70AD and 80 AD, he wrote in Greek for Christians living in Syria. These Christian communities were surrounded by the vast Roman Empire. Fragile and vulnerable, they were caught up in conflict and persecutions.

The future was uncertain. Bearing up courageously, enduring and encouraging each other was greatly needed. They must not lose heart.

Matthew portrays Jesus communicating a tough message in the face of the coming disasters over which they have no control: trusting God, not waiting passively overcome

by fear or lingering in a more comfortable past. They need to trust the future to God and believe that Jesus' words will have validity in the midst of cosmic disturbances.

Jesus' teaching and promise will be the only sure, stable port of call. Through his victory over death, disaster, suffering and lamentation will never be the last word.

## 5. Reflection Question for Matthew 24:37-44

1. When you light a candle, what's in your mind?

## 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

Blessing of Hope

May we know the hope  
that is not just for some day-  
but for this day-  
here and now in this moment  
that opens to us:

Hope not made of wishes but of substance,  
hope made of sinew and bone,  
hope that has breath and a beating heart,

hope that knows how to shout out  
when it is called for  
hope that raises us from the dead -  
not someday but this very day,  
every day and again, again and again.

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Making Space for Trust  
Second Sunday of Advent 2022



## 1. Welcome and opening prayer

O God of love,  
hear our prayers;  
protect our dreams  
and listen to our silent hopes.

Deal gently with our pain  
speak to our sadness  
and remove the barriers  
that imprison our spirits.

Shed your light  
where shadows are cast  
that we may feel your warmth  
and know your presence.

God over all  
Christ within us  
Spirit around us  
hear our prayer  
and send your messenger  
of peace to us and  
to our troubled world.

Cafod and Iona

## 2. Gospel text: Matthew 3:1-12

In those days John the baptist came,  
preaching in the desert of Judea and  
saying: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven  
is near. This is he who is spoken of through  
the prophet Isaiah:

'A voice of one calling in the desert,  
prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.'

John's clothes were made of camel's hair.  
He had a leather belt around his waist.

His food was locusts and wild honey.  
People went out to him from Jerusalem  
and all Judea and the whole region of the  
Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were  
baptized by him in the Jordan River.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and  
Sadducees coming to where he was  
baptizing, he said to them: 'You brood of  
vipers! Who warned you to flee from the  
coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with  
repentance. And do not think you can say to  
yourselves, "We have Abraham as our  
father." I tell you that out of these stones  
God can raise up children for Abraham. The  
axe is already at the root of the trees and  
every tree that does not produce good fruit  
will be cut down and put into the fire.  
I baptize you with water for repentance. But  
after me will come one who is more powerful  
than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry.  
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and  
with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand  
and he will clear his threshing floor,  
gathering his wheat into the barn and burning  
up the chaff with unquenchable fire.'

## 3. Quiet time...

*People can read over the text 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

### Matthew 3:1-12

By the time Matthew was writing the Jewish  
leaders had rejected Jesus and so in  
addressing Christians who had been Jews  
Matthew depicts the Pharisees and  
Sadducees presenting a united front of  
opposition against Jesus. The picture of John  
the Baptist is sombre, and grim. Living in the  
Judean desert, of not owning anything, not  
eating the common food of bread, surviving  
by his wits.

John had a dream of change but based on  
dire punishment by God and wrathful  
vengeance. But the God of Jesus will be far  
from that. The wildly compassionate God of  
Jesus is symbolised by fire, an element far  
more refined than water. Jesus will prune  
John's image of God of its violence and  
retribution. He will live an ordinary life, eat  
bread and drink wine. He will usher in a new  
era of compassion, forgiveness, healing and  
joy in the certainty of being loved and  
cherished by God.

## 5. Reflection Question for

### Matthew 3:1-12

When things are really bad and so slow to  
change, where do you go to snatch a glimmer  
of hope:

- talking with a good friend?
- listening to people of hope?
- a place that inspires you?
- meditation/prayer?
- poetry?
- music/song?
- other..?





## 6. Prayers

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

## 7. Closing Prayer

Father in heaven,  
Mother of all,  
Guardian of the universe,  
Thank you for the gift of light and the  
morning sunrise  
that stirs our hearts and awakens our spirit  
to the  
possibilities of each new day.

Thank you, Lord, for bringing light  
into our darkness  
and for the gifts of hope, love and  
happiness.  
Please help us to recover love, wisdom,  
humility, patience, quiet and slower  
tempos.

May we see beauty,  
be gentle  
do justice.  
May we listen to your voice that rests  
within us.

Walter Brueggemann  
Prayers for a Privileged People

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Making Space for Trust  
Third Sunday of Advent 2022



## 1. Welcome and opening prayer

Our world waits in darkness  
longing for your light.  
In the midst of darkness  
brighten our hopes.  
You are present in the whole universe  
and in the smallest of creatures,  
you embrace with your tenderness all  
that exists.  
Pour out on us the power of your love  
that we may protect all living things and  
beauty.  
Fill us with peace that we may harm no-one.

O God of the poor  
help us rescue the abandoned and  
forgotten of this earth.  
Bring healing into our lives that we may  
protect the world and not prey on it,  
that we may sow tenderness,  
not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only  
for gain, at the expense of the poor and the  
earth.  
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing.  
As we journey towards your infinite light,  
encourage us in our struggle for justice, love  
and peace.

Adapted from Pope Francis' writings

## 2. Gospel text: Matthew 11:2-11

When John heard in prison what Christ  
was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him:  
'Are you the one who is to come, or should  
we expect someone else?'  
Jesus replied: 'Go back and report to John  
what you hear and see: the blind receive  
their sight, the lame walk, those who have

leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead  
are raised and the Good News is preached to  
the poor. Blessed is the person who takes no  
offence at me.'

As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began  
to speak to the crowd about John. 'What did  
you go out into the desert to see? A reed  
swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go  
out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and  
more than a prophet. This is the one about  
whom it is written:

"I am sending my messenger ahead  
of you, who will prepare your way  
before you."

I tell the truth: among those born of women  
there has not risen anyone greater than John  
the baptist; yet he who is least in the  
kingdom of heaven is greater than he.'

## 3. Quiet time...

*People can read over the text 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 Matthew 11:2-11

Jesus has been moving among his own people  
in Galilee telling the Good News of God's  
tremendous love and hope for the future. He  
has communicated it through telling stories  
and parables that challenge and overcome

their inherited beliefs about God. Also by  
healing people in the community who were  
not regarded as worthy of God's attention. He  
has been talking to everyone who came to  
him and has chosen the company of despised  
tax-collectors and prostitutes.

John the Baptist is languishing in prison,  
searching for a glimmer of hope. But he is  
confused by news of the humble, healing,  
inclusive, compassionate approach of Jesus.  
Jesus' reply is uncompromising: people being  
cured, walking again, seeing again, hearing  
again, learning to hope again, flourishing in  
community, is what the kingdom is all about,  
what God's dream is about.

The wilderness is changing, the wasteland is  
blooming. The sign of God's presence is no  
longer violence but the gentle blessings of  
relief, peace, freedom, even joy.

And anyone who can accept that is really on  
the road to happiness.

### NB

Matthew uses the phrase 'kingdom of heaven'  
rather than 'kingdom of God' out of  
respect for his Jewish audience.

## 5. Reflection Question for Matthew 11:2-11

'The Lord comes that we may find him in this  
world'

Comment.

Laudate Si #236





## 7. Closing Prayer

### Christmas Eve Remembered

I see them going to the chapel  
To confess their sins, Christmas Eve  
In a parish in Monaghan.  
Poor parish!, And yet memory does weave  
For me about these folk  
A romantic cloak.

No snow, but in their minds  
The fields and roads are white.  
They may be talking of the turkey markets  
Or foreign politics but tonight  
Their plain, hard country words  
Are Christ's singing birds.

Bicycles scoot by, old women  
Cling to the grass margin,  
Their thoughts are earthy but their minds move  
In dreams of the the Blessed Virgin  
For one in Bethlehem  
Has kept their dreams safe for them

Patrick Kavanagh

Jesus, you came to be light in our darkness.  
Jesus, you came to be peace in our conflicts.  
Jesus, you came to be joy in our sadness,  
And to bring your love in our fears.

Today we celebrate your birth.  
Thank you for your saving grace.  
Amen.

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Making Space for Trust  
Fourth Sunday of Advent 2022



## 1. Welcome and opening prayer

With expectant waiting  
we anticipate your coming  
Come close to us, Lord.  
Come very close.

Come, Alpha and Omega  
who is from before the ages.  
Come, morning star who named the stars,  
Come, carpenter of Nazareth  
who knows the smell of planed wood  
Come, beloved Son of God  
who knows the heart of God  
Come, Son of man  
who knows the hearts of God's people.

Come, Lord of Life and Prince of Peace  
Come, Dayspring and Rising Sun,  
Come, Wonderful Counsellor  
Come, Emmanuel, God with us.  
God very close to us

Ged Johnson Cafod

## 2. Gospel text: Matthew 1:18-24

This is how the birth of Jesus came about.  
His mother, Mary, was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said: 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife because what is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to

give him the name Jesus, because he will save people from their sins.'

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him "Emmanuel" - which means "God with us".'

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

## 3. Quiet time...

*People can read over the text 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 Matthew 1:18-24

Betrothal was a serious stage in the Jewish marriage process. The fiancé was already called 'husband' and could release himself from going forward to marriage only by an act of repudiation - disavowing the engagement promise. Matthew portrays Joseph as wanting to satisfy the Law by giving Mary the prescribed document privately. He plans to play safe within the rules but treat Mary as gently as possible protecting her from public shame and punishment.

But the angel in the dream turns everything on its head. Something new, undreamed of is beginning and Joseph is caught up in it. The Holy Spirit, God's life-giving power, is taking over. The law and systems no longer hold sway.

All that his people longed for is beginning to dawn.

Matthew is careful to refer to Joseph as a son of David in this way inserting Mary into the Davidic line, giving these events a proper place in salvation history, familiar to Jews. He will be father to this new human being but naming the child with the name God has chosen.

## 5. Reflection Question for Matthew 1:18-24

'God comes to us disguised as our life'

Paula D'Arcy

Comment.

## 6. Prayers

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

