

7. Closing Prayer

Lord, let us be attentive to your presence
shining on us all the day through.
Let us remember your tender love
You 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.
Using our hands and our hearts
to comfort others –
and let us be tender towards ourselves.

(based on Pope Francis' TED talk 2017)



Meaning of the Advent Wreath:

- The 1st **purple** candle is lit on the 1st Sunday in Advent, Nov 25th, and is the candle of HOPE.
- The 2nd **purple** candle is lit on the 2nd Sunday in Advent, Dec 2nd, and is the candle of PEACE.
- The 3rd **pink** candle is lit on the 3rd Sunday in Advent, Dec 9th, also known as Gaudete Sunday, and is the candle of JOY.
- The 4th **purple** candle is lit on the 4th Sunday in Advent, Dec 16th, 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 Tenderness
First Sunday of Advent 2017



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1. Welcome and Opening Prayer

As Advent begins 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 but encouraging each other to trust again.

May this candle we light symbolize our desire to bring light into a world of darkness and hope into a world of despair. May we never give up hoping in your love that surrounds us and gives us power to act with joy and wisdom.

2. 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 midnight, 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 everyone: "Watch!"

3. Quiet moment

People can take time to read over the text for themselves again 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 not a time for argument or discussion).

4. Reflection Questions for Mark 13:33-37

1. 'Let your face shine on us.' (Ps 80:7) In what ways have you experienced God's tenderness?
2. Pope Francis has called for a revolution of tenderness. What do you think that means?
3. How can we create circles of healing, friendship and tenderness?

5. Prayers

Mention situations and people we want to pray for....

6. Background Notes for Mark 13:33-37

When Jesus speaks these warning 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 him.

There is a strong sense in the text that the end-time is near, for Jesus and for Jerusalem itself, a time of turmoil and terror. He doesn't mince his words; he is not comforting, but challenging, calling his friends to be faithful and to be people of hope, because they believe. He tells the story of the man going away entrusting his home and all he has to the care of his servants, expecting them to mind it and keep it flourishing.

This is what we are to be about: what he himself has been about. He has entrusted to us his home and his world. We are to be helping life to flourish, not letting it waste away under oppression, creating places of healing and friendship, where food, shelter and peace can be taken for granted. To live purposefully, making a difference: this is our survival kit. We are equipped to face the difficulties and terrors through the power and wisdom of the Spirit.