



Vivat International Ireland
Prayer reflection for
Advent 2013

*"Get the Lord's road ready ...
All low plains must be filled up, all
hills and mountains levelled off; the
winding roads must be made straight, the
rough paths made smooth, and all
humankind will see God's salvation!"*

(Luke 3: 4-6)

**"Let your
light
shine"**



Introducing VIVAT International

VIVAT International was founded in 2000 by the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) and the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSpS) as an organization to lobby in favour of the poor, the marginalized and for the protection of creation at the United Nations. Since 2005, ten other congregations joined the original founders of VIVAT. Many are well known in Ireland and include the Spiritans (CSSp), the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), the Little Sisters of the Assumption (LSA), the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary (MSHR), Comboni Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MCCJ), Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (SCJ), and the Religious of the Assumption (RA).

With a very wide distribution of congregations, it can be said that VIVAT has its finger on the pulse of the issues of the poor and marginalized worldwide. It is also a powerful voice as it is geared to bring their agenda to an international audience through lobbying on concrete issues presented by member congregations at the UN. How does it do this? VIVAT's first strength is indeed in having access to the people its members are working with and their issues. It has also put an infrastructure in place to ensure effective international lobbying. VIVAT opened and staffed a UN office in New York shortly after its foundation. In 2009 it opened another office in Geneva, Switzerland, home of the UN's Human Rights Council and numerous international human rights groups. Other offices at regional level are being considered.

Since early 2011, representatives of the congregations of VIVAT in Ireland have been meeting to focus on issues which will be prepared for lobbying at the United Nations by VIVAT.





Introduction

ADVENT is a time to prepare our hearts for Christ's coming. We are invited to enter into the mystery of the promise once made and now being fulfilled in our time. The now of God's salvation is upon us. All things are being made new. The gospel of Luke puts it this way, "All low plains must be filled up, all hills and mountains levelled off; the winding roads must be made straight, the rough paths made smooth, and all humankind will see God's salvation!" (Luke 3:4-6). The filling in and the levelling off, the straightening and smoothing out is going on in our time and we are part of it.

ADVENT is a time of waiting for the Lord to act. Human vulnerability establishes a bond with our brothers and sisters around the globe who are also waiting. They wait for the next catastrophe to strike, for food to eat, for fair wages to be made, for dignity to be recognized. We wait with them in a solidarity grounded in God's love for all of us. We are all part of the one universe, the one humanity. The love we have for one another emboldens us to respond to the cry of the oppressed, the demand for justice, the call to love.

ADVENT is a time to measure the justice of our living. The four moments of this Advent Prayer book draw us into the circle of God's righteousness as we discern within ourselves **a longing for peace** (Week One). Recognising the awful division between rich and poor we resolve to **live simply** so that others may simply live (Week Two). The Christian heart is **open to the stranger** in our midst and we welcome him/her as we would the Lord (Week Three). The challenge to respond to the injustices of our time is met in **the power of "We"**. Working together for change is the means by which the kingdom of God is realised (Week Four). Pope Benedict put it, "The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbours, the more effectively we love them. Every Christian is called to practice this charity, in a manner corresponding to his vocation" (*Caritas in Veritate*, no. 7).

ADVENT is a liturgical season that heralds a new liturgical year. This Prayer Book, in the tradition of the Prayer of the Church, invites all who

use it to enter into the living stream of Christian life and there be nurtured by praise and prayer, challenged by knowledge and reflection and better prepared to practice the charity that does justice. By responding to this invitation you are part of the **VIVAT** family of religious communities worldwide united in the mission of Jesus to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. The Community Prayer presented here for Advent time is structured thus:

- The Prayer Leader gathers the community in prayer and all sing or recite a hymn followed by an opening prayer (said together *or* one voice);
- A psalm or poem to be recited;
- A passage from Scripture;
- A Reflection and invitation to Personal Reflection and Sharing as appropriate;
- Prayers of Intercession are provided and can be added to with spontaneous prayers;
- Final prayer and Hymn.

Additional information is offered each week for communal or personal reading and reflection. The prayer leader may wish to provide other material for reflection that is relevant to the theme. Hymns are provided in the text and an additional selection can be found in the appendix with reference to where the melody can be sourced.

This **ADVENT** time we pray as communities united all across the world that the Holy Spirit will inspire us to transform our world; empower us to seek the common good for all persons; and give us a spirit of solidarity making us one with all who suffer injustice and live in want. *Let your light shine.*





First Week of Advent

We long
for Peace

Leader: Advent has begun. Once again we await the Lord. It is a wonderful opportunity for a new beginning in a world broken by war, by corruption, by injustice which creates lines of refugees. The Prophet Isaiah calls upon us once again to turn our weapons of destruction into instruments of peace. The United Nations has recently given us a new *Arms Trade Treaty** to regulate the world's deadliest business, the arms trade. Let us in this prayer service pray that this treaty, responsive to God's Will, will help to make a safer future.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

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Week 1



Hymn: *(or from the appendix of this book or elsewhere)*

The race that long in darkness pined

www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIGXE3B4rhw

The race that long in darkness pined
has seen a glorious light;
The people dwell in day who dwelt
in death's surrounding night.

To hail your rise, you better Sun
the gath'ring nations come,
joyous as when the reapers bear
the harvest-treasures home.

To us a Child of hope is born,
to us a Child is giv'n;
Who shall the tribes of earth obey
as do the hosts in heav'n.

The Child shall bring us heaven's peace
forevermore bestowed;
The Wonderful, the Counsellor,
the great and mighty God!

God's pow'r increasing still shall spread;
God's reign no end shall know:
Justice shall guard God's throne above
and peace abound below.





We long for Peace

Leader: Let us Pray

All: All powerful God, increase our strength of will for building peace and doing good, that Christ may find an eager welcome when he comes among us and calls us to his side in the kingdom of heaven where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amazing Peace

By Maya Angelou

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In our joy, we think we hear a whisper.
At first it is too soft. Then only half heard.
We listen carefully as it gathers strength.
We hear a sweetness.
The word is Peace.
It is loud now.
Louder than the explosion of bombs.

We tremble at the sound.
We are thrilled by its presence.
It is what we have hungered for.
Not just the absence of war. But true Peace.
A harmony of spirit, and comfort of courtesies.
Security for our beloveds and their beloveds.

We, Angels and Mortals, Believers and Nonbelievers,
Look heavenward and speak the word aloud.
Peace. We look at each other, then into ourselves,
And we say without shyness or apology or hesitation:

Peace, My Brother.
Peace, My Sister.
Peace, My Soul.

First Reading for the First Sunday of Advent

Isaiah, 2:1-5

**The Lord gathers all nations together into
the eternal peace of God's kingdom.**

The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

In the days to come the mountain of the Temple of the Lord shall tower above the mountains and be lifted higher than the hills. All nations will stream to it, peoples without number will come to it; and they will say:

‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Jacob that he may teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths; since the Law will go out from Zion, and the oracle of the Lord from Jerusalem.’

He will wield authority over the nations and adjudicate between many peoples; these will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, there will be no more training for war.

O House of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

This is the word of the Lord.

Personal Reflection/Sharing:

- This Advent, we desire that all generations can enjoy peace and the absence of war. How can I contribute to this important issue? (Pause)
- How can I make the new *Arms Trade Treaty* known and respected at the grass roots? (Pause)
- Can I commit myself to praying and working for peace this Advent and throughout 2014? (Pause)
- In what way can I be open to God's grace and be attentive to the ways that peace can be built up or damaged in this world entrusted to us by God? (Pause)





We long
for Peace



Ms Ebun James

*General Secretary of the Sierra Leone Council of Churches,
Freetown, Sierra Leone.*

During Sierra Leone's civil war, the boys carrying guns were so young the gun barrels would drag on the ground when they walked. There were guns coming into our country via Libya, Burkina Faso and Liberia. There were so many guns around, it affected you even if you wanted nothing to do with it.

Once when my husband had to go away he gave me a pistol for protection. I did not want it so I hid it in the attic. Later I took it into the bush and threw it away. The only way to deal with illegal weapons is to get rid of them and to stop new guns coming in.

It's like trying to stop smoking – you cannot keep getting cigarettes if you are trying to quit. We had no choice but to survive all this violence, so we healed ourselves by our struggle for survival. The people affected by violence helped each other and community support was strong.

Today, thank God, there are fewer illegal guns and less violence. There are 26 churches in this council and we want stronger international laws to keep so many guns from ever coming into our country again.

“Human Scope”

www.armstreatynow.org





Intercessions:

From the sorrowful ashes of Syria, to the murderous assassinations in Mexico; from the drug lords of Latin America, to the pillage and rape of women in Africa, from the selfish pursuit of wealth to the material poverty in our lives now, communities are living in fear. People are afraid of the guns, bombs and knives which are so indiscriminate and can destroy lives in a moment. People everywhere are longing for peace and security and so we make our prayers.

Let us pray that with the help of the Holy Spirit and the new **UN Arms Trade Treaty** the world will become a more secure place in which to live.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

Lord, send your spirit of reconciliation among the peoples divided by war.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer





We long for Peace

Lord, we pray that your spirit may move the hearts of evil-doers to respect the lives of vulnerable women and children in places where they are in danger.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

Lord, we pray for those who have been kidnapped, trafficked or abused in any way. We ask you to restore to them a sense of their self-worth in your eyes and in theirs.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

Lord, graciously grant us a deeper understanding of all that you have made, the water, the land, the sky, the animals and the gifts of nature that we may use them well and protect them.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

Lord, guide all business people in the ways of justice and fairness so that they will be open to caring for the well-being of all people and that we may all become a community of people supporting one another.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer



All: Our Father...

Final Prayer

Most holy Trinity, in the Spirit of Jesus, we pray that all people may be one, just as you are one in communion.

May we too reveal the glory that you have given to us by our communion in love.

We make this prayer in the name of Jesus our Lord, the Prince of Peace.
Amen.

Final Hymn (*from the appendix or elsewhere*)



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*** Webpages:**

www.ArmsTreatyNow.org

www.Media@controlarms.org





Live simply so
that others may
simply live

Second Week of Advent

Leader: On the Second Sunday of Advent, the prophet Isaiah gives us a vision of a world where there is integrity, equality, peace and harmony. As we reflect and pray let us encourage each other to work together so that peoples and nations can enjoy life in all its fullness.

Hymn: Long the Ages Rolled – sing or recite

Long the ages rolled and slowly to the coming of the Word
Fervent longings grew more fervent undismayed by hopes deferred.
Weaker spirits sighed and whispered 'could the Lord of all forget '
While the Prophets scanned the portents and in patience said 'not yet'

O that thou wouldst rend the heavens,

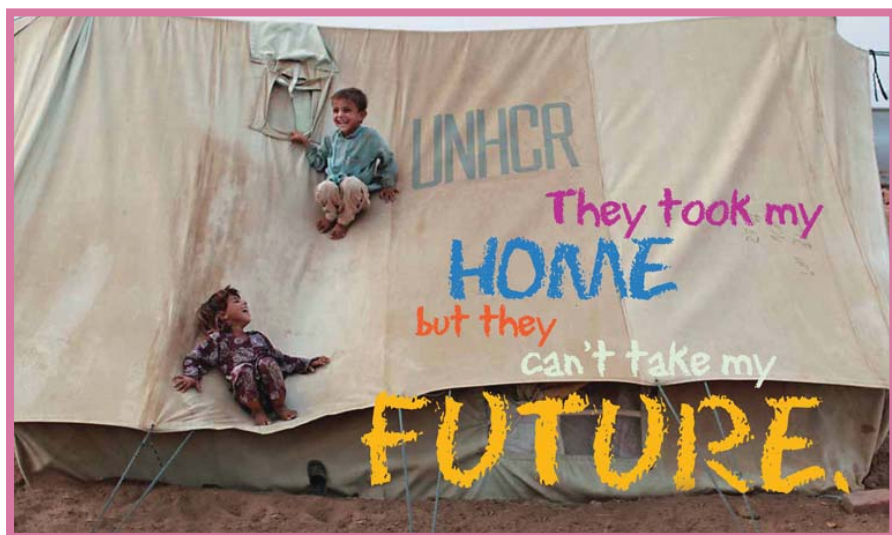
O that this might be the hour.

O the Wisdom, O the Orient, O the Key of David's power.

O Desired of nations hasten fire that shall redemption bring

O Adonai the Leader, O Emmanuel, the King.

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Opening Prayer

All loving God, as we hear again your promises of old and your vision for all humanity; free our world from the things that prevent its fulfilment. Help us to work together for peace, harmony and justice in all our dealings with each other. This we ask through Jesus Christ your Son.

Psalm 72 (taken from: *'Out of the Silence'* Jim Cotter & Paul Payton)

Ant: May justice flourish in our days

O God, give wisdom to those who govern us,
A sense of justice to those who wield power,
That they may frame laws that are life-giving,
That the poor and weak may breathe freely.
May they defend the cause of the needy
Save the abandoned and orphans,
Disarm the rebellious and violent.

Ant: May justice flourish in our days

May such wisdom endure like the sun and moon?
Giving light from one age to the next.
May justice rain down like showers
That waters the new-sown fields.
May justice flourish in our days,
And abundance of peace till the moon be no more.

Ant: May justice flourish in our days

So may there be abundance of grain in the land
To the tops of the hills may it wave.
Let the mountains be laden with peace,
With the prosperity that follows from justice.
May the corn swell with the gentle rains,
The sheaves thicken like grass of the meadows.





*Live simply so
that others may
simply live*

First Reading for the Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah, 11: 1-10.

A shoot springs from the stock of Jesse,
a scion thrusts from his roots: On him the
spirit of the Lord rests, a spirit of wisdom and insight,
A spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the lord.
He does not judge by appearances, he gives no verdict on hearsay, but
judges the wretched with integrity, and with equity gives a verdict for
the poor of the land. His word is a rod that strikes the ruthless, integrity
is the loincloth round his waist, faithfulness the belt about his hips.

The wolf lives with the lamb, the panther lies down with the kid, calf and
lion cub feed together with a little boy to lead them. The cow and the
bear make friends, their young lie down together, the lion eats straw like
the ox. The infant plays over the cobra's hole: into the viper's lair the
young child puts his hand. They do no hurt, no harm, on my entire holy
mountain; for the country is filled with the knowledge of the Lord as
waters swell the sea. That day, the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to
the people. It will be sought out by the nations and its home will be
glorious.

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King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand says:

...“Sufficiency Economy is a philosophy that guides the livelihood and behaviour of peoples at all levels, from the family to the community, to the country, on matters concerning national development and administration. It calls for a ‘middle way’ to be observed, especially in pursuing economic development in keeping with the world of globalisation. At the same time we must build up the spiritual foundation of all people in the nation, especially state officials, scholars, and business people at all levels, so they are conscious of moral integrity and honesty and they strive for the appropriate wisdom to live life with forbearance, diligence, self-awareness, intelligence, and attentiveness...”



**King Bhumibol Adulyadej
of Thailand**

...“If we contain our wants with less greed, we would be less belligerent towards others. If all countries entertained this – this is not an economic system- the idea that we all should be self-sufficient which implies moderation, not to the extreme, not blinded with greed, we can all live happily...”





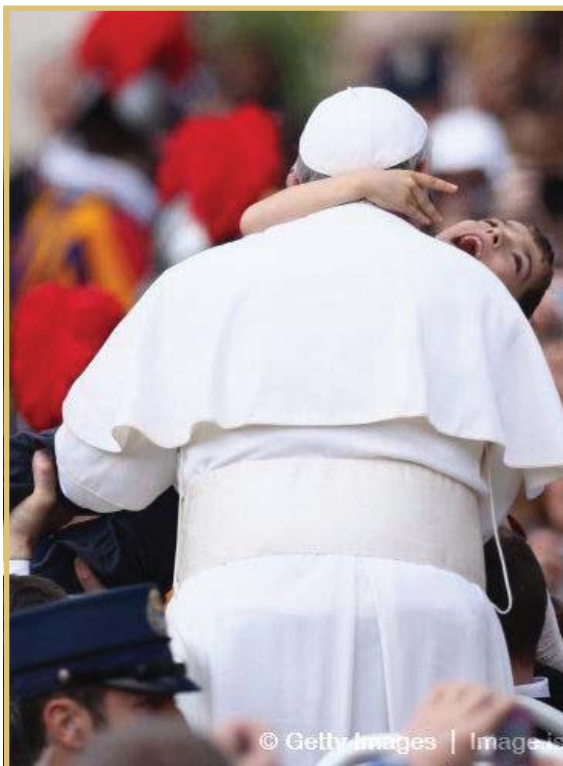
*Live simply so
that others may
simply live*

Personal Reflection and Sharing

The vision of Isaiah is far from being realised. Our world is a harsh place for very many people, too many. Violence is everywhere. There is hunger, inequality, destruction of the environment, imbalance in the distribution of wealth and resources, greed, selfishness and waste.

- How can we work together for a more just and equitable society?
- How can we resist the pervasive power of consumerism?
- How can we support an economy 'where **just enough** is the ability to appreciate the right amount'?

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"Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: let us be "protectors" of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment."

*Homily of the
Bishop of Rome,
Pope Francis
St Peter's Square
Tuesday 19th March 2013*

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An Irish Experience

(from: *Stories of Struggle and Solidarity*, ATD Fourth World)



I'll always remember the first day we went homeless with the two kids, one 4 years and one 9 months. I nearly went mad when they told us we had to go to separate places. I was terrified. I went into a woman's hostel with the kids. Darren went to a men's hostel and slept on the floor. It was horrible to be separated. If Darren wasn't at the hostel door by 6p.m., or if he didn't have money, he wouldn't get in. There were lots of times when he just slept rough, and me not knowing half the time if he was dead or alive. Our worst fear was that the kids would be taken from us. We held on to them. Sometimes I used to look after the kids of other women. I gave them a hand because I didn't want to see the kids taken off them. We have seen so many people who had their children taken off them. The best thing we did was to stay as a couple and with the children, through it all. We helped one another through it. We did it for our kids. They kept us going. We don't want our children to fall into the same hole that we were in. We want them to get on with their lives. The thing we want most for them is education. We hope they all stay in school.

Thank God it's nearly over. When you've your own home, that's when you know you're on the straight road and then you can start running your new life.





Live simply so
that others may
simply live

Intercessions

As we listen and reflect on the reading from the Prophet Isaiah and dream of a world of peace, harmony, equality:

We pray that World Leaders may be courageous and more determined to reach out and work for the restoration of peace and harmony in places torn by war and violence.

Lord hear our prayer

We pray that the Leaders and decision makers in our own country show the willingness and the wisdom to work for an economy that provides fairly for all citizens and especially for the poor and vulnerable.

Lord hear our prayer

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We pray that those who provide financial aid to the materially poor will do so with sensitivity, dignity and respect for the holistic development of those they wish to help.

Lord hear our prayer

Free our hearts from selfishness and help us to show understanding, solidarity and generosity with the homeless and all in difficult situations.

Lord hear our prayer



Spontaneous Prayers

Our Father ...

Final Prayer.

O loving God, help us to be open and willing to bring your peace and reconciliation to those we encounter in our daily living. We remember the places in our world that are torn by war, the people who are homeless, those struggling to make enough money to support their families. Help them to find the strength and courage they need in their struggles for a better life. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.

Final Hymn: *Christ is our Light*

(melody; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhQoXMUtoQ&feature==relate>)



21

An African Child's Solution:

*"If many little people in many little places
do many little deeds
they can change the face of the earth."*





*We remember
The stranger*

Third Week of Advent

Leader: Conscious of the Lord's coming and renewing our hope in God's promises, we begin: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The prayer leader offers a word of welcome and announces an appropriate **hymn** from the index of this booklet or elsewhere.

In our prayer together we continue to celebrate the Advent Season.

Leader: This week we continue to celebrate this season of Advent. We continue this time of expectation in prayer and solidarity with other members of VIVAT. In a special way this week we remember the Stranger, Refugees and Asylum Seekers."

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Opening Prayer:

Almighty and merciful God,
whose Son became a refugee
and had no place to call his own;
look with mercy on those who to-day
are fleeing from danger, homelessness and hunger.
Bless those who work to bring them relief;
Inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts;
and guide the nations of the world towards that day
when all will rejoice in your Kingdom.
God of justice and peace;
We make our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

An Asylum Seeker was in SPIRASI (Spiritan Asylum Services Initiative) having psychotherapy. This poem recalls a time when he had a flashback to the events that had taken place in his home country. During the session his mournful cry was heard all over the building. It reminds us of the traumatic events that many asylum seekers have to endure.



Suddenly in the half sounds of the average working morning
The roar
Silence all around
The primeval roar again, and again, a roar of pain
Suddenly we are all galvanized
We appear from offices like rabbits in the glare of the spotlight
The primeval sound of fear grips us.
The Asylum Seeker – The Torture Survivor is recounting
What happened
The roar comes again
His nose is dropping water
He is blind
He is back there
Where it happened
There is no now
There is no future
Only then.

Source: Tom Hogan CSSp, *Reflections and Poems: An Anthology* (2011).





*We remember
The stranger*

Psalm 145

*God hears the cry of the oppressed:
Those who trust God's word find strength*

It is the Lord who keeps faith forever.
Who is just to those who are oppressed.
It is the Lord who gives bread to the hungry,
The Lord who sets prisoners free.
It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind,
Who raises those who are bowed down,
The Lord, who protects the stranger,
And upholds the widow and the orphan.
It is the Lord who loves the just,
But thwarts the path of the wicked.
The Lord who reigns forever.
Zion's God, from age to age.



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Gospel of the Third Sunday of Advent – Matthew 11:2-11

John in prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?" Jesus answered, "Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the good news is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the one who does not lose faith in me."

As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine cloth? Oh no, those who wear fine clothes are found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet; he is the one of whom the scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way before you. I tell you solemnly, of all the children born of woman, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is."

Personal reflection/sharing

The Gospel reading challenges us in this Advent time to live the values of Jesus as he lived them out in his time.

- Who are the “least” in my community and in society?
- How are we providing for the stranger in our midst?
- How am I a stranger to myself?

Pause





We remember The stranger

Intercessions

With prayers for a world waiting in hope,
let us call on the Lord for assistance.

For the Church still waiting for unity,
still hoping for renewal, still searching for
steadfast faith:

May we be blessed by the sound of the Gospel
proclaimed to the ends of the earth.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Hear our prayer.

Every 30 seconds an African child dies of malaria, Every day 8000
people die of AIDS. These are preventable, treatable diseases.

Lord empower us to be instruments of your healing by advocating for
prevention programmes and affordable medicines for those without the
means to cope with their illnesses. Come Lord Jesus.

Hear our prayer.

The world's 32.8 million refugees and displaced persons, the result of
conflicts over scarce resources and political discord, are those least
likely to benefit immediately from global anti-poverty efforts.

Lord give us courage to take the path of risk. Give us grace to listen to
those whose voice is lost, to hear the cries and shout out for justice...
Come Lord Jesus.

Hear our prayer.

Gender equality will ensure women an
equal chance to improve their lives and the
lives of their families especially through
education and employment.

Lord, enlighten us to provide women all over
the world with equal dignity and opportunity.
Inspire every society to oppose violence
against women and strengthen gender
justice... Come Lord Jesus.

Hear our prayer.



Spontaneous Prayer

Our Father ...

Final Prayer

God our fellow traveller,
Give us courage to leave security behind
That we may take the path of risk
And become your pilgrims.
Give us courage to tread the road of dispossession
That we may reach out to those we meet
And share their load.
And give us the grace to listen to those whose voice is lost
That we may hear the cry and shout out for justice. Amen
(*Spiritual source*)

Magnificat from index of this booklet.

Leader: May God during this Advent season write a message of hope upon our hearts, bless and direct us and send us out as living letters of the Word. Amen.





*The power of "We"
working together
for change*

Fourth Week of Advent

Leader: We are drawing closer to the Christmas Event. Christ reveals to us the sacredness of humanity and of all of creation. We gather in prayer and say:

Glory to you, source of all Being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end,
Amen

Hymn: from the index of this booklet or elsewhere

Opening Prayer:

O Loving God, O Holy One, we thank You for the gift of Life. We thank You for Your Eternal Presence within us. As we draw closer to the feast of Christmas, may we allow Christ's values to be born anew in our hearts and communities. May we recognise the sacredness of our humanity and of all of creation and may our shared choices and actions bring about transformation in our world today.

This we ask through the same Christ, our Lord, Amen.

POEM:

Called beyond Comfort Zone

*Walter Brueggemann
(on reading Jeremiah 23)*

We are among your called.

We have heard and answered your summons.

You have addressed us in the deep
places of our lives.

In responsive obedience we testify,
as we are able, to your truth as it
concerns our common life.

We thank you for the call,
for the burden of that call,
for the risk that goes with it,
for the joy of words given us
by your growing spirit, and
for the newness that sometimes comes
from our word.

We have indeed been in the counsel of
your summoning spirit,
and so we know some truth to speak.

But we are, as well, filled with rich
Imagination of our own,
And our imagination is sometimes
matched and overmatched
by our cowardice,
by our readiness to please,
by our quest for well-being.

We are, on most days, a hard mix
of true prophet and wayward voice,
a mix of your call to justice
and our hope for *shalom*.

Here we are, as we are,
mixed but faithful,
compromised but committed,
anxious but devoted to you.

Use us and our gifts for
your newness that pushes beyond
all that we can say or imagine.
We are grateful for words given us;
we are more grateful for your word fleshed
among us.





*The power of "We"
working together
for change*

First Reading from the Fourth Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 7:10-14

Yahweh spoke to Ahaz and said:

Ask Yahweh your God for a sign, either from the depths of Sheol or in the heights above. But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask. I will not put Yahweh to the test.'

He then said:

'Listen now, House of David:

are you not satisfied with trying human patience without trying my God's patience too?

The Lord will give you a sign in any case:

It is this: the young woman is with child

and will give birth to a son

whom she will call Immanuel,

a name which means 'God-is-with-us'

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We reflect:

A positive sign inspires. It touches the soul. It connects people. In the midst of pain and injustice today there are people and communities coming together, expressing solidarity and being signs of inspiration for one another. As we reflect and work together for change, the power of "WE" is one of the positive signs that 'God-is-with-us'.

Personal Reflection/Sharing:

- During the past year, who or what has challenged or encouraged me to work with others for change?
- What situations stretch me/us beyond my/our comfort zone(s)?
- What motivates me to engage with others and commit to the process of change?



Women making a difference

Sr. Franca Onyibor MSHR

The world was outraged when on Christmas day 2011, at St Theresa's Catholic Church, Suleja a suicide bomber, blew himself up during the Christmas Day Eucharist. Many lost their lives in a tragic, violent death; many were injured, and property lost. The *Boko Haram*, an Islamic Extremist group, claimed responsibility.



In the face of the violence and the security challenges facing Nigeria, peacemakers are quietly emerging and transforming society. Christian and Moslem women have formed a sister-to-sister link. Together we pray and also work towards cultivating a culture of peace and non violence in our fragile country. We try to live this

culture of peace in our daily lives. Through these humble efforts, we are becoming like sisters to each other; and like yeast in a dough nurturing a culture of non violence in our society.

Mariam Mohamed is one such sister. She is a young mother of 3. Her father was killed by a Christian in one of the incidences of religious violence in Northern Nigeria. Mariam tells the story of how she was deeply traumatized by the tragic death of her father. When eventually the Christian who killed her father was caught and brought to Mariam for revenge, she reasoned that she had undergone unimaginable pain because of her father's tragic death. She would not like to see another undergo such pain. By choosing revenge and killing the man who murdered her father, this man's wife and children would go through horrific pain similar to that which she had gone through. She chose not to add to the cycle of violence. Instead of choosing revenge and killing the man, she let him go, to the utter disbelief of both the man himself and the Moslem youths who caught him. Mariam has become an active advocate of non violence and peaceful co existence.

Our dream is that one day the skills of Non-Violent Communication (also called Compassionate Communication) may become a reality among all our peoples.





*The power of "We"
working together
for change*

Intercessions:

Christ lives in us and with us today.
May we become one with Him in mind
and heart and body.

Lord hear us...

As we observe our world and it's
peoples, may we respect diversity and
foster unity.

Lord hear us...

As we long for a world of justice and peace, may we begin with
justice and peace in our own hearts, in our families, our
neighbourhoods and our parishes.

Lord hear us...

As we engage with life may we be willing to deeply reflect and listen
to what is happening, so that our responses may be relevant and
unifying.

Lord hear us...

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We thank you for those committed to change, those who inspire others, those who live simply so that others may simply live. May they experience your Wisdom and Love in their life choices.

Lord hear us...

We acknowledge our treasure of sacred history. We thank you for the ways in which you have spoken to us, the signs you have given to us through the ages. Be with all peoples who long for a just and peaceful world.

Lord hear us...

May those who are nearing death and those who have died, experience you ever more deeply as Immanuel, God-is-with-us.

Lord hear us...



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Final Prayer:

Loving God, be with us on our journey. As we work together for a better world may we give witness to Christ's values in our midst. We pray for this gift at this special time of year and we make our prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen.





*The power of "We"
working together
for change*

Final Hymn:

We are Companions on the Journey

We are companions on the journey,
breaking bread and sharing life;
and in the love we bear is the hope we share
For we believe in the love of our God,
we believe in the love of our God.

No longer strangers to each other; no longer strangers in God's house;
we are fed and we are nourished
by the strength of those who care, by the strength of those who care.

We are Companions...

We have been gifted with each other,
and we are called by the
Word of our Lord
to act with justice, to love
tenderly,
and to walk humbly with our
God, to walk humbly with
our God.

We are Companions...



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Useful webpages:

[www: Avaaz.org](http://www.Avaaz.org)

[www: Evolving Wisdom.com](http://www.EvolvingWisdom.com)



Advent Hymns

(Please feel free to also select other appropriate hymns)

CHRIST, CIRCLE ROUND US

Text and music: Daniel L. Schutte

Melody: <http://www.mycatholicvoice.com/media/KvQJag>

Come, O Radiant Dawn,
Splendour of the morning light.
Come, Sun of Justice,
turn away the power of night

Refrain:
Christ, circle round us.
Christ, may your light surround us.
Shine in our living.
Fill our hearts with great thanksgiving.

Come, O flower of Love,
Holy branch of Jesse's tree.
Come, bough of Blessing,
Bloom for all the world to see. Refrain

Come, O Word of Truth,
font of knowledge from on high.
Come, Holy Wisdom,
Be our faithful friend and guide. Refrain

Come, O Gate of Hope,
Holy door of heaven's throne.
Come, Key of David,
Open wide the pathway home. Refrain

Come Emmanuel,
Cherished hope of Israel.
Come, Live among us,
Ever in our hearts to dwell. Refrain

Come, Lord Jesus Christ,
Long awaited Prince of Peace.
Come, Hope of Nations,
Ever make our love increase. Refrain

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SONG TO MARY, MOTHER OF THE LORD

Melody: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAKDRhnnPuA>

When creation was begun, God had chosen you to be
Mother of his blessed Son, Holy Mary full of grace.

Ave, Ave, Ave Maria.

Lead us to your child above; He will teach us how to love,
How to pity and forgive, Holy Mary full of grace.

Ave, Ave, Ave Maria

Praise the Father and the Son, and the Spirit three in one,
As it was when time began. Now and evermore. Amen

Ave, Ave, Ave Maria



HOLY IS GOD'S NAME

(John Michael Talbot)

Melody: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Br6gHdmKRvE>

My soul proclaims the greatness of my God
And my spirit exults in God my savior
For he has looked with mercy on my lowliness
And my name will be forever exalted.
For the mighty God has done great things for me
And his mercy will reach from age to age
And holy, holy, holy is God's name.

He has mercy in every generation
He has revealed His power and His glory
He has cast down the mighty in their arrogance
And has lifted up the meek and the lowly
He has come to help His servant Israel
He remembered His promise to our fathers

And holy, holy, holy is God's name.
And holy, holy, holy is God's name.

THE ANGEL GABRIEL FROM HEAVEN CAME

(Basque carol: tr. Sabine Baring-Gould 1834-1924)

(Melody: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pliqObTHxUQ>)

The Angel Gabriel from heaven came
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
"Oh hail" said he, "O lowly maiden Mary"
"Most highly favoured lady!" Gloria!

"For know a blessed mother you shall be
All generations praise continually
Your son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold"
"Most highly favoured lady!" Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head
"To me, be as it pleases God!" she said
"My soul shall laud and magnify His holy name"
"Most highly favoured lady!" Gloria!

Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ was born
In Bethlehem all on a Christmas morn;
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say:
"Most highly favoured lady!" Gloria!



O COME, DIVINE MESSIAH!

Venez, Divin Messie (Abbe Simon-Joseph Pellegrin, 1663-1745)

Trans: Sr. Mary of St. Philip 1825-1904)

Melody: www.youtube.com/user/TORCHkids?feature=watch

1. O come, divine Messiah!
The world in silence waits the day
When hope shall sing its triumph,
And sadness flee away.

Chorus: : Sweet Saviour haste;
Come, come to earth,
Dispel the night and show your face,
And bid us hail the dawn of grace.

2. O Christ, whom nations sigh for,
Whom priest and prophet long
foretold,
Come break the captive fetters;
Redeem the long-lost fold.

Chorus

3. You come in peace and meekness,
And lowly will your cradle be;
All clothed in human weakness
Shall we your Godhead see.

Chorus

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ON JORDAN'S BANK

(Text: Charles Coffin, 1676-1749; tr. John Chandler, 1806-1876)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Py4N_hcvuAo

1. On Jordan's bank, the Baptist's cry
Announces that the Lord is nigh;
Awake, and hearken, for he brings
Glad tidings of the King of kings!
2. Then cleansed be every breast from sin;
Make straight the way for God within;
Yea, let us each our hearts prepare
For Christ to come and enter there.
3. For Thou art our Salvation, Lord,
Our Refuge, and our great Reward.
Shine forth, and let Thy light restore
Earth's own true loveliness once more.
4. Lay on the sick Thy healing hand
And make the fallen strong to stand;
Show us the glory of Thy face
Till beauty springs in every place.
5. Stretch forth thine hand, to heal our sore,
And make us rise to fall no more;
Once more upon thy people shine,
And fill the world with love divine.
6. All praise, eternal Son, to Thee
Whose advent sets Thy people free,
Whom, with the Father, we adore,
And Holy Spirit evermore.



O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL

(Psalterium Canticum
Catholicarum, Cologne, 1710
tr. By John Mason Neale, 1818-1866;
verses 2,7 tr. Fr.

The Hymnal 1940, alt.)
melody:[http:// www.youtube.com/
watch?v=DWLitU9ayFc&feature
=results_main
&playnext = 1&dist=
PL744BA0 70E5BE4027](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWLitU9ayFc&feature=results_main&playnext=1&dist=PL744BA070E5BE4027)

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

Refrain

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

2. O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Refrain
3. O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight!
Refrain
4. O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery. Refrain
5. O come, O come, Thou Lord of Might,
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud, and majesty, and awe. Refrain



- The name VIVAT is derived from the Latin verb “Vivere” meaning “to live” and expresses our deep concern for all that exists and a vision of the world and of every human being as created in goodness and dignity. VIVAT stands for the equal rights and dignity of individuals, peoples and cultures.
- VIVAT engages in advocacy and lobbying on issues of human rights, justice and peace at the United Nations. It brings grassroots experience and insights to the attention of the international community. It raises awareness of issues among its members and provides a possibility for networking and collaboration with other agencies and NGOs.
- Membership of VIVAT is made up of over 25 thousand sisters, priests, brothers and their associates from 12 religious congregations working in 122 countries in collaboration with local communities and NGOs.
- VIVAT International focuses on issues dealing with human rights particularly in the areas of gender, poverty eradication, sustainable development, and the culture of peace.



This Vivat Advent Prayer Book was prepared by:

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