

ADVENT 2021

**A RESOURCE FOR
PARISHES**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Introduction

This resource invites participants to journey through the four weeks of Advent, reflecting on the Gospel and sharing in the stories of our sisters and brothers around the world.

There are resources available on our webpage for use in schools and parishes at: www.caritas.org.au/advent

About Caritas Australia

Caritas Australia is the international humanitarian relief and development agency of the Catholic Church in Australia. Through effective relationships with the Church, local partners and communities in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, the Pacific and Australia, Caritas Australia helps to end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity. Our programs, advocacy and education initiatives promote the dignity of every person, regardless of religious, political or cultural beliefs. We envisage a world in which children, women and men most vulnerable to extreme poverty and injustice are architects of their own sustainable development.

Resource Structure

Each week of Advent has been organised into the following components:

- Advent prayer and pause
- Advent wreath: lighting of candles and prayer
- Gospel reading
- Caritas Australia story
- Reflection questions
- Faith in action
- Closing prayer
- Suggested song

About Advent

Advent marks the beginning of the Church's new year and is a season of waiting and preparation. In fact, this season of Advent focuses on Christ's threefold coming—past, present and future.

- We await and prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas.
- We hope and give thanks for Christ's presence within us and in the Word and sacraments.
- We look to the future, waiting for Christ to come again.

In the coming four weeks we prepare with mounting expectation for the coming of Christ in a spirit of waiting, conversion and hope.

GLOBAL GIFTS

Buy a Global Gift this Christmas

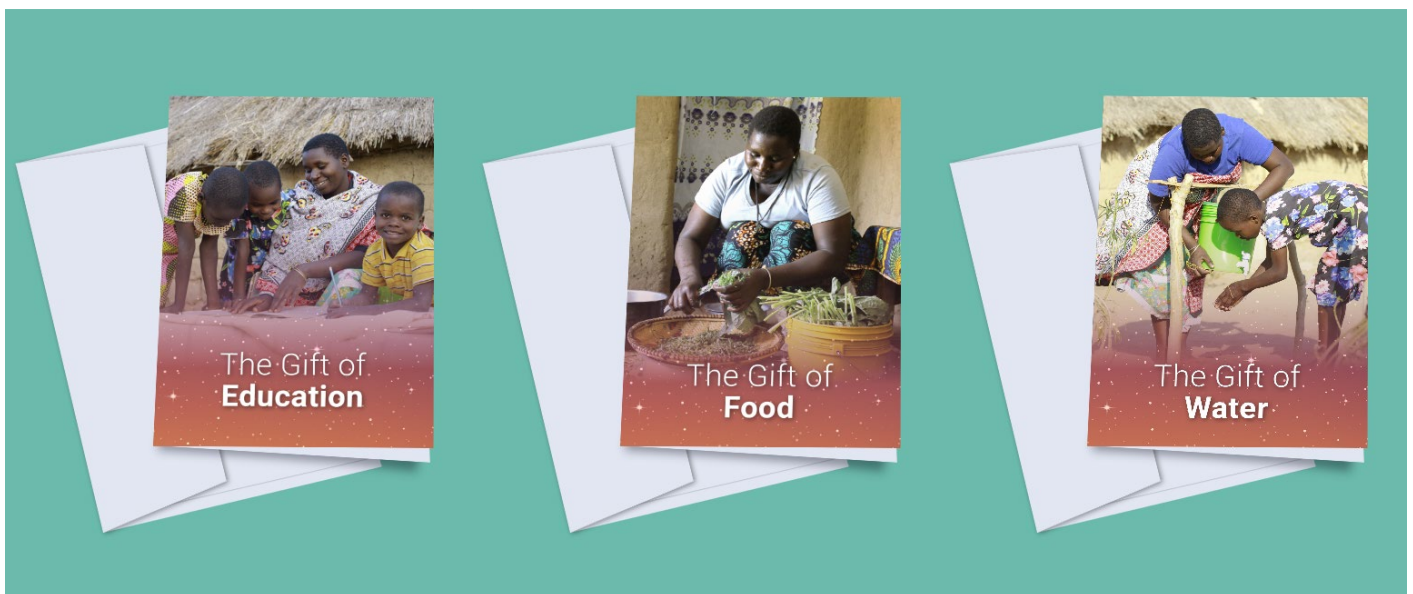
You can make Christmas shine brighter for those in need by purchasing a Global Gift.

Your gift will have a life-changing impact on vulnerable families across the world as they strive to overcome the challenges of poverty.

It's possible to change lives this Christmas by giving your loved ones a Global Gift. Simply select your Global Gift card(s) of choice and help create lasting change for vulnerable families all around the world.

The Christmas, give a gift that keeps on giving and makes a real difference to people living in poverty.

Visit www.globalgifts.org.au



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ADVENT

Introduction

Welcome

Leader: Explain the structure for each session as outlined in the 'Introduction' (p.2). Introduce Caritas Australia as the International aid and development organisation of the Catholic Church in Australia. Explain that through sharing the stories of the people with whom Caritas Australia works, we can acknowledge that we are all part of one global family. For more information you could watch [Compassion in Action](#) (3 mins).

What is Advent?

Introduce the season of Advent by watching this video '[Advent in two minutes](#)'.

Advent Pause



At the beginning of each session (before lighting the Advent wreath candle) we will say the Advent prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus" and pause for a moment, to focus on the weekly theme (hope, peace, joy, love) and ready our hearts for openness and reflection.

Pope Francis encourages us to pray "Come, Lord Jesus" in the season of Advent.

"Let us make our own the traditional Advent prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20). The Book of Revelation ends with this prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus". We can say that prayer at the beginning of each day and repeat it frequently, before our meetings, our studies and our work, before making decisions, in every more important or difficult moment in our lives: Come, Lord Jesus! It is a little prayer, yet one that comes from the heart. Let us say it in this Advent season. Let us repeat it: "Come, Lord Jesus!"

(Pope Francis, Advent Prayer, Saint Peter's Basilica, First Sunday of Advent, 29 November 2020)



Advent Wreath

The word 'Advent' means 'coming'. Lighting the candles on the wreath symbolises the coming of light (Jesus) into the world. The first candle (violet) represents hope, the second (violet) peace, the third (rose) joy, and the fourth (violet) love. The central white candle is lit on Christmas Day and represents Christ. This Advent we will learn, act and pray for a more just and fair world – a world full of hope, peace, joy and love.

Making the Advent wreath a daily custom

The Advent wreath helps us keep our thoughts focused on the coming of Christ at Christmas, it should be integrated into our daily lives. If you don't have an Advent wreath you can make your own, instructions can be found at: www.caritas.org.au/advent

Everyone gathers around the wreath and someone lights the candle(s). Leader prays [the Advent wreath prayer for the week](#).

Hope

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Prayer for lighting of first Advent candle.

As we light this first candle on our Advent wreath may we be filled with your **everlasting hope**. Amen



Gospel reading

Leader: Ask the participants to sit comfortably, feet flat on the floor, hands in laps, shoulders relaxed. Explain that you (or someone in the group) will read the Gospel and they are asked to really listen to the words and think about what the Gospel is saying to them.

Luke 21:25-28. 34-36

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.

'Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will be sprung on you suddenly, like a trap. For it will come down on every living man on the face of the earth. Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man.'

The Jerusalem Bible

Advent pause:

**“Come, Lord
Jesus”**

Photo: [Dyu-Ha](#), [Unsplash](#)

Hope



Photo: August Lucky

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT - Maria's story



[Watch Maria's story](#)

Maria lives with her husband and six children in a village in northern Tanzania, in a region with long-term food and water insecurity. With little education or way of earning a sustainable income, it was a daily struggle for Maria and her husband to feed their young family.

Maria's family have a small farm, growing onion, maize, beans and vegetables. However, water scarcity has meant poor harvests and a low income in recent years - making it difficult to afford seeds and fertiliser. Maria also had to walk a four-kilometre round trip, to fetch water for the household.

Around 14 million people in Tanzania are living in poverty,¹ while 34 percent of children under five experience stunted growth². Gender inequality also means that women do not have equal access and control of resources or involvement in community decision-making.

Maria heard about the A+ program which is supported by Caritas Australia's local partner, Diocese of Mbulu Development Department (DMDD). She saw it as her chance to achieve what she had always wanted.

Maria took part enthusiastically in all the program's activities which included training in sustainable farming techniques, entrepreneurship, literacy and numeracy, gender awareness, environmental protection, hygiene and sanitation.

Maria's community was able to install a new borehole closer to the village so they no need to walk long distances to access safe, clean water.

Improved irrigation also boosted food production. Now Maria and her husband are able to produce enough food for their family to eat three meals per day, throughout the entire year, using a variety of nutritious foods. They also produce enough to sell which has increased their income. Improved hygiene and sanitation has also reduced the risk of the spread of waterborne diseases and COVID-19.

Maria's confidence grew and she was inspired to run as a local councillor to help her community.

+ “We have increased happiness in our family as we are able to fulfil basic needs. In future, I would like have a dairy cow, to build a good house and I want my children to do well in school so they can get good jobs and have a good future.”

Maria

Along with your generous support, this program is supported by the Australian Government, through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

Sources: [World Bank](#), [World Food Program](#)

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT – HOPE



Guided Reflection

Leader: Open up the conversation by inviting participants to share what they feel the Gospel is saying to them. Alternatively you can use the guided reflection questions below.

Guided Reflection Questions:

- Where do you see hope in today's gospel?
- Where do you see hope in Maria's story?
- Maria's family lived through droughts and limited food production. Reflect on what her natural environment might have felt like at that time. Reflect on what it might feel like to not be able to produce enough food for your family due to environmental challenges. Consider the vital relationship to the earth that this presents.
- Advent is a hopeful time where we wait patiently. Identify a time in your life that you have struggled to wait patiently? How did you overcome this hurdle?
- Pope Francis in his third encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, states "Hope is bold; it can look beyond personal convenience, the petty securities and compensations which limit our horizon, and it can open us up to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile" (n. 55). When have you witnessed 'bold' hope?
- Maria hoped to be able to learn more to improve her family's life. What do you hope for your family? What is your greatest hope for our global family and the future of our world?
- Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year. This Advent, how can we prepare as people of hope and faith for this new year?



Faith in Action

- Share Maria's story with friends and family.
- Make a conscious effort to preserve food and not be wasteful. Any money saved could be used towards a Global Gift, supporting communities like Maria's to have enough food to eat.
- Spend some time reflecting or praying in nature.

Prayer

God of Hope,

Thank you for your love that surrounds.

Strengthen us so that we may soften our hearts to you and each other.

We pray for our sisters and brothers around the world who face hunger. Help us build a more just world where no one faces this burden. Help us to be patient, and grow as people of hope and faith in action.

Renew our hope daily. In your name we pray, Amen.



Music Suggestions

There is a Longing – Anne Quigley **or** A Voice Cries Out – Michael Joncas **or** Joyful in Hope – Michael Herry

Peace

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Prayer for lighting of Advent candle:

As we light this second candle on our Advent wreath may we be filled with your **deep peace**.
Amen



Gospel reading

Leader: Ask the participants to sit comfortably, feet flat on the floor, hands in laps, shoulders relaxed. Explain that you (or someone in the group) will read the Gospel and they are asked to really listen to the words and think about what the Gospel is saying to them.

Luke 3:1-6

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah: A voice cries in the wilderness; Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.

Every valley will be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low, winding ways will be straightened and rough roads made smooth.

And all mankind shall see the salvation of God.

The Jerusalem Bible

Advent pause:

“Come, Lord
Jesus”

Photo: [Dyu-Ha](#), [Unsplash](#)



Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT - Aloma's story

In the coastal areas of the Philippines, extreme weather events have caused extraordinary levels of devastation, threatening the safety and food security of many families. The country is struck by over 20 typhoons every year – with infrastructure in some remote areas taking years to re-build.

When Typhoon Santi raged in 2013, Aloma and her small children covered while their home fell to shreds around them. Following the typhoon, Aloma faced enormous financial difficulties.

But she was determined to help her family and her community to rebuild from the disaster. She became a participant in the Integrated Community Development Program (ICDP) run by the Socio Pastoral Action Center Foundation Inc. (SPACFI) and supported by Caritas Australia.

Aloma gained a range of skills through the program, including bookkeeping, managing logistics, and understanding ecology and environmental conservation.

Along with others in the community, Aloma also undertook training in disaster risk reduction. She learnt how to manage the logistics of disaster response, and along with her husband took part in first-aid training.

With Aloma's training, her confidence grew, and so did her awareness of the role she could play in caring for the land. "The greatest change in my life was to realise that the environment is very important.

We grew up cutting down all the trees around us, including the mangroves ... and using [them] for firewood. Now, instead, we are planting the mangroves for our own protection. We are in a coastal area, and mangroves will protect us from a tsunami or flooding."

Inspired by Aloma's leadership, the whole community came together – children and adults – to build a mangrove nursery.

The community today faces a new emergency: COVID-19. The pandemic has affected the livelihoods of many communities throughout Philippines, with more than 1.3 million cases recorded since the start of the pandemic. The pandemic has made life a lot harder for Aloma and her village due to restrictions on movement and lack of employment and income sources. As one of the frontline workers in her community, Aloma helps remind others about the importance of adhering to health protocols to ensure that the virus does not spread.

+ "My dream for my community is that everyone develops an awareness and stewardship of our environment, help each other and continue what we have started especially during this pandemic."

Aloma

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT - PEACE



Guided Reflection

Leader: Open up the conversation by inviting participants to share what they feel the Gospel is saying to them. Alternatively you can use the guided reflection questions below.

Guided Reflection Questions:

- Where do you see peace in today's gospel?
- Where do you see peace in Aloma's story?
- Aloma's family survived a typhoon. Reflect on what her natural environment might have felt like at that time. The sounds, feelings, smells and sights.
- How can you 'prepare a way' in your everyday life to feel at peace with God and with your natural environment?
- What would you like to ask God's forgiveness for? How does seeking forgiveness impact on your relationship with God?

- The increased occurrence of extreme weather events due to climate change illustrates the lack of peace between humans and the earth. On Earth Day 2021 Pope Francis said *"Both the global catastrophes, Covid and climate change, prove that we do not have time to wait...Time urges us, and as COVID-19 demonstrated, we do have the tools to face the loss. We have the instruments. This is the moment to act. We are at the edge...We need to ensure that the environment is cleaner, purer and that it is conserved. We must care for nature so that nature may care for us."* [Source](#)

How can we be people of peace in this issue? How can we begin this new year and 'make the path straight' with a fresh perspective on 'peace on earth'?



Faith in Action

- Share Aloma's story with friends and family.
- Seek and give forgiveness.
- Commit to one way you will 'bring peace' to your relationship with the earth. For example, living more simply in regards to Christmas gifts this year.

Prayer

God of Peace,

We seek your guidance to be peacemakers, with nature and in our communities.

We pray for our sisters and brothers around the world who face natural disasters and poverty.

Grant us forgiveness for the times our thoughts, actions and words were filled with selfishness. God as we prepare for the coming of your Son, may we continue to seek the way that leads to peace.

Amen



Music Suggestions

Your Peace Will Make Us One - Audrey Assad
Song At the Centre – Marty Haugen

Joy

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Prayer for lighting of Advent candle:

As we light this third candle on our Advent wreath may we be filled with your **overflowing joy**. Amen



Gospel reading

Leader: Ask the participants to sit comfortably, feet flat on the floor, hands in laps, shoulders relaxed. Explain that you (or someone in the group) will read the Gospel and they are asked to really listen to the words and think about what the Gospel is saying to them.

Luke 3:10-18

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

When all the people asked John, 'What must we do?' he answered, 'If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same.' There were tax collectors too who came for baptism, and these said to him, 'Master, what must we do?' He said to them, 'Exact no more than your rate.' Some soldiers asked him in their turn, 'What about us? What must we do?' He said to them, 'No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!' A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.' As well as this, there were many other things he said to exhort the people and to announce the Good News to them.

The Jerusalem Bible

Advent pause:

"Come, Lord Jesus"

Photo: [Dyu-Ha](#), [Unsplash](#)

Joy



Photo: Caritas Bangladesh

THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT - Chanmoni's story

Despite the country's economic growth, inequality continues to impact the most marginalised groups in Bangladesh, particularly women, children, and indigenous people.

Chanmoni is part of the 70 per cent of people in Bangladesh who rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. With agriculture heavily dependent on the weather, and with the limited infrastructure, people like Chanmoni struggle with food insecurity. "I always relied on limited income from seasonal agricultural and often had to borrow money from local money lenders with high interest rates. It was a struggle to make ends meet." says Chanmoni.

After years of financial hardship, her life took a turn for the better when she joined the Sustainable Livelihood Program for Indigenous Communities in Dinajpur, an initiative supported by Caritas Australia and implemented by its partner, Caritas Bangladesh.

Chanmoni gained the necessary skills to support livestock and aquaculture development, as well as new approaches to generate income.

With further financial support she's received from the program she was able to purchase two goats and five chickens. "In over a year, I had a total of 12 goats, and got eggs from the chickens all year round. I was also able to provide nutritious food for

my children from the organic vegetables I cultivated", says Chanmoni. "We can now have three meals a day."

Through the newly formed Traditional Social Organisation committees, community participants also received training in community participation, resource management, women's leadership, child protection and prevention of violence and sexual exploitation.

Chanmoni's hard work and dedication to learn and apply new skills have made her a leader in her community. She is now the Chair of the Handful of Rice Group in her village, through which members save and exchange rice to ensure every family has food on their plates.

+ "I feel empowered and hopeful that I can ensure higher education for my children."

Chanmoni

THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT - JOY



Guided Reflection

Leader: Open up the conversation by inviting participants to share what they feel the Gospel is saying to them. Alternatively you can use the guided reflection questions below.

Guided Reflection Questions:

- Where do you see joy in today's gospel?
- Where do you see joy in Chanmoni's story?
- Today's gospel mentions the sharing of tunics and 'something to eat'. Consumerism and an excess of "stuff" is a challenge some of us face. Consider the impact that consumerism has on our environment - the production, transportation, and disposal of items that are used only a few times. What is one way you could reduce your contribution to the negative impacts consumerism has, particularly during this Advent season?
- The gospel describes a rising sense of expectancy among the crowd. What are you feeling expectant about this Advent season?
- Agriculture is a source of food and livelihoods for many communities around the world. Caritas Australia is equipping farmers in vulnerable communities with sustainable agricultural training to help strengthen food security and build resilience against adverse weather events. Chanmoni relies on these skills to provide nutritious meals for her family, and earn an income. Consider your own experiences with growing and eating your own food, or your awareness of where and how your food is grown. Such a vital component of our lives can also promote a renewed sense of connection the earth and all it provides for us- and this can be a joyful connection!



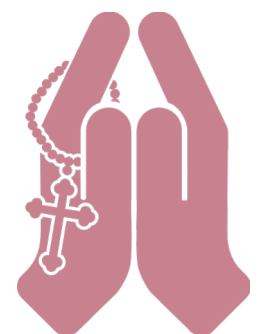
Faith in Action

- Share Chanmoni's story with friends and family.
- Seek to share your joy and encourage your neighbours today.
- Commit to sharing something material with others today e.g. Donate belongings, donate to local Christmas appeals such as Vinnies.

Prayer

God of Joy,

Your love brings us joy during this Advent season as we await the birth of Jesus. We pray for our sisters and brothers around the world who experience poverty, that we may work together as a global family so that they may have what they need. Even as we face hardships, may we look to you daily. May your joy illuminate our homes and families and workplaces, that we may then share it with our neighbours, both local and global. In your name we pray. Amen.



Music Suggestions

Oh for Joy – Folk Hymnal
The Magnificat – Todd Agnew

Love

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Prayer for lighting of Advent candle:

As we light this fourth candle on our Advent wreath may we be filled with your **restoring love**.
Amen



Gospel reading

Leader: Ask the participants to sit comfortably, feet flat on the floor, hands in laps, shoulders relaxed. Explain that you (or someone in the group) will read the Gospel and they are asked to really listen to the words and think about what the Gospel is saying to them.

Luke 1:39-44

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made to her by the Lord would be fulfilled.'

The Jerusalem Bible

Advent pause:

“Come, Lord
Jesus”

Photo: [Dyu-Ha](#), [Unsplash](#)



Photo: Sam Rinang

Love

FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT - Lat and Em's story

Lat and Em live in a village in central Cambodia. They make their living from rice farming and raising chickens and ducks. However, Lat and Em struggled to make a living. Lat's chronic asthma makes it difficult for him to get extra work as a labourer. To bring in more income, Em bakes cakes every day to sell in the village, as well as working on mango farms during harvest season.

Lat and Em's children left school early to help their parents with the housework and farming. The nearest school is five kilometres away - about an hour by bicycle - even longer by foot, along an unsafe road.

Lat was keen to improve his family's livelihood, so in 2018, he and his wife joined the Upholding Community Dignity Together program, supported by Caritas Australia, as they had seen the way it had helped other families.

Implemented in partnership with eight local Cambodian NGOs, the project aims to improve access to safe, reliable water sources, to increase food and water security and to boost farming production with sustainable practices and by adapting to climate change for improved resilience to droughts and floods.

The couple took part in training to boost their skills in chicken raising and vegetable cultivation, as well

as improving water collection and storage methods. They also participated in hygiene and sanitation education sessions.

Since joining the program, the family's knowledge, skills and farming practices have improved greatly and their farm is thriving which has increased their income.

"We are really happy for our family situation now," Lat says. "We earn a regular income each month. Em is also now an active member of a community development committee, leading the way in mobilising resources that have enabled the community to build a classroom so that children, including their own 13-year old, can study in the village. With your generous support, Lat and Em's family have improved their ability to earn a living and are also working to improve their community's future."



"I would like to say thanks so much Caritas Australia and its partner, ARD for your support to my family as well as my community to make change happening like today"

Lat



FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT - LOVE



Guided Reflection

Leader: Open up the conversation by inviting participants to share what they feel the Gospel is saying to them. Alternatively you can use the guided reflection questions below.

Guided Reflection Questions:

- Where do you see love in today's gospel?
- Where do you see love in Lat and Em's story?
- Mary set out to meet Elizabeth in person. During this pandemic, many of us have had to be apart. Reflect on how love has sustained us through difficult times.
- Mary demonstrated her commitment to God and believed in him. How do you continue to follow God and believe in his love?
- It is love that compels us to act for justice. Where does the Bible call for structures to protect people experiencing poverty and marginalisation?
- [Southeast Asia and Africa](#) are home to some of the nations that are most affected by water shortages. Without reliable sources of water and water management systems to support them, rural and remote communities, the work of farmers, hospitals, schools, and other essential community development services come to a grinding halt. Do you ever reflect on your use of life-giving water throughout your day? Or pause to consider the source and it's journey to your home?



Faith in Action

- Demonstrate your love for God by showing kindness to someone in your community.
- Say a prayer of thanks every time you use water in one day, and seek to conserve water where you can.
- Take action for climate by writing to your MP.

Prayer

Loving God,

Thank you for loving each of us. Help us to remember the wonder of your love. Let the love of your Holy Spirit be in our hearts. As we draw nearer to the celebration of Christmas, direct our thoughts, words and actions today so that we may care for and protect our common home and each other. May people know through us the power of Jesus' love.

In your name we pray, Amen



Music Suggestions

The House That Love Is Building – Sarah Hart

THANK YOU



Caritas Australia generates income from various streams including the Australian Government, public donations, government grants and investments. We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Australian Government.

In 2021-22, Caritas Australia received support from the Australian government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program, the Australian Humanitarian Partnership, the Church Partnership Program and the Bougainville Youth Initiative in Papua New Guinea.