

Openness to the Word of God

especially on 2nd Sunday of Advent

Background

In many denominations this Sunday is known as Bible Sunday. This originates from the Collect for this Sunday in the Book of Common Prayer:

*Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them,
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

Advent is a time when the Church 're-reads and re-lives the great events in salvation history in the "today" of her liturgy'. [CCC 1095]

Prayer of the Faithful

one of the following may be used or adapted according to local needs

- For our openness to the Word so that we may hear God speaking to us today.
- For all called to proclaim the word that they may communicate God's message to all.

Prayer

All-wise God,
as you have granted us
to drink with delight
from the Word
that leads us to know you,
in your goodness grant us also
to come at length to you,
source of all wisdom,
and stand for ever before your face.

based on a prayer of the Venerable Bede

Mass Texts

may be used when permitted - see Table of Rubrics

- For the Spread of the Gospel

Opportunities and Challenges

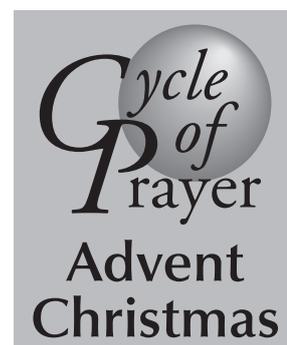
- Advent might be a good time to Scripture Reflection group perhaps looking at the gospel for the coming liturgical year.
- Why not include the references for next Sunday's readings in the bulletin.
- The presentation of a Bible or Gospel can be part of a process of Sacramental preparation (RCIA, Confirmation, Marriage). Consider how best to help people to use the scriptures for reflection and prayer.

Links

- *The Gift of Scripture* - Bishops' Conference teaching document on the Bible [www.catholicchurch.org.uk/nav/giftofscripture.htm]
- Liturgy Office Resources to accompany *The Gift of Scripture* [www.catholic-ew.org.uk/liturgy/Resources/Scripture]
- Catholic Biblical Association of Great Britain [www.ushaw.ac.uk/cba/index.php]
- The Bible Society [www.biblesociety.org.uk]

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Migrants and Refugees

especially on 3 December.

Background

On December 3rd the Church commemorates St Francis Xavier. This is the day chosen by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People to mark World Migration Day. Each year there is a message from the Holy Father reflecting on the 'signs of the times'.

Asylum seekers and refugees - I wish to underline how the tendency is to stop at the question of their arrival while disregarding the reasons for which they left their native land.

[Benedict XVI – Message for World Migration day 2005]

Prayer of the Faithful

one of the following may be used or adapted according to local needs

- For our society
may it always welcome the stranger.
- For those countries from which asylum seekers and refugees have fled
may all work together for peace and justice.

Mass Texts

may be used when permitted - see Table of Rubrics

- For Refugees and Exiles

Opportunities and Challenges

- Make copies of 'The Dispossessed - a brief guide to the Catholic Church's Concern for Refugees and Migrants' available for people.
- Find out how the Church is assisting asylum seekers and refugees locally.
- Be aware of migrants in the local community. What have they to offer the parish. How can the parish support them and respond to their needs.

Prayer

Lord, no one is a stranger to you
and no one is ever
far from your loving care.
In your kindness watch over
refugees and exiles,
those separated from their loved ones,
young people who are lost,
and those who have left
or run away from home.
Bring them back safely
to the place where they long to be
and help us always
to show your kindness
to strangers and those in need.

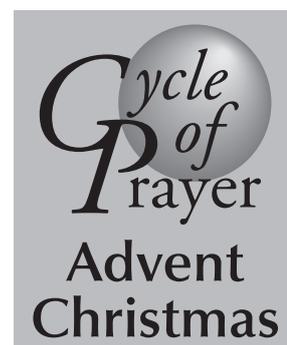
Roman Missal: For Refugees and Exiles

Links

- Bishops' Conference Office for Refugee Policy
[www.catholic-ew.org.uk/international/OfficeforRefugeePolicy.htm]
- Holy Father's Message for World Day for Migrants and Refugees
[www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/migration/index_en.htm]
- Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrant Workers and Itinerants
[www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/index.htm]
- Refugee Council [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk]

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Expectant Mothers

especially on 4th Sunday of Advent

Background

The Gospel on the 4th Sunday of Advent focusses on the role of Mary in our salvation. Over the three year cycle the gospel tells of the betrothal of Mary to Joseph, the Annunciation and the Visitation. The stories prepare us for the Birth of our Lord at Christmas.

Prayer of the Faithful

one of the following may be used or adapted according to local needs

- For all who are waiting for a birth, may they be given patience and strength.
- For all who work in maternity units and with mothers, may they always recognise and cherish the gift of life.

Liturgical Texts

may be used when permitted

- Book of Blessings – Blessing of a mother before childbirth

Prayer

God has brought gladness
and light to the world
through the Virgin Mary's
delivery of her son.

Grant the prayer of all mothers to be
as they ask for the birth
of a healthy child.

May they safely deliver
a son or daughter

to be numbered among your family,
to serve you in all things,
and to gain eternal life.

adapted from the Book of Blessing

Opportunities and Challenges

- What provisions does the parish make for families with young children?
- *Consecrated for Worship* has guidance on the use or avoidance of 'cry-chapels'
- Remember in the *Order of Christian Funerals* the Church makes provision for those who suffer a stillbirth or a miscarriage.

Links

- Day for Life [www.catholic-ew.org.uk/dfl/index.htm]
- Everybody's Welcome [www.everybodyswelcome.org.uk]
- *Cherishing Life* – Bishops' teaching document [www.catholic-ew.org.uk/cherishinglife]

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