

## **Advent service 2017: Maranatha!**

*NB: This service outline may be freely adapted for your own use in parishes, groups and communities. The additional words for Bernadette Farrell's Litany of the Word have been included with her permission.*

*All stand.*

**Opening hymn:** Litany of the Word, Bernadette Farrell, (Laudate, 64) Verses 1-9

**Leader:** Welcome to this Advent service where we join together to pray: Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus! And as we pray, we reflect how best we can prepare for this coming. How will we welcome Christ into our lives as individuals, as families, and as a community this Advent? And as we think about this, we also hold in our hearts all our brothers and sisters throughout the world, especially those who have been forced to flee their homes, those who are seeking a place of safety and welcome, those who are in need.

**Opening prayer:** Come Lord Jesus  
Maranatha!

Open our ears to hear your word.

Open our eyes to see you in one another.

Open our hearts to your call to live generously

And to let our light shine.

Open our arms to reach out in welcome and love.

Come Lord Jesus

Maranatha!

Amen.

**Leader:** We start our service today by calling to mind all the times we have not been as welcoming as we could, the times we have not recognised Christ in our brothers and sisters.

For the times we've seen only the differences between ourselves and others, rather than our similarities. Lord, have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

**Leader:** For the times we have built up walls to keep others at a distance, rather than broken down barriers and welcomed one another. Christ, have mercy.

**All: Christ, have mercy.**

**Leader:** For the times we've thought only of what divides us, rather than what unites us as members of one global family. Lord, have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

**All: May our Generous God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.**

**Leader:** Today we have an opportunity to heal some of these broken bonds, to start to rebuild our community and our relationships with one another. And so in that spirit, I invite you to make the sign of peace.

*All turn to those around them and make the sign of peace.*

**Leader:** We will now listen to three short readings – each of them describes a journey. Afterwards, we will reflect on the readings and how they connect to our lives and the lives of others....

*All sit*

**Reading:** Exodus 15:22-23, 27 "Moses led Israel away from the Sea of Reeds, and they entered the desert of Shur. They then travelled through the desert for three days without finding water. When they reached Marah, they could not drink the Marah water because it was bitter; this is why the place was named Marah. ... So they came to Elim where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees; and there they pitched camp beside the water."

**Sing:** The Lord hears the cry of the poor, John B Foley (Laudate 892). Chorus only.

**Reading:** Aza fled Syria with her nine-month-old son. Arriving in Lesbos, Greece, she said: "We left Syria because of the war. We saw a lot of blood, a lot of destruction. Everything was expensive and we didn't have any food. They told us there would be 35 people in our boat but when we arrived there were more than 200. We were in the sea and the engine stopped. The first thing we did was call the coastguard but they didn't come. The engine was full of smoke. My son was vomiting and couldn't breathe. I was praying to God so he could save us. I saw lots of people pray. All of them were crying. And all of them were scared.

**Sing:** The Lord hears the cry of the poor, John B Foley (Laudate 892). Chorus only.

**Reading:** Luke 3:2-6

"The word of God came to John the son of Zechariah, in the desert. He went through the whole of the Jordan area proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of Isaiah the prophet:

A voice of one that cries in the desert:  
Prepare a way for the Lord,  
make his paths straight!  
Let every valley be filled in,  
every mountain levelled,  
winding ways be straightened  
and rough roads made smooth,  
and all humanity will see the salvation of God."

**Sing:** The Lord hears the cry of the poor, John B Foley (Laudate 892). Chorus only.

**Reflection on the readings:**

*Either a time of silence or the leader takes people through the following optional reflection. This should be read slowly. Each time ... appears the leader pauses for a few moments, allowing time for silent reflection.*

We have just listened to the journey of the people of Israel in Exodus – through the desert, searching for water. We heard about Aza travelling from Syria, seeking a place of safety.

Now I invite you to think of a difficult journey you have been on....

It might be a physical journey from one place to another. It might be a metaphorical journey, from illness to recovery, from a difficult end to a new beginning. ...

How did you feel when things became challenging? ... Now, think about those who helped you through that journey...

They may have been people you already knew, friends, family, colleagues. They may have been strangers, those who saw you were in need and reached out a helping hand. ...

Think about how their support made you feel. ... Think about how you felt when you reached your journey's end. ...

Think about John the Baptist, a voice in the wilderness crying out: "Prepare a way for the Lord". ... How can we prepare the way for Christ in others this Advent? ...

The Archbishop of Lesbos, Greece, has said: "We have seen the face of Jesus in the face of every refugee." As we wait in hope and joyful expectation for the coming of Christ this Advent, can we do the same? ...

**Sing:** Litany of the Word, Bernadette Farrell (Laudate, 64). Verses 10, 11, 13, 16

*Then sing to the same tune:*

Friend and stranger, Alleluia, Seeking shelter, Maranatha!

Aza and son, Alleluia, seeking refuge, Maranatha!

Know you're welcome, Alleluia, we stand with you, Maranatha!

Come Lord Jesus, Alleluia, Come and change us, Maranatha!

**Leader:** In his encyclical *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis wrote: "Saint Therese of Lisieux invites us to practise the little way of love, not to miss out on the kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness. ... Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care

is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world." (#230, 231)

So this Advent, as we "prepare for the Lord", let us try to make little gestures of love, peace, and friendship each day, so we may build a better world.

**Sing:** Let there be love shared among us or Peace is flowing like a river (Laudate, 902) or Brother, sister let me serve you (Laudate, 924)

**Leader:** As our service draws to an end, we remember Aza and all our brothers and sisters who have been forced to flee their homes. We commit ourselves to gestures of love and generosity, recognising that in doing so we are preparing a way for the Lord, making his paths straight.

**Closing prayer:** Come Lord Jesus, come  
and let your light shine through us  
so that through our actions  
we may be salt for the earth,  
a light in people's sight  
and that we might reach out to you in one another,  
especially those in need.

**Amen.**

**Leader:** And may Jesus Christ bless us all in the name of the Father....

**Sing:** Come to set us free, Bernadette Farrell (Laudate, 81).

*We would invite all those attending the service to come together at the end to share tea/coffee and other refreshments. Given the nature of the service, you may also wish to open up these refreshments to those beyond your normal parish congregation: perhaps inviting local refugees, or asylum seekers, homeless people, isolated elderly people etc.*