

CAFOD is the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development; we work to help the poorest people who are most out of reach. We are part of a global Church network with a local presence in 200 countries and territories.

Please visit
cafod.org.uk/adventcalendar
to find our online Advent calendar, which includes daily reflections, plus ideas and advice for any fundraising your parish might be planning in the lead up to Christmas

ADVENT

Prayer & Reflection 2018

Organiser's note: This service may be freely adapted for your own use in parishes, groups and communities. Hymns are suggestions, so please feel free to replace with those your congregation or community prefers.

Preparation: For the reflection you will need three tables, each with a different prop - a small bowl of honey, some pebbles and a clump of straw.

Leader: Let us stand

Opening hymn: A voice cries out (Laudate, 96)

Leader: I am delighted to see you all here today. This Advent service has been produced by CAFOD. During our time of prayer and reflection we will hear a story about Amina and her family who have fled violence in their country. They have made a difficult journey towards safety in a refugee camp, like so many others.

Pause

When you hear Amina's story, I also invite you to reflect on the journey of Mary and Joseph, as they travelled to Bethlehem. Think about how uncomfortable that road might have been for Mary, as she was with child. How hard must it have been as they searched for somewhere to stay the night?

We now pause for a moment in silent reflection.

Pause

Opening Prayer:

Lord God, our Father, each day we read about, we see, people seeking refuge from war, from poverty, from natural disaster. They are searching for a better life for their families and themselves.

Jesus, we remember that your family also sought refuge in another land.

Now, as we prepare for your arrival in Bethlehem, let us walk alongside our sisters and brothers created in your image, who are forced to flee their homes.

This Advent let us see in them your face and be joyful and welcoming, opening our hearts to those in need.

We ask this through Christ our Lord,

Amen.

Leader: We call to mind all those who are making journeys away from fear and towards a safer place.

Prayer: Lord, open our eyes to see every refugee as a person, made in your image. We are sisters and brothers in one global family. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer

Prayer: Jesus, you promised rest to those who were overburdened. May all refugees and migrants find a place of safety. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer



Amina and her family became refugees after fleeing violence in their home country. Although they have reached a refugee camp, Amina worries about her baby suffering from hunger and cold in their thin tent.

CAFOD is providing practical help to mums like Amina this Christmas - ensuring they have emergency food and emotional support as well as seeds, tools and training to help them begin to rebuild their lives.

Prayer: Lord, help us to see the truth and respond with courage. May we do all we can to open our hearts and our doors to those in need of our support. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer

Prayer: Lord, we pray for all refugees, who are struggling to care for their children and are afraid for the future. We thank you for the generosity of the many poor communities who have welcomed them. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer

Prayer: Lord, we pray for ourselves, that we might be able to face our own fears and anxieties, so that we can make our communities places of welcome for all. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer

Leader: Let us all be seated

Pause

We will now listen to three short readings. In the first reading from the Prophet Isaiah, we hear a call to make the way straight for the coming of the Messiah. In this reading we catch a glimpse of jagged landscapes, with valleys and dangerous cliffs. As we listen, we call to mind the many refugees who face a difficult road ahead. We are invited now to journey with them, in solidarity and hope.

Reading: Isaiah 40: 1-5, 9-11

Leader: (Psalms 23:1 – 4) Let us all read the Psalm together

All: The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. In grassy meadows he lets me lie. By tranquil streams he leads me to restore my spirit. He guides me in paths of saving justice as befits his name. Even were I to walk in a ravine as dark as death I should fear no danger, for you are at my side. Your staff and your crook are there to soothe me.

Pause for reflection

Leader: In the second reading we listen to the story of Amina's family, who have fled violence and found refuge in Kenya.

Reading: I want to talk to you today about a woman called Amina, who was forced to flee her homeland because of unrest and violence. Amina said "We were running away with our children, some were not able to walk. We spent three nights in the bush before we arrived here. It was raining. It rained on us at night in the bush, with the young children. We had no food. It was a very bad experience." Amina was relieved when they had arrived at the refugee camp safely but she is still afraid for her children's future. CAFOD has supported Amina's family with shelter and water, but their future is uncertain. She wants her children to have access to health care and the chance to go to school.

Pause for reflection

Leader: Together we will sing the hymn

Hymn: Be not afraid (Laudate 964)

Leader: In this third reading we will hear how John the Baptist was in the desert and ate a simple meal of locusts and wild honey.

Reading: Mark 1:1-8

Hymn: O Come, O Come Emmanuel (Laudate 112)



The Lampedusa cross was created as a symbol of hope for refugees, from the remains of shipwrecks that washed ashore an Italian island.

Throughout the year, the Catholic community of England and Wales have walked in solidarity with people on the move to share their journey and spread this message of hope.



If you would like to include a collection as part of your Advent service, please visit cafod.org.uk/shop to order CAFOD collection envelopes, free of charge.

CAFOD
Romero House,
55 Westminster Bridge Road,
London SE1 7JB
Tel: 0303 303 3030
E-mail: events@cafod.org.uk
Website: cafod.org.uk/fundraisingkit

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Photos: CAFOD

Leader: You will see three items on the tables near you - some pebbles, honey and straw. I'm going to ask you to visit each table and spend some time in reflection at each one. When you pick up the pebbles, think about what the journey is like for refugees across deserts and rough tracks, not knowing the way, travelling in fear. When you look at and touch the honey think of John the Baptist, who ate locusts and wild honey in the desert. Many refugees are forced to search out food where they can. What food will they eat, where will they find water? When you look at and touch the straw, think about how Mary prepared a bed of straw for her baby. How do we prepare to welcome Christ into our homes? How can we, as a community, reach out to welcome the stranger who comes to us in hope? Let us take a few moments to visit each of the three stations in quiet reflection.

Instrumental music plays as people visit each table

Once everyone has visited each table, the leader continues

Leader: Please be seated

Pause

On his visit to the island of Lampedusa, where so many refugees lost their lives in search for safety, Pope Francis said, "The Lord needs our hearts to show his merciful love towards the least, the outcast, the abandoned, the marginalised." As we prepare for the coming of Christ our Lord, we reflect on the journey his mother Mary made to Bethlehem, a difficult path. And we remember the fear and uncertainty faced by our brothers and sisters who are also in search of shelter and safety. May we open our hearts to all who are fleeing violence and conflict. May we show compassion to all who are afraid for their future.

Pause for reflection

Leader: I now invite you to stand in solidarity with all refugees, our global brothers and sisters.

Pause

With our hands outstretched in welcome, let us all join together in prayer, with the words our Father taught us;

All: Our Father, who art in heaven...

Leader: May we continue to welcome all our brothers and sisters who reach out, asking for refuge. Let us remember them with each journey we take during the season of Advent. As we leave here today, let us consider how we might help. How can we reach out with open arms to welcome those in need? How we can build peace across the globe so that fewer people are forced to make dangerous journeys into the unknown?

Pause

Let us bring our prayer and reflection to a close as we pray these words together.

All: We pray for all those in danger, and for everyone who has been forced to flee from their homes. We commit ourselves to work for peace and to try to build a fairer world for all. We ask for the courage and strength to continue to support those in most need. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Leader: Thank you for attending our Advent prayer and reflection.

If you would like to include a collection, please ask attendees to contribute now.

Leader: If you would like to support CAFOD's work and help reach more families like Amina's, please make a contribution as you leave.

Final Prayer: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn: Make me a channel of your peace (Laudate 898)