



ADVENT PARISH RECONCILIATION SERVICE *BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL*

Opening Hymn

Sign of the Cross & Greeting

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **AMEN.**

The mercy of the Father, the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And with your spirit.

Introduction

We live in a world that is confronted with discord, violence and the threat of terrorism. Many of our brothers and sisters in the world are left homeless and hungry as a result of war and persecution, as a result of the sins of others. Where is our hope?

We live in a world of separation and division, of harsh words and un-kept promises. Many of our brothers and sisters, indeed ourselves, carry the hurt of broken relationships and feel the pain of the wounds of our own sin. Where is our hope?

Together, as a faith community, in this season of Advent we turn our hearts and minds to the merciful Father, the only source of lasting peace, the only source of our hope.

Lighting of Advent Wreath

Reader (*as wreath is lit*):

Moses said “an eye for an eye”

but the Son of the Merciful God said “Blessed are the merciful”.

Thus the light of mercy and forgiveness has come
to shatter the darkness of an unforgiving world.

Let Christ, the Light of lights, hidden from all eternity,
shine at last on your people

and free us from the darkness of our sin, of terrorism and of violence.

Fill our lives with mercy and forgiveness

so we, as people called to be merciful,

can be beacons of your Son’s light, overcoming the darkness of a fallen world.

For only in God’s mercy and forgiveness

can the world come to experience true peace.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Opening Prayer

Gracious God,

we turn to you hoping in your great mercy

that you would grant us your bountiful forgiveness.

We are sorry for all our sins because of the scars they leave on others.

Heal these scars and may your grace and mercy change our hearts

that we may serve you in true freedom and with lasting joy.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading: Isaiah 2:2-5 *The Good News that the world is changing and we need to be ready for that change and we must prepare for the Lord's return.*

Pause

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 103 (The Lord is kind and merciful) / Psalm 85 (Lord, let us see your kindness) / Psalm 25 (To you O Lord / Remember Lord your mercies, Remember them O Lord) (*Preferably sung*)

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-16 (The Sermon on the Mount [the Beatitudes] and the similes of salt and light)

Homily Suggestion

The homilist might mention Isaiah's incredible dream of a more just and peaceful world and invite everyone to become a part of it by reminding them that every just action is an active participation in helping this dream become a reality.

To live the attitudes of the Kingdom of God is to be alight in the midst of the darkness of the world. Receiving in mercy the refugees who have fled from the dark invites us to be the Light of Christ for them. Remember if we practice mercy, then mercy will be granted us: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Reflection

Priest Celebrant: My brothers and sisters, let us remind ourselves how we become people of salt and light in a dark, downtrodden world as we **kneel** before our merciful God.

Reader 1: Lord Jesus Christ, you said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God". (*pause*) Yet we are preoccupied with money and worldly goods and even try to increase them at the expense of justice.

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

Reader 2: Lord Jesus Christ, you said: "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth". (*pause*) Yet we are ruthless with each other, and our world is full of discord and violence.

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

Reader 1: Lord Jesus Christ, you said: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted". (*pause*) Yet we are impatient under our own burdens and, in turn, unconcerned about the burdens of others.

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

Reader 2: Lord Jesus Christ, you said: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be filled. (*pause*) Yet we do not thirst for you, the fountain of all holiness, and are slow to spread your influence in our private lives or in society.

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

Reader 1: Lord Jesus Christ, you said: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy". (*pause*) Yet we are slow to forgive and quick to condemn.

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

Reader 2: Lord Jesus Christ, you said: “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God”. (pause) Yet we are prisoners of our senses and evil desires and dare not raise our eyes to you.

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

Reader 1: Lord Jesus Christ, you said: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God”. (pause) Yet we fail to make peace in ourselves, in our families, in our country, and in our world.

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

Lord Jesus Christ, you said: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice, for the kingdom of God is theirs”. (pause) Yet we prefer to practice injustice rather than suffer for the sake of right; we discriminate against our neighbours and oppress and persecute them.

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Grant us peace.**

Rite of Reconciliation

Examination of Conscience

Priest Celebrant: We come together in this Advent season to support one another in our need for reconciliation and peace.

Let us examine our lives and acknowledge our sins so that we may turn away from sin and return to God’s grace and love.

Do I spend my life caring only for myself?

Do I begrudge the help being given refugees?

Have I been violent in my speech towards others?

Have I undermined others?

How have I used God’s gifts of time, health, talents?

How often am I impatient with others?

Do I return always and try to get my own back?

Do I accept that others do not always agree with me?

Have I refused to apologise?

Do I shrug my shoulders when I see injustice?

Am I at peace with myself, my family, friends, class, co-workers?

General confession of sins

The Priest Celebrant invites the assembly to kneel (if not already doing so) and to pray together, I confess to Almighty God...

The Lord’s Prayer

Priest Celebrant: Assured of God’s mercy and love, we stand and join in prayer to God the Father... Our Father...

Individual Confession and Absolution

Priest Celebrant: I invite my brother priests to take their places.

(During this time music ministers can lead the assembly in reflective music – both instrumental and sung, for example. Taize Music – “Wait for the Lord”; “To you O Lord My soul in stillness waits”; “O Comfort my people” For you O Lord my soul in stillness waits ... as well as the official Jubilee Hymn)

Communal Penance – Jubilee Prayer

This prayer might be included in the participation sheet for the congregation or, where relevant, on a projector screen.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,
and have told us that who
ever sees you sees Him.
Show us your face and we will be saved.
Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money;
the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things;
made Peter weep after his betrayal,
and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.
Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman:
“If you knew the gift of God!”
 You are the visible face of the invisible Father,
 of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy:
 let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.
 You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness
 in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error:
 let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.
Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing,
so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord,
and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor,
proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed,
and restore sight to the blind.
 We ask this through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy,
 you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Priest Celebrant: Gracious God,
your mercy is boundless
and we cannot thank you enough for this great gift you shower on us.
Give us grace to truly appreciate your merciful deeds in our lives
and through the Holy Spirit transform our hearts
into wells of mercy and forgiveness.
Teach us to work together for peace and reconciliation in our lives
that we may come to know the blessings of the merciful.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **AMEN.**

Final Blessing and Dismissal

Priest Celebrant: The Lord be with you. **And also with your spirit.**
May almighty God bless you...
Brothers and sisters, be merciful, just as your heavenly Father is merciful. Go in peace.