

PARISH LITURGY FOR NOVEMBER

PRAYING FOR THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED



Leader's Guide



Living Church
DOWN & CONNOR

This resource has been developed by the Living Church Office as a series of four weekly liturgies for the month of November when we gather our parishioners together to take time to pause, reflect and pray for their deceased relatives and friends. It can be led by a member of the clergy or a lay person who is accustomed to leading liturgies/times of prayer. The liturgy each week should be about 30 minutes long.

A parish may find some of the reflections and prayers useful for their annual Mass for deceased parishioners.

A bulletin notice is available to encourage parishioners to engage in the liturgy each week. An A4 print out leaflet to accompany the programme is also available for parishioners. **The full resource can be downloaded at: derrydiocese.org/november**

The structure for each session includes the following:

- Opening hymn.
- Opening prayer.
- Lighting of Paschal candle & Liturgical action.
- Scripture reading.
- Suggested homily/reflection.
- Prayers and Intercessions.
- Reflection.
- Closing prayers.
- Closing hymn.

Liturgical action

Each week we invite you to light the paschal candle as part of the liturgical action.

Week 1: *Place the lists of all the deceased in the sanctuary. These could be tied with coloured ribbon and placed in a basket. (Lighting of grain of incense.) You could also light the incense burner as a symbol of our prayers rising to God for all our deceased.*

Week 2: *Invite one member from each family to place a small picture or memorial card of their loved one at a designated place in the sanctuary. These could be collected after the liturgy or displayed throughout the 4 weeks of November.*

Week 3: *Provide a basket of candles at the entrance to the church. Invite one member from each family to bring forward their candle to be lit and place it at a designated place in the sanctuary. These should be lit by a taper from the Paschal candle. It might be helpful to have volunteers assist with the lighting of the candles. These could be collected following the liturgy.*

Week 4: *Provide a basket of daffodil bulbs or pack of seeds. Invite a member from each family to pick one from the baskets provided and plant it in a special place.*

Preparation for each week

Volunteers required

Materials required

<p>Week 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music/Choir. • Two Readers. • Volunteer to light the Paschal candle. • Volunteer to present the November dead lists. • Volunteer to light the incense burner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parishioners' leaflet for week 1. • Paschal candle. • Incense and Incense burner. • November dead lists. • List of names of recently deceased to be read out. • Basket & Ribbon.
<p>Week 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music/choir. • Two Readers. • Volunteer to light the Paschal candle. • Two volunteers to receive the pictures presented by each family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parishioners' leaflet for week 2. • Paschal candle. • Table/designated place to set pictures.
<p>Week 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music/Choir. • Two Readers. • Volunteer to light Paschal Candle. • Two volunteers to light the candle from a member of each family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parishioners' leaflet for week 3. • Paschal candle & lighting taper. • Baskets and small candles. • Place a table in the sanctuary area for lit candles.
<p>Week 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music/Choir. • Two Readers. • Volunteer to light Paschal candle. • Two volunteers to distribute daffodil bulbs/pack of seeds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parishioners' leaflet for week 4. • Paschal candle. • Baskets and daffodil bulbs/seed packets.

DOWNLOAD PRAYER SHEETS FROM: derrydiocese.org/november

Text for Weekly Bulletin Notices

Praying for the Faithful Departed during November

Week One

PRAYING FOR THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED - HOPE

CHURCH/DAY/DATE/TIME

November is a time for remembering and praying for our loved ones who have gone before us. It is a time when we are particularly conscious of those in our parish who are grieving and all those families who have lost loved ones in the past year. As we pray for our deceased relatives and friends, we will take time to pause and reflect on the hope God can bring to our lives, especially during times of bereavement. If you have not returned your November dead list, please call into the parish office so that we can include the names of your deceased family members in our parish liturgy.

Week Two

PRAYING FOR THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED - PROMISE

CHURCH/DAY/DATE/TIME

November is a time for remembering and praying for our loved ones who have gone before us. This week, as we continue our journey of remembering our beloved dead, we will reflect on the promise that Jesus is with us during times of sadness and grief. Please bring along a memorial card or small photograph of your loved one which will be included as part of our parish liturgy.

Week Three

PRAYING FOR THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED - COMFORT

CHURCH/DAY/DATE/TIME

November is a time for remembering and praying for our loved ones who have gone before us. Grief and loss can affect us all in different ways. Following the death of Jesus, the apostles huddled in fear in the upper room grieving the loss of their teacher, friend and master. Jesus entered bringing them His comfort and peace. During our liturgy, a member of your family will be invited to light a candle as a visible sign of Christ's presence among us as we offer prayers for our loved ones. Candles will be available in the church on arrival.

Week Four

PRAYING FOR THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED - LOVE

CHURCH/DAY/DATE/TIME

November is a time for remembering and praying for our loved ones who have gone before us. Let us take time to pause and reflect on the peace and love God brings to our lives, especially in times of doubt, uncertainty and grief. As a symbol of love and hope, each family will leave with a bulb/packet of seeds to plant at home as a reminder of how new life can emerge from a long dark winter into a new springtime.

DOWNLOAD THE TEXT ABOVE FOR YOUR PARISH BULLETIN FROM: derrydiocese.org/november

Words of Welcome

(The words of welcome could be read out at the beginning of the liturgy for week 1.)

Welcome to our parish liturgy for the month of November. Each November affords us a time to pause, reflect and remember all those who have died and gone before us into the loving arms of God. This time is also an opportunity to gather as a parish family to pray together and to find comfort in the knowledge that Jesus is with us throughout all our suffering and continues to journey with us.

Grief and loss deeply affects us all and often in different ways. For some of us, it leaves us in the grip of fear and hopelessness, just like the apostles experienced in the days following the death of their beloved teacher, friend and master. They locked themselves away in this fear and hopelessness. However, it was into this turmoil that Jesus appeared, coming through the locked door and bringing with him his peace. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." (John 20:19-20). And so it is for us. Jesus understands our grief. He understands our fear. He understands our hopelessness. He understands each of us and leads us to peace.

Jesus assures us too that God's love is not limited by time or places. Rather, God's love unravels the grip that fear can often have on us and has the power to permeate all areas of our lives. God can reach through. God's love, made visible in Jesus present in our lives, can reach through the locked doors of our hearts and our broken places, into our grief, into our losses. Jesus, in breaking through the locked door to the upper room where the apostles were hiding, and in breaking through into our grief-torn hearts, brings us not only the promise of peace, but the promise that He has conquered death once and for all; death no longer has a hold on us.

Each week we will take time to remember our loved ones. During the liturgy, we will listen to the Word of God, pray together and reflect on the hope, promise, comfort and love that our faith brings to us, especially during times of grief and suffering.

We hope this time together will be a support to everyone as they remember and pray for their loved ones.



Week One: HOPE

This week, we begin our liturgy on the theme of Hope. Hope marks us out as Christians. It is through hope that our faith is sustained, and it is in hope that we are called to share the message of Christ with others.

Opening hymn: *Be Still For the Presence of the Lord.*

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, you are the God of Hope. As we gather together in your name we bring to you all our loved ones and place them into your heavenly care. We believe that through the power of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and resurrection from the dead, death is defeated. As we begin this time of prayer and reflection, let us take a moment to remember that Jesus lived a fully human life. He mourned at the death of his friend Lazarus and He destroyed death to give us the hope of eternal peace in heaven. He is with us now. For us gathered here, who mourn and miss our dear loved ones, we come to the Lord seeking healing and peace. We pray that God our Father will welcome them among the saints in glory. We make this prayer through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Lighting of Paschal candle & Liturgical Action.

Reflective music during liturgical action

Paschal Candle is lit

As we light this candle, we ask that your light shines on all those who have died. We pray that they may be bathed always in the light of your love and grace and come to eternal life with you.

November Dead Lists are carried forward

The names of all our deceased relatives and friends have been placed in the sanctuary.

Grains of incense are placed in the burner.

As the incense burns, let our prayers for our loved ones rise to God. Let us give thanks for their lives in the stillness and quiet of our own hearts. Amen.

Pause for quiet prayer

Let us pray,

Almighty God and Father, You sent your only beloved Son Jesus Christ into the world to free us from the power of sin and death. By His life, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven, Christ opens up for us the way to a new life.

Look kindly on those who we grieve and mourn for today, remembering not their failings but the saving sacrifice offered for them by your Son.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians.

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Reflection on (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

This reflection invites people to consider:

1. We live in a world of instant gratification. We seek solutions in the attractions and distractions of the world.
2. The world can only offer temporary fixes to grief.
3. Our greatest hope lies in the promise of the Resurrection, which tells us that God can take care of any situation.
4. The promises of Christ reach their perfect fulfilment in the Resurrection.
5. When confronted with the challenges and tribulations of life we should hold fast to this hope.

We live in an increasingly secular society and people look for gratification and comfort in what they can find in the material world. Distractions and diversions are at our fingertips by pressing buttons and flicking switches. We can obtain a variety of items to keep us amused by just lifting them off a shelf in a shop or supermarket. Better still, we can obtain them on-line and have them delivered to our door. People speak about "Retail Therapy" to alleviate the problems and pain that life may confront us with. "Shop till you drop" is openly proclaimed to consumers as a way to provide a "feel good" buzz to chase the blues away. Getting away from it all is something that is highly recommended for our well-being and there is no doubt that a relaxing holiday at home or abroad can work wonders for our mental and physical health.

More intricate problems may be handled with the use of medication, but medical professionals are very intent on telling us that these are only temporary measurements and if possible, should not be seen as a long-term solution as they can just further compound a difficult situation when addiction becomes a factor. Most of us live in a part of the world where a myriad of choices keeps us preoccupied or distracted. We can be spoilt for choice! However, there are times when we are well and truly confronted with the stark realities of life and quick fixes are inadequate, insufficient, and often inappropriate.

Bereavement of one kind or another is something that nearly all of us will experience in life and the older we get the more frequent will that experience be repeated. There is no easy solution or remedy to this terrible pain. It can turn our world upside down and leave us wondering how we can get through it. People do get through it but how they get through it can vary a lot.

In today's reading from 1st Thessalonians, St Paul impresses upon Christians the need that we hold fast to the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. The Lord came into this world to proclaim the message that we are loved by God, and he wants nothing more than we be united with Him in eternity when our earthly lives are over. To prove this His Son, Jesus died a terrible death and rose again through the Resurrection.

We are told that we can share in that Resurrection if we live like Christ and believe all his promises. It is in these promises that we must place our hope and the greatest promise of all is that of the Resurrection when the last great enemy of humanity is overcome. In this hope we can realise that the separation we feel through bereavement is not permanent. Through Jesus, we can enjoy eternal union with God and be reunited with those loved ones who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith.

Prayers and Intercessions

Leader: Let us pray as one community united in faith and hope.

We invite you to stand as we say the response together, **You are the God of Hope.**

Response: You are the God of Hope

Lord, we pray for those in our parish who have died in this last year. (*names of those who have died in the parish or had their funerals celebrated could be read out here*). We ask Christ our Lord to call them into His glorious kingdom. **(R)**

We pray for all deceased members of the clergy. We thank God for their generosity in responding to the call to the priesthood and for their faithful witness and service to God's people. We pray they are now sharing in the fullness of Christ's resurrection. **(R)**

Lord, we pray in a special way for grieving parents. During their time of pain, sadness and grief may they be comforted with the words of Jesus, "Let the little children come to me..."(Matthew 19:14) **((R))**

We especially place before you all those who have passed away and have no one to pray for them. **(R)**

Let us bring all these prayers together with our own intentions as we pray in the words our Saviour gave us. **Our Father...**

Reflection:

Adaption of an old Hebrew prayer

For each of us life is like a journey.
Birth is the beginning of this journey
and death is not the end but the destination.
It is a journey which takes us from youth to age,
from innocence to awareness, from ignorance to knowledge,
from foolishness to wisdom, from weakness to strength,
from loneliness to friendship, from pain to compassion,
from defeat to victory, until, looking backward or ahead,
we see that victory does not lie at some point along the way,
but in having made the journey stage by stage.
Having met the people we did on their journey
and having loved those dearest to us,
has made life most worthwhile.

Closing Prayers

Let us pray:

Christ Jesus, You are the Resurrection and the Life,
You understand the pain of loss,
and the grief that seems to take
the air from our lungs.

**You are the Resurrection and the Life,
all our hope is in you.**

Lord Jesus, may we find a way through the darkness
to the light of your love.

**You are the Resurrection and the Life,
all our hope is in you.**

Christ Jesus, you wept at the death of your friend, Lazarus.
May your compassion wipe the tears from our eyes.
May we find comfort in reaching out to others
who feel lost and alone.

**You are the Resurrection and the Life,
all our hope is in you.**

We make this prayer through Christ Jesus, Our Lord. Amen

Eternal rest grant on to them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace.
Amen. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace.
Amen.

(Reminder to parishioners before the closing hymn.) *Next week, we invite you to bring along a small picture or memorial card of your loved one to be placed in the sanctuary as part of our liturgy.*

Closing hymn:

(Marian antiphon can be said or sung)

Mother of Christ, hear thou thy people's cry,
Star of the deep and portal of the sky,
Mother of Him Who thee from nothing made,
Sinking we strive, and call to thee for aid:
O, by that joy which Gabriel brought to thee,
Thou Virgin first and last, let us thy mercy see.

or

Salve Regina

*Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiæ,
vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevæ,
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle.*

*Eia, ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos
misericordes oculos ad nos converte;
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsiliium ostende.
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.*



Week Two: PROMISE

Last week, we reflected on the theme of hope. Today we reflect on Promise, the promise that Jesus continues to be with us on our journey through life, in the joys and the sorrows, in the ups and downs. Jesus continually invites us to keep our gaze fixed on Him. Jesus brings us the good news of hope and salvation and the promise of eternal life to come.

Opening hymn: *Be Thou My Vision*

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, you are the God of Promise. As we gather together in your name inspire us with the confidence to know that you make all things new. You promised your disciples that you have a place prepared for all those who take up the cross and follow you. May we hold on to the promise that you have prepared a place for our loved ones in your heavenly kingdom. We make this prayer through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Lighting of Paschal candle & Liturgical action

Reflective music during liturgical action.

Paschal candle is lit.

As we light this candle, may it be a sign of hope and promise that Jesus, the Light of the World, is present with us today. Lord, we ask for the grace and confidence to place all our trust in you that our loved ones are at peace in your presence.

You are now invited to bring forward a photograph of your loved one.

Images are brought forward to a designated place at the sanctuary.

Presently we cannot see our loved ones face to face, but we pray that they share in the light and love of Christ.

We thank God for the joy they brought to our lives. Amen.

Pause for quiet prayer.

Let us pray:

Almighty God and Father, we place all our loved ones before you today.

May we be consoled by the promise, that through the saving events of Jesus' life, salvation was opened up for the whole of humankind.

Comfort us during our time of grief and sadness and help us to recognise that death is not the end, but a path to eternal life.

May we look with hope and expectation to the joy and beatitude that God offers to each one of us at the end of our earthly pilgrimage.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

John 14:1-7

A reading from St John's Gospel.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

The Word of Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Reflection on (John 14:1-7)

This reflection invites people to consider:

1. Promises are precious. They provide security, comfort, joy, and a future.
2. God's promises are found in the covenant he made with His People. He loves us and guides us. "We are his people, the sheep of his flock."
3. A covenant is not just a contractual promise. It is much more intimate. It is a caring bond that guarantees the welfare of those who enter into it.
4. We are told that God will never desert us. He tells us, "Don't be afraid."
5. There are times when this can be a "big ask". Fear is the opposite of faith.
6. Jesus promises to take us through fear and pain to peace and eternal joy.

Life's journey is difficult and it is prayer that helps us to navigate the struggles and trials. One of the shortest prayers we make when we are asking for the intercession of our Blessed Mother is "Pray for us, Oh Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ." This short intercessory prayer is powerful despite its brevity. It is asking Mary's help as we carry out our discipleship in the name of her Son. It implies that we have a responsibility to live out our baptismal promises to become reflections of Jesus. This will lead us to receive the benefits of those efforts by coming into the rewards that Jesus has promised us.

We can be rewarded by an increased intimacy with the Lord that will sustain through the trials and tribulations of life but, as we know, the greatest promise of all is that of the Resurrection. It is through striving to be reflections of Jesus that we fulfil our potential. We are made in the image and likeness of God and that gives humanity an inbuilt beauty, but it is marred by sin, and our fallen nature can prevent us from reaching our potential. The very word "potential" implies that we look forward to a bright future and for us that is eternal union with God by sharing in the Resurrection of his Son and a reunion with our beloved Faithful Departed.

The passage of Scripture that we hear this week is all about the promises of Christ. The Lord seeks first to reassure us. He says, "let not your hearts be troubled." In other words, do not be afraid. This is a recurring theme all the way through Sacred Scripture. God's words "Don't be afraid", shows us that he is aware of our limitations, our doubts and, most of all our fears. It is often said that the opposite of faith is disbelief. This is true to some extent, but it would probably be more accurate to say that it is fear.

Fear can paralyse us and render us helpless when we need to be strong and trusting. That is why the next words of Jesus are "Trust in God still and trust in me." We are called to trust Jesus because he has made promises to us that tells us that there is a place for each one of us in His Father's house. He would not have told us if this was not the case.

In his book "A Grief Observed" written by C.S. Lewis after the death of his wife, Joy Gresham, he starts with the words "Nobody ever told me that grief was so much like being afraid." He recognises that grief shakes us to the very core of our being. The world becomes a very unsafe place and life a very uncertain thing. Faith can be shattered. Promises can seem distant. Lewis goes on to speak of how, although he was broken by his loss, he continued his journey of faith sustained by the promise of the Resurrection. This is a reminder that when we say another short prayer, "Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and may perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace." will be heard and acted upon. Jesus has promised us just that.

Prayers and Intercessions

Leader: Let us pray as one community united in the hope and promise that our deceased family members share in the eternal life of God.

We invite you to stand as we say the response together, **You are the God of Promise.**

Response: You are the God of Promise

Jesus, you are the Way, the Truth and the Life. Guide us in all that we say and do so that our actions reflect your love, joy and tenderness. **(R)**

When our hearts are troubled, comfort us with your healing love and mercy. **(R)**

Guide us on the path that you have traced out for us and let us see Christ in those we encounter on the way. **(R)**

During the times in our lives when we turn away from you, let us experience the power of your forgiveness, healing and peace. **(R)**

Help us to see the opportunities to spread the message of your Divine Mercy to others, especially those who experience hurt, rejection and hopelessness. **(R)**

May we experience the kingdom of God in our hearts and place before you in confidence our loved ones who have passed away as, together, we look forward to the beauty and glory prepared for those who follow Christ. **(R)**

Let us bring all these prayers together with our own intentions as we pray in the words our Saviour gave us.
Our Father...

Reflection:

Questions

With utter finality,
We ask, how will we cope?
Swept of all vitality,
We ask, where is our hope?

How can it be in death,
To have the promise of new life?
A body devoid of breath,
While we remain in grief.

In loss what have we to gain,
and where shall comfort be found?
For in this moment all we know is pain,
We wail without a sound.

The answer soon becomes made clear,
In the heart that raises its cries,
We did not lose,
for you are still here,
and our love shall never die.

So with hope in his promise, in his comforting love,
We entrust them to you, God here and above

Closing Prayers

Let us pray:

God, thank you for the people in our lives who we are remembering in a special way during the month of November.

We thank you for being a compassionate God who walks with us in our dark moments of grief and loneliness.

We are thankful for all who continue to love and support us through our grief.

We praise and thank you, O Lord.

Lord, continue to be a light for us, giving us hope, direction and courage.

May we now live our lives treasuring the memories of those special people we have known and loved and help us to bring light and hope to others.

We praise and thank you, O Lord.

We make this prayer through Christ Jesus, Our Lord. Amen

Eternal rest grant on to them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Closing hymn:

(Marian antiphon can be said or sung)

*Mother of Christ, hear thou thy people's cry,
Star of the deep and portal of the sky,
Mother of Him Who thee from nothing made,
Sinking we strive, and call to thee for aid:
O, by that joy which Gabriel brought to thee,
Thou Virgin first and last, let us thy mercy see.*

or

Salve Regina

*Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiæ,
vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevæ,
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle.*

*Eia, ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos
misericordes oculos ad nos converte;
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.*



SESSION 3: COMFORT

This week, we reflect on the theme of comfort. There are times in all of our lives when we need to experience comfort; to be comforted and to bring comfort to others. Jesus sought out those on the margins of society to bring them comfort. May we all have a heart like Christ's and recognise those who need comforted within our parish family and wider communities.

Opening hymn: *Be Not Afraid*

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, you are the God of Comfort. As we gather together in your name let us hold on to the hope and promise that you console and comfort us by your presence. Through your Son Jesus Christ, you comforted the afflicted, the suffering, the neglected and the bereaved. You brought healing, mercy, forgiveness and hope to their lives. Comfort us now and in our prayer today help us to remember the light that our loved ones brought to our lives, and the love and legacy that they left behind. We make this prayer through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Lighting of Paschal candle & Liturgical Action

Reflective music during liturgical action

Paschal candle is lit

Lord Jesus, as we light this candle let it be a sign of your love and presence. Let the light of your love shine brightly in our lives.

One member from each family comes forward to light their candle.

Lord Jesus, each candle placed before you in the sanctuary represents each family present today. May it be a visible sign of our prayer for our loved ones. May their soul shine in your presence and dispel any darkness, pain and suffering we are feeling from their loss.

Pause for quiet prayer

Let us pray:

Almighty God, let the light of this candle no matter how small, be a reminder that Christ dispels the darkness. The same is true of our prayers. No matter how small, no matter how inadequate words are, it is a comfort to know that we can unite our prayers with the sacrifice of Jesus.

May our prayers in union with God and all the saints in glory help bring those who have died to the joy of heaven. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

(pause)

Matthew 11:25-30

A reading from St Matthew's Gospel.

At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

The Word of Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Reflection on (Matthew 11:25-30)

This reflection invites people to consider:

1. Comfort is an essential commodity in our lives. We avail of it from our earliest days. E.g., A mother or father's love.
2. Jesus' very presence in the world was an expression of God's love and comfort.
3. We place our faith in the comforting words of scripture in which God seeks to reassure us in times of sadness and loss.
4. Jesus didn't just bring physical comfort, but also spiritual comfort. Bring to mind his words, "Your sins are forgiven you."
5. Jesus says "Peace be with you. My peace I give you. My peace I leave with you." May we always express faith in those words and work to bring it to others.

We all need comfort all the way through our lives. As babies we are rocked in our mother's arms and our tiny backs are patted to further soothe us. A cut knee is tended. As the years go on comfort is something that we still receive and give. We need a shoulder to cry on. It is a vital element in the expression of our love and concern. In giving and receiving comfort we show our beautiful humanity and the spark of the Divine that dwells within each one of us. We can be reflections of the Incarnation when the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, is a manifestation of God's love for us. He came to bring us comfort and the assurance that His love has control over all he has created.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus offers us comfort and reassurance. In chapter 11:28, He tells us to come to him when we labour or feel over-burdened. He also says that we need to learn from him and be assured that in him we will find gentleness and humility. He accepts us and opens his arms to us. He knows our pain and anxiety and wants to take us through it. Again, all this requires trust. It requires faith that God will not let go of us and those we love. His love finds a way to help us if we let Him.

In life we can be brought to our knees, not in prayer but in pain. Jesus asks us to turn that pain into prayer by coming to him when things become too much, and we are wondering what to do and where to go. When we are confronted by death, whether it be through the death of a loved one or an awareness of our own mortality, we can feel that someone has flicked a switch and left us in darkness. The Apostles were in darkness when the Lord was crucified. Their world crumbled and they locked themselves away and lived in great fear. When Jesus rose from the dead and stood among them his first words were "Peace be with you." His first words to his disciples and friends were words of comfort. Only after giving them comfort, did he speak further. He healed them and through the Holy Spirit they became great witnesses to the promises of Jesus and the proclaimers of the great hope of the Resurrection from the dead.

The only thing that we can bring to God and truly call our own is our brokenness. In the world we live in the broken can be discarded but God gathers us to Himself and puts us back together again. We may still bear the marks of being broken but these can often serve to keep us humble and gentle and transform us into people who will be ready and willing to bring comfort to those who labour and are overburdened.

Prayers and Intercessions

Leader: Let us pray in thanksgiving to God for our parish community and those who have helped bring comfort to us during our time of grief by their love, kindness and support.

We invite you to stand as we say the response together, **Comfort us, O Lord.**

Response: Comfort us, O Lord.

We pray for all those who work in health and palliative care, those who work in funeral ministry and our clergy. We pray that the Holy Spirit will fill them with His compassion and wisdom as they minister to the dying and bereaved. **(R)**

We pray for those particular people who we have come to remember and pray for today. We ask our loving Father to listen to our prayer and in his mercy give them peace. **(R)**

We pray for us gathered here who continue to grieve the loss of our friends and family. We ask Jesus, who mourned the death of his friend Lazarus, to give us the strength and courage we need to continue in our daily lives. **(R)**

We pray for those who feel they grieve alone, that they will experience the presence and peace of Christ who felt the pain of abandonment on the cross. **(R)**

We pray for those who have died and have no one to mourn and pray for them. **(R)**

Let us bring all these prayers together with our own intentions as we pray in the words our Saviour gave us.
Our Father...

Reflection:

You can shed tears that they have gone,
or you can smile because they have lived.
You can close your eyes and pray that they will come back,
or you can open your eyes and see all they have left.
Your heart can be empty because you can't see them,
or you can be full of the love you shared.
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday,
or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.
You can remember only that they have gone,
or you can cherish their memory and let it live on.
You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back.
Or you can do what they would want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on.

Closing Prayers

Let us pray:

May we always recognise the power of love in our lives.
May we always remember that we are never alone,
that we are always connected to others past and present
with the eternal rhythm of the God of the universe.

You are the God of light and hope.

May we realise that each of our lives are unique,
and although we have lost some of our loved ones,
we still have our own role to play in life today and into the future.
May we learn to see ourselves with the same delight,
pride and expectations, with which God looks at us at every moment.

You are the God of light and hope.

God, we believe in your tender love for us.
Give comfort and strength to those who mourn.
Keep us all in your care and renew our lives in a spirit of trust.

You are the God of light and hope.

We make this prayer through Christ Jesus, Our Lord. Amen.

Eternal rest grant on to them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace.
Amen. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace.
Amen.

Closing hymn:

(Marian antiphon can be said or sung)

Mother of Christ, hear thou thy people's cry,
Star of the deep and portal of the sky,
Mother of Him Who thee from nothing made,
Sinking we strive, and call to thee for aid:
O, by that joy which Gabriel brought to thee,
Thou Virgin first and last, let us thy mercy see.

or

Salve Regina

*Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiæ,
vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevæ,
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle.*

*Eia, ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos
misericordes oculos ad nos converte;
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.*



Session Four: LOVE

This week, in our final liturgy, we will reflect on the theme of love. The whole of Scripture is often described as a love story between God and us, His children. In our readings today, we are reminded that God, who is love, has made us His children through Christ. We are called to share the power of God's love with others.

Opening hymn - Here I am Lord

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, you are the God of Love. It is through the power of your love and grace that we are renewed and transformed. May we be inspired by the example of your Son, Jesus, whose central message was, 'to love one another as I have loved you.' (John 13:34-35). May the transforming power of your love be visible in our relationships with others, in the experiences that we share, in our intentions for the future, and ultimately in our relationship with you. We make this prayer through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Lighting of Paschal candle & Liturgical action

Reflective music during liturgical action.

Paschal candle is lit.

As we light this candle, we are reminded that Christ is the light and life of the world. Through our Baptism, we have received the light of Christ. We are called to share this light with others. In Scripture, light is often associated with life. It is in Christ that we receive a new life of grace, nurtured and nourished through the sacraments, and one which grows, develops and matures over time.

Pope Francis teaches us that, "The cycle of life and the rhythm of the seasons are created by God to teach us that the passing of time is not a threat, it is a promise. Our existence on earth is the time of initiation of life; it **is** life, but one that leads you to a fuller life, a life which finds fulfilment only in God, [who is love]."

You are invited to come forward to pick a daffodil bulb/pack of seeds in the basket provided and to plant it in a special place.

Parishioners come forward to receive a daffodil bulb or pack of seeds.

Let this bulb be a symbol of love and hope and remind us of how new life can emerge from a long, dark winter into the brightness of Springtime.

Pause for quiet prayer

Let us pray:

Almighty God, out of love you sent your only Son Jesus into the world to free us from our sins. As we continue on our journey, let us always be reminded that no matter how difficult the road we travel you are there with us by our side. Where darkness can sometimes invade our peace, may the light of your love and grace shine brightly. Your love and mercy knows no bounds, even during times of sin and temptation. We pray that those who have gone before us have entered their eternal reward as sons and daughters of the Living God. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

1 John 3:1-3

A reading from the first letter of St John.

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Week 4 - Reflection on (1 John 3:1-3)

This reflection invites people to consider:

1. Much of Scripture is written in Greek, a very expressive language. E.g. four definitions for love.
2. Love is central to the Christian message.
3. The greatest expression of God's love is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
4. When we live by the Gospel of Jesus we will share in the Resurrection of Jesus.

It is good to note that a substantial part of scripture is written in Greek. This is particularly the case in regard to the New Testament. Of course, Greek was the common language of the time and it was crucial in how the Gospels were proclaimed and accepted in the early days of the Church. It could possibly be argued that God knew exactly what he was doing by making this happen. Greek is not an easy language to learn but it is also a very expressive language. The faith of many bible scholars has been enriched when they study the scriptures and find new depths and definitions to the Greek translation which really enhances the message of how much God really loves us. One example is the very word "Love" itself. The Greeks have four words for that word and they cover the different aspects of how human beings experience love from *Philia* - Friendship to *Eros* - Romance to *Divine Love* - *Agape*, and *Storge* - Affection. All of these are God's gift to us. They are what makes life beautiful. They are also the means by which we become reflections of his Son, Jesus.

Love is the centre of the Christian message. Jesus tells us himself that, "God so loved the world that he sent his only Son so that the world may be saved." (John 3:16). We are a product of God's love. We are made in his image and likeness and Jesus came into this world to fulfil our potential as children of God and enjoy eternal life through union with Him. Jesus told us that this would be achieved through the Resurrection. He is the first-born from the dead and where he has gone we hope to follow. He is the way, the truth and the life and we come to the Father through Him.

The message is clear and even repetitive. Jesus did not just come to teach us a certain philosophy to ensure that we live a good life. To live as a Christian demands that we live a good life, but there is also a purpose and aim to doing this. First, we will make the world a better place by building up the kingdom of God in the world, but the final objective of living as reflections of Christ is that we will come to that eternal union that he promises us. Love is the underlying motivation, reason, and method for doing this.

All of Holy Scripture is about God's love for us and his plan of salvation for us. The first letter of St John assures us that the Father and the Son are working together to bring us through death to redemption. John writes of "...our joy being complete." That will happen through the Resurrection where we and those who have gone before us will join in the joy of the eternal praise in heaven.

Prayers and Intercessions

Leader: Let us pray in thanksgiving for the hope, promise, comfort and love that God brings to each of us within our parish family. Let the light of God's love shine brightly, so that all who see and experience it will be filled with joy and happiness even during their darkest moments.

We invite you to stand as we say the response together, **Love me, O Lord.**

Response: Love me, O Lord.

Come to us, O God, when the night surrounds us. **(R)**
Come to us in the night of disappointment. **(R)**
Come to us in the night of guilt.**(R)**
Come to us in the night of fear.**(R)**
Come to us in the night of hatred.**(R)**
Come to us in the night of loneliness.**(R)**
Come to us in the night lost love.**(R)**
Come to us in the night of anxiety.**(R)**
Come to us in the night of pain.**(R)**
Come to us in the night of questioning.**(R)**
Come to us in the night of rejection.**(R)**
Come to us in the night of broken relationships.**(R)**
Come to us in the night of despair.**(R)**
Come to us in the night of hopelessness.**(R)**
Come to us in the night of death and stay with me, my God in every night. **(R)**
We make this prayer through Christ Jesus, Our Lord. Amen

Let us bring all these prayers together with our own intentions as we pray in the words our Saviour gave us. **Our Father...**

Reflection:

Death is nothing at all,
It does not count,
I have only slipped away into the next room.
Nothing has happened.
Everything remains exactly as it was.
I am I, and you are you,
and the old life that we lived so fondly together is untouched, unchanged.
Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.
Call me by the old familiar name,
Speak of me in the easy way which you always used.
Put no difference into your tone,
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.
Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes that we enjoyed together,
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.
Let my name be ever the household word that it always was.
Let it be spoken without an effort, without the ghost of a shadow upon it.
Life means all that it ever meant,
It is the same as it ever was.
There is absolute and unbroken continuity.
What is this death but a negligible accident?
Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?
I am but waiting for you, for an interval,
somewhere very near,
just round the corner.
All is well.

By Henry Scott-Holland (1847-1918)

Closing Prayers

Let us pray:

Lord, you are gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in mercy.
You are good to all,
and your compassion is over all that you have made.
You uphold all who fall, and raise up all who are bowed down.

Lord, you are gracious and merciful.

The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.
You open your hand, you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

Lord, you are gracious and merciful.

You come to us in our time of need. You lift us up with your word.
May your love endure forever and your compassion know no bounds.

Lord, you are gracious and merciful.

(Adapted from the You Cat Youth Prayer Book)

We make this prayer through Christ Jesus, Our Lord. Amen

Eternal rest grant on to them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace.
Amen. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace.
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Closing hymn:

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Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
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O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.*



The Scripture readings included in this program have been taken from the Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition translation.

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