



CHRISTMASTIDE

December 2021 to January 2022



In the weeks coming up to Christmas, and especially in the wake of the Glasgow COP26 conference, concerns about the environment and climate change have been widely reported. Everyone has at some stage spent time reflecting on the situation depicted by the media. Some have been incredulous; others saddened and despairing; still others galvanised into action.

*As a Christian, for whom life and prayer are inseparable ...
Where do I stand?
What can I do in practical terms?*

This year, St Beuno's Outreach gives you the opportunity to consider these questions as you pray throughout the Christmas period, pondering both with the traditional Scriptural texts and some words from the encyclical letter of Pope Francis: *Laudato si'* ('On care for our common home': 2015). As we step into the New Year, you may like to reflect more deeply on what we can each do in response to these words:

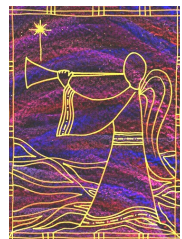
'I would like to ask ... all men and women of goodwill:
Let us be "protectors" of creation,
protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature,
protectors of one another and of the environment.'

Pope Francis, 19 March 2013

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*St Beuno's Outreach
in the Diocese of Wrexham, UK
wishes you a Blessed Christmas and
a Happy New Year.*





Christmas Day: 25 December

Gospel Luke 2: 1–14

Now at this time Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken, and everyone went to their own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn.

In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turns to watch their flocks during the night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified, but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing: '*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace to all who enjoy his favour.*'

When I can find a moment for myself, I may want to light a candle, take a few deep breaths and relish the quiet within me and hopefully around me.

I read the account of these familiar events and ponder.

What was it really like for Joseph, Mary, the new born baby, the shepherds? I try and imagine the countryside, the surroundings, the weather. Perhaps I can see the litter scattered by the crowds travelling to Bethlehem for the census.

I talk to the people I meet. What do I say to them?

Maybe I then feel like focusing on the shepherds and their flocks.

What do they do to protect their environment?

When the glory of the Lord shines around them – and me – what is my overwhelming feeling? Joy ... gratitude ... fear ... or ...?

I tell the Lord what is in my heart and slowly go back to my usual activities on this Christmas Day.

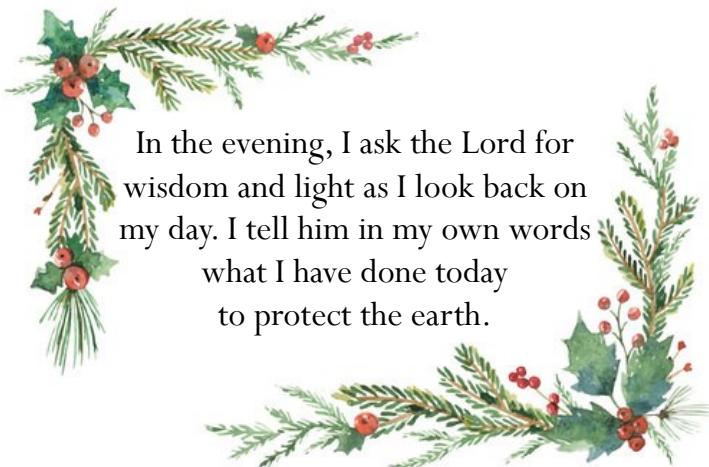
‘Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations.’

Laudato si’ §67

What can I do today to protect the earth?

For example:

- I can buy a real Christmas tree.
- I can use recycled wrapping paper.
- I can make or sew my own Christmas decorations.
- I can try to re-use three different items I bought or was given for Christmas.



In the evening, I ask the Lord for wisdom and light as I look back on my day. I tell him in my own words what I have done today to protect the earth.



Feast of the Holy Family: 26 December

Second Reading Colossians 3: 12–17

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful.

Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Taking a few deep breaths, I settle myself in the place where I will pray.
I sit for a while in silence and simply let God love me – just as I am.

When I am ready, I slowly begin to read the text. I notice where my attention is drawn, and may want to repeat those words or phrases – noticing the feelings they stir within me. Perhaps I ask myself how well I '*wear the clothes*' St Paul describes.

What do others see in me that reflects the peace of Christ?

Am I always thankful that I am called as part of one body?

How much do my choices as a consumer indicate the love I have for God's creation?

On this feast of the Holy Family, my prayer might now naturally turn to my own family. Perhaps I think of those family members who particularly display *compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness*?

Maybe I picture myself bringing them before the Lord to receive his blessing.

I bring before him too, those to whom I may not be as close, for whatever reason.

What do I want to ask of him for each of them?

Perhaps I am also drawn to pray for those who have no close family, or who have been rejected by their own. Entrusting them to the Lord, I ask him to heal the hurt in those families separated by conflict, war, forced migration and persecution.

I end my prayer giving thanks to God for the love he has lavished on me.

‘A change in lifestyle could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power. This is what consumer movements accomplish by boycotting certain products ... show[ing] us the great need for a sense of social responsibility on the part of consumers.’

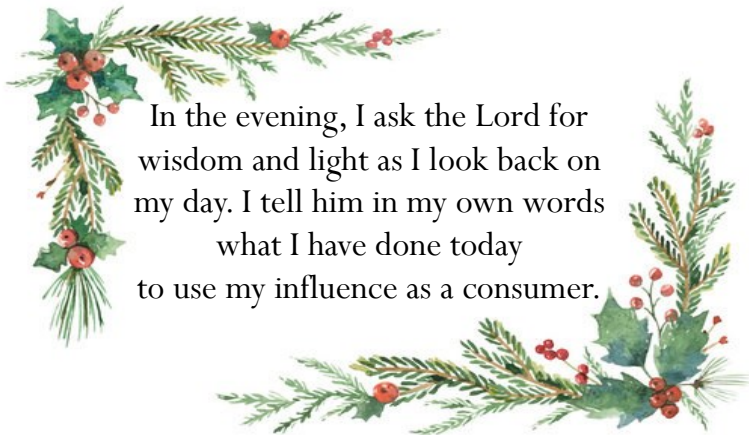
Laudato si’ §206

Purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act.

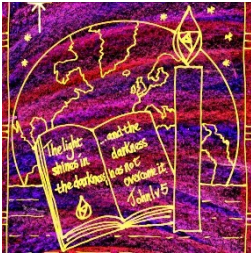
(Pope Benedict XVI)

What can I do today to use my influence as a consumer?

- I can reduce the amount of new clothing I buy and check they are made from Fair Trade sources.
- I can make sure that my energy provider is using as much power generated from renewable sources as possible.
- I can increase the number of days each week when I make meat-free meals.
- I can give more of my time to others rather than buying them presents they do not need.



In the evening, I ask the Lord for wisdom and light as I look back on my day. I tell him in my own words what I have done today to use my influence as a consumer.



Second Sunday after Christmas: 2 January

Second Reading Ephesians 1: 3–6, 15–18

Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ. Before the world was made, he chose us, chose us in Christ, to be holy and spotless, and to live through love in his presence, determining that we should become his adopted children through Jesus Christ for his own kind purposes, to make us praise the glory of his grace, his free gift to us in the Beloved.

That will explain why I, having once heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus, and the love that you show towards all the saints, have never failed to remember you in my prayers and to thank God for you. May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit.

After coming to quiet in mind and body in the way which works best for me, I read St Paul's words, perhaps pausing after each sentence, attentive to the way they touch me. I do not judge.

In what ways does this text relate to my life today, to the people I love, to the issues which concern me?

How does the knowledge that I have been chosen and adopted as God's child affect the way I lead my life?

How do I feel: full of gratitude ... awe ... indifference ... or ...?

Maybe I have a sense of responsibility for the world I live in. I may want to beg for the *wisdom and perception* of what I can do to protect the Lord's creation: the earth and its people.

I ponder ... then I tell the Lord about the small practical steps I could take to help future generations inherit creation's rich glories.

I may feel overwhelmed and discouraged by the task at hand.

Perhaps, then, like Paul, I can ask the Lord to *enlighten the eyes of [my] mind* so that I can answer his call when I hear the cry of the earth and of the poor.

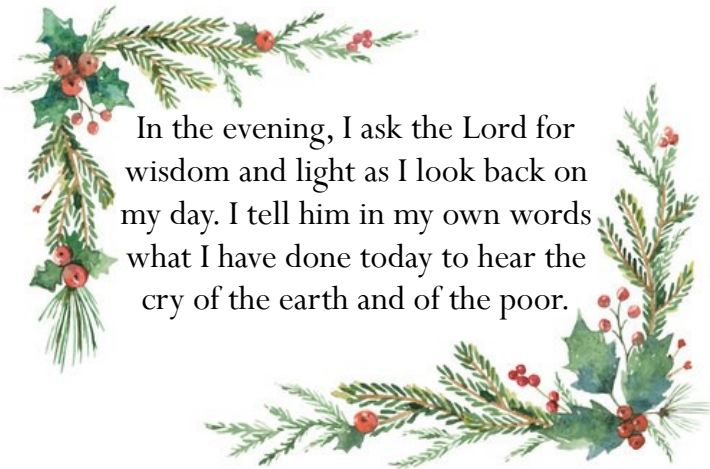
In time, I conclude my prayer with my own words of gratitude.

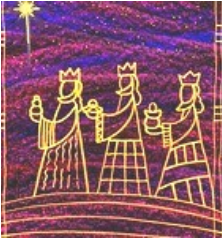
‘We have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.’

Laudato si’ §49

What can I do today to hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor?

- I can perhaps use public transport or walk or cycle rather than take my car.
- Weather permitting, I can use a clothes line or a clothes rack rather than the tumble dryer to dry my clothes.
- I can look where the food I buy comes from and try to buy food produced locally.
- I can give food to my local food bank.





The Epiphany of the Lord: 6 January

Gospel Matthew 2: 1–12 (abridged)

After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod, some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east. Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward, and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Settling down to pray today, I might want to revisit the blessings this season has brought me. Perhaps there have been challenging times too?

I thank the Lord for his presence beside me throughout.

When I am ready, I read the Gospel slowly, a couple of times.

If it helps, I may want to put myself in the place where the star halted, and watch and listen as the scene unfolds.

What do I notice as the wise men offer their gifts to the infant Jesus? ...

gold for the king; frankincense for the Son of God; and myrrh foretelling the sacrifice he will make for our salvation. As the wise men kneel before him, I make my own homage in whatever way I am drawn.

I look back on my prayer with this booklet over the past twelve days, and reflect again on my actions to protect creation.

I may already be playing my part in caring for God's world in simple ways, but are there further challenges I can respond to? Perhaps I can see these as my gifts to the Lord in gratitude for his love for me and for the world.

In time, I gently bring my prayer to a close, asking the Lord's blessings for the year ahead, and for an ever deeper awareness of his life in me.

‘Many things have to change course,
but it is we human beings above all who need to change.’

Laudato si' §202

