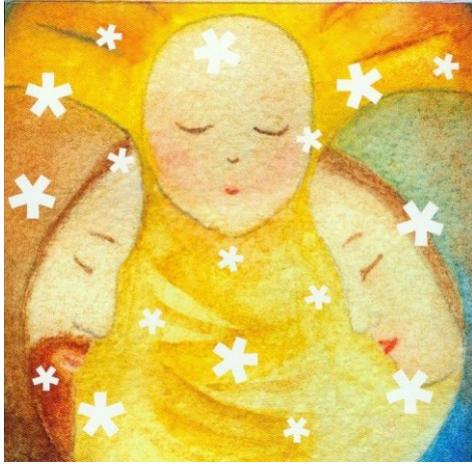


Pastoral Prayer on Christmas Eve



We praise you, O loving God,
who gave your very self in human
form,
your majesty born into our poverty,
your love lying in an out-house.
We thank you that, amidst Bethlehem's
noisy rush,
we find in you
a focus for our activity,
a hope for you humanity,
a love for all eternity.

But we confess that
Christ's birth has gone unnoticed.
Now, as then, we have not made room
in our day to day lives.
Now, as then, we have mislaid
your message of reconciling love.
Now, as then, we have ignored
the stillness of your presence.

Gift-giving God, forgive us.
Free us from our self-centeredness.
Help us to accept your love so freely
given
that we may live
as you have called us to live.

We are called to be the light of the
world.
We bring from our homes and
countries, cultures and traditions

different memories and images of light.
Let us remember and celebrate light.

We pray for those in the darkness of
waiting,
not knowing what is to come,
of staying ready and quiet and attentive.

We pray for those in the darkness of
staying silent,
for the terror of having nothing to say,
and for the greater terror of needing to
say nothing.

We pray for those in the darkness of
loving,
in which it is safe to surrender,
to let go our self-protection and to stop
holding back our desire.

We pray for those in the darkness of
choosing,
when you give us the moment to speak
and act and change,
when we cannot know what we have set
in motion,
but we still have to take the risk.

We pray for the darkness of hoping in a
world which longs for you.
For the struggle and the labouring of all
creation,
for wholeness and justice and freedom.

Darkness and light are both alike to
you.
We thank you for this, God,
and ask you to open our eyes
that we walk in the light of your love
and share your light and your love with
others.
And we start when we pray: Our
Father...
Amen.