

# Domestic Rituals

## Blessings and Prayers on Life's Journey

*A resource for Families compiled by the Liturgical Commission, Diocese of Toowoomba.*

In the past it was understood that only ordained priests could pray a blessing upon a person or thing. With the renewal of the Second Vatican Council the Church reclaimed the right of lay persons to pray blessings within their household settings. Below is a sample list of suggestions for the use of blessings within a family or small community setting.

The following blessings are taken or adapted from;

*A Book of Blessings*, Canadian Conference of Bishops, Ottawa Canada, © 1981.

*Book of Blessings*, Catholic Book Publishing Co. New York, © 1989.

*Catholic Household Blessing and Prayers*, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington DC, © 1989.

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# *Celebrating Life*

## Celebrating Birthdays

*In the week of a person's birthday, set up a small display of photographs of their life, for example, the first day of school, a wedding photo. Before their birthday, place small strips of paper in a bowl and encourage everyone to write something that they admire about or are thankful for relating to the person.*

*On the day of the birthday, incorporate these pieces of paper in a birthday card. Some of these affirmations could be said or read during the blessing. Say the following at a meal or a suitable time:*

**Leader:** (...Name...),  
We honour and celebrate your life today  
We want to thank God for the gift you are to us  
And for all the special things you bring to our family.

*Some of these could be shared*

God of life,  
we celebrate (...Name...) on his/her birthday  
May he/her have a long, happy and friend-filled life.  
As the candles on this cake burn we pray  
that your life will on fire with happiness, gratitude and life  
and that it will burn brightly among us for many years to come.  
We give thanks for the gift of (..Name...)’s life today and every day. Amen.

OR

God of all life  
you gave life to each one of us  
and you hold our life gently in your hands.  
You know each of us by name.  
We ask your blessing on (...Name...) whose birthday we celebrate today.  
Give him/her happiness and health, contentment and peace.  
May his/her friends be many, and her enemies few.  
Grant him/her many successes in life and few disappointments  
May he/she know the love, acceptance, forgiveness and challenge  
of parents and family who love her, and care for her  
today and every day. Amen

## Blessings for Children

### **A Prayer for parents**

God who created all life  
and believed that it was all very good,  
continue to create in us  
new dreams, new visions, new hopes, and new happiness  
so that this child born to us (or about to be born to us)  
will be surrounded by love, peace and security all his/her days  
and grow into a mature person of goodness and integrity.  
We ask this in trust and in faith, today and every day. Amen.

### **Blessing Prayers for our Children**

*These prayers are meant to be used singly*

May God bless your eyes that you will see clearly with vision and insight;  
bless your mouth that your words will be truthful, kind and empowering;  
bless your ears that you will hear what is right and good;  
bless your heart that you will love openly and with passion;  
bless your hands that you will reach out to help those in need;  
bless your feet that you will find your own path in life  
and walk it with faith, honesty and hope. Amen.

May the deep peace of the running waves refresh you  
the peace of the flowing air surround you  
the peace of the quiet earth support you  
the peace of the shining stars enlighten you  
and the peace of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, surround you. Amen.

May the God of love bless you  
with the love of family and friends  
and may every person you meet in life  
young or old; near or far;  
known to us or unknown;  
living, departed or yet to be born;  
treat you with love, kindness and respect. Amen.

(Adapted from the Sakyamuni Buddha)

We give you thanks, creator and sustainer of life  
for the life of this child.  
We thank you for a safe delivery  
and for the privilege of parenthood.

As we thank you for the gift of this child  
we ask for your blessing.  
Help us to be trustworthy and wise parents,  
patient and understanding,  
forgiving and trusting.  
May this child always know our love  
and grow up secure and happy.  
May he/she grow to love you and to trust in you  
for you are our God, today and every day, forever and ever. Amen.

We are a family.  
For one another we are love and trial; strength and trouble;  
we fight and forgive; we are one but still individuals  
Together and apart, our love binds us together with ties  
that can never be broken.

God, Creator, Saviour and ever present Spirit  
bless our family as we come together today/tonight.  
Help us to deepen the love that binds us together  
and to support one another.  
Form us into people who are kind and thoughtful; honest and fair;  
help us to be tolerant and forgiving; good humoured and peaceful.  
May our home never be a place where anger,  
violence or criticism finds a home  
But let it be a place of peace, security and love, now and forever. Amen

In good times and in bad,  
in sickness and in health,  
we belong to you, God ever faithful.  
By morning and by night  
may your name be on our lips  
so may kindness, patience be ever among us,  
a hunger for justice  
and songs of thankfulness in all we do.  
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

(Adapted from the Household Book of Blessings)

## Wedding Anniversary

(Adapted from the Book of Blessings of the Roman Ritual)

*This ritual is intended to be used within the home or with a group of people gathered in a social setting to celebrate the anniversary with the married couple. It is not intended to be used within a church or during the celebration of the Eucharist.*

### WORDS OF WELCOME

#### RECALLING AND RENEWING THE MARRIAGE VOWS - EXAMPLE A

*Each of the partners takes the other partners hand and places a finger on the wedding band if one is worn they say together - in these of similar words.*

**Couple/s:** Remembering the vows that we made on our wedding day (...date...) years ago, I affirm my intention to remain faithful to those vows, and before you and our family and friends I wish to renew my commitment to be your faithful partner for as long as we both shall live.

**Scripture:** *one of these readings or another may be read.*

My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.  
(Song of Songs: 2:10-13)

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of one's house, it would be utterly scorned.  
(Song of Songs 8:6-7)

#### BLESSING:

**Relative:** Let us pray for (...Name...) and (...Name...) as we celebrate with them the (...number...) anniversary of their marriage.

*Pause for silent prayer*

God of all goodness, we thank you for bringing (...Name...) and (...Name...) to this day, and we rejoice that they have weathered the storms and difficulties that face all married couples.  
We thank you for the way that they have lived out the promises they made so many years ago.

In the presence of the community they have declared their commitment to each other.  
We ask that you bless each of them today and over the coming years.

*Pause before final blessing*

May the God of all kindness be with you in your working and in your resting;  
in your sleeping and your waking; in your laughing and in your weeping;  
in your dreaming and in your doing; in your home and in your travels.

May God's presence enfold you, with strength to pilot you;  
wisdom to instruct you;  
good humour to sustain you; hope to inspire you; love to brighten you  
today and every day. Forever and ever. Amen.

### **RECALLING AND RENEWING THE MARRIAGE VOWS - EXAMPLE B**

**Couple/s:** I, (...Name...), recall the vows that I made to you (...number...) years ago. Today on our anniversary, I renew my commitment to love you, and honour you, in good times and in bad; in times of good health and in times of sickness. As I loved you in the years of my youth, so now I promise to love you as we advance in years, until death parts us.

### **BLESSING**

**Relative:** Let us pray for (...Name...) and (...Name...) as we celebrate with them the (...number...) anniversary of their marriage.

*Pause for silent prayer*

Blessed are you loving God,  
that you love us with an everlasting love,  
and shower upon each of us countless blessings.

With (...Name...) and (...Name...) we thank you for their (...number...) years together.

We thank for you the times of happiness and contentment,  
and for the courage and strength to remain faithful in difficult times.

With (...Name...) and (...Name...) we bless you and give thanks  
Continue to fill their hearts with love of you  
and of each other.

Bless them, and their children (...Name...)  
their relatives and friends  
and lead them safely through this life  
to eternal happiness with you.

We make this prayer through Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

## Celebrating Mother's/Father's Day

*Members of the family might gather together in advance to think of ways they could make mother's/father's day special. Instead or as well as the usual gifts, family members might plan to give their parent a gift that might last for many months - ie five car cleans; twenty grumble free washing ups; a promise to clean ones room without being asked etc. The family might look at ways they could show their mother/father gratitude and appreciation throughout the year.*

*The meal for mother's day could be special - a picnic or meal out; a meal at home with no TV; no arguments; a table set with cloths and candles; a meals cooked by some-one other than mum! The following meal blessing might be used]*

### **A Special Blessing**

*A son/daughter reads the following. Other sons and daughters could say the response after each blessing.*

**Leader:** Mum/Dad, on this day we want to thank you for all that you are for us;  
and for all that you do for us.

**All:** We all say thank you!

**Leader:** For saying "yes" to our lives, for giving us life, and for helping us grow

**All:** We all say thank you!

**Leader:** For all the times that you have been there for us to talk to; for us to complain to;  
for us to come home to.

**All:** We all say thank you!

**Leader:** For all the things that you do for us: washing, ironing, cooking, working and  
driving.

**All:** We all say thank you!

**Leader:** For the love that you have for each one of us.

**All:** We all say thank you!

**Leader:** For all the times you've forgiven us when we've messed up

**All:** We all say thank you!

**Leader:** For looking after us when we are sick and being here for us when you are sick.

**All:** We all say thank you!

**Leader:** For doing all that you do even when we take you for granted.

**All:** We all say thank you!

**Leader:** In the prophet Hosea, God uses images of a mother. *“I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them.”* (Hosea 11:4).

We give you thanks O God for the many good things that we have to share, for this food that we are about to eat and for all those who prepared it for us.  
We give you thanks O God for the gift of family and friends, and in particular for the gift of our parents and those who care for us.

**All:** We all say thank you!

Today and every day.

**All:** Amen.



## Blessing for a New Car

*In this blessing, we ask God to bless the use of a new vehicle, the driver and passengers. However, this prayer could be adapted for any other vehicle - taxi, tractor, pram, boat. Using this simple model, families could create and pray their own blessing for any object at all.*

### **A Driver's Prayer**

*Those who are to use the car might like to pray in these or similar words:*

Jesus our brother,  
You teach us to love others  
And to treat all persons with dignity and respect.  
Help me to drive safely and carefully,  
Obeying the traffic laws and regulations  
For the safety of myself and others.  
Help me to be courteous and kinds to others  
Never allowing anger or annoyance to affect my driving  
So that I can serve you even as I drive.  
Be with me in all my journeys  
Today and every day. Amen.

### **Blessing**

Blessed are you O God, creator of all the world;  
You hold all creation in your care  
And you sustain us in every situation.

Bless this car and all its drivers and passengers.  
Let it not harm or destroy your creation  
Or hurt or disturb other people.  
Guide all our journeys so that they all end in safety.  
May our use of this car  
Build up and enrich our lives  
And help us to serve you in our family and neighbour.

Listen to our prayer and be with us always  
In Jesus' name. Amen.

## Blessing a New Driver

### **A New Driver's Promise**

Life is a series of journeys, of goings and comings.  
As I set out on this new stage of my journey  
I am aware of the responsibility that comes with the privilege of being a driver.  
I promise that I will drive carefully and safely,  
Mindful of others who use the roads, and footpaths  
And remembering the animals and plants who share our neighbourhoods.  
I promise that I will try always to treat other drivers with courtesy and patience  
And the car with skill and respect. Amen.

### **Blessing**

Loving God,  
We thank you for the gift of (...Name...) to our lives  
And we ask you to bless him/her as he/she begins to drive.  
Given him/her a great respect for the rules of the road  
And for all others who travel with them.  
May they never give in to the temptation to treat the car as a plaything  
Or as a means of gaining popularity.

Bless (...Name...) with patience and with kindness,  
With good sense, and with due care.  
May his/her driver's licence bring joy to his/her life  
And to the whole family.  
Bring him/her safely to every destination  
Today and every day. Amen.

# *Celebrating New Life*

## Naming our Child

*This ritual provides a framework for parents to acknowledge the name they have chosen for their child and the significance and reasons for choosing it. The ritual can be celebrated in the hospital, at home or during a social gathering with extended family members. Parents may value the opportunity to celebrate the naming of their child as a precursor to celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism.*

### **Giving the first name/s**

**Parent/Family Member:** To name is to know in a special way. Names reveal something about a person, and so we want to give you names that are beautiful and which have a special meaning for us

And so we name you (...Name...), this name means.....  
We give you this name because we hope that .....

*If the child is named after a relative or friend that person might be invited to speak of his or her hopes for the child at this time.*

### **Giving the Surname of the parent/s**

*Either the father's surname or that of both parents might be given*

**Parent:** We give to you our own names because you are now a much loved member of our family/families. We give to you the history and the traditions of our family/families and hope that they will fill you with pride and a sense of belonging.

We hope that you will grow up proud of your family and be a bearer of your heritage, and someone who creates for all of us new ways of being a family.

### **A Commitment**

*In these or other words the parent promise to create a loving home for their child*

**Parent:** As we give you these names we also give you this promise. We promise that we will always love you and care for you.  
May God help us to be good parents and role models, wise teachers, and strong supports.  
May God bless you and keep you all the days of your life with happiness, love and good health.  
We ask this for you of the God or love, today and every day.  
Forever and ever. Amen.

## Celebrating a Pregnancy

*This prayer of blessing could be celebrated by the expectant parents alone or with close family and friends. It could be prayed once or on a regular basis during the pregnancy.*

### CELEBRATING A PREGNANCY - EXAMPLE A

*Each paragraph can read by alternate people or the same person.*

**Reader/s:** New life is a gift from the one who created the universe  
The swirling galaxies and the tiny ants.  
New life is special; it is frightening;  
It is absolutely ordinary and an awesome mystery.

We give you thanks God of all creation  
For the new life that grows in (...Name...)  
We ask your blessing on this tiny child  
As he or she grows and develops in the safety of the womb.

May this child know only love and security  
May he or she grow to be a truly good person,  
kind and loving, healthy and generous.  
And may the love of God always watch over him or her.

**Together:** God of creation,  
who laboured in love to bring the world to birth,  
bless this gift which has been created through our love,  
and the mystery of your life within us.  
May the doors of possibility and promise always open before this child  
And may he or she grow to fullness and wholeness of life  
Today and each day, forever and ever. Amen.

### CELEBRATING A PREGNANCY - EXAMPLE B

*This prayer may be prayed by a family member, parish minister or someone chosen by the parents.*

**Leader:** Friends, let us pray for (...Name...) and (...Name...) *pause*  
and for the child who is God's gift to them. *pause*

God of all life; God of every generation,  
You have given the gift of life to this child  
And you rejoice with us at the wonder of life.

*All touch the parents on the shoulders, or extend their arms over them*

Bless the parents of this child  
As they prepare for the birth of their child.  
Protect (...Name...) as she carries the child in her womb,  
And bring her through the months of waiting  
To a safe and healthy delivery.

# *Hard Roads to Travel*

## Prayers in Hard Times

### **A Psalm Prayer**

Holy God, giver of peace:  
I do not ask to know  
what human wisdom cannot fathom.  
All the unanswered questions of my life,  
all its darkness and perplexing light.  
I lay my trust upon your vast maternal heart.  
I rest in your care as peacefully as an infant  
asleep within strong paternal arms.  
Succour all the earth's anxious children  
with the unending provision of your peace.  
Carry the earth's weary children  
when human strength fails.  
This I pray in the name Jesus Christ  
who trusted you to bear him  
through death  
to certain life.  
Amen

(Diane Karay Tripp, from *Liturgy* Vol. 14 No. 1)

### **Don't Surrender**

Don't surrender to your loneliness  
so quickly  
let it cut more deep.  
Let it ferment and season you  
as few human  
or even divine ingredients can.  
Something missing in my heart tonight  
has made my eyes soft,  
my voice  
so tender,  
my need of God  
absolutely  
clear.

(Persian Poet, Hafiz)

## **Prayers for Hard Journeys**

*When used in a group setting all read the texts in bold type*

Life is a journey on many different roads

**but God is always with us.**

Sometimes we life our faces to the sun

and God is always with us.

But then there is the hard journey through pathways of pain  
and fears in dark places.

**But God is with us.**

O God who travels with us in the shadows

**you know who we are.**

We long for life which is full and free.

We long to know the truth

and we want to leave behind us

all the things that hold us back.

**We want to move forward in faith**

but the way seems too hard

and we stand in helpless fear

to hurt, too tired to move forward.

**Stand beside us, gentle Christ.**

**Walk before us, brave Jesus.**

**Call us to new life, Spirit of the living God.**

**Enlighten our path, brighten our days.**

*A candle is lit*

**See light for the journey**

**light in the darkness**

**brightness in the midst of your pain.**

We stretch out our hands to the warmth of the flame

like the warmth of God's love.

May that love melt the frozen places in our hearts,

the hardness, we carry like a stone within.

**May God's love surround us**

**and travel with us on rocky ground.**

**Forever and ever. Amen.**

(Adapted from Dorothy McRae McMahon, from Liturgies for the Journey of Life, SPCK)

## Prayer for a stillborn or miscarried baby

*This prayer could be prayed by a family member, parish minister or close friend of the parents. It may take place in the hospital or at home. Depending on the circumstances, parts of the ritual may be adapted or omitted as per the wishes of the family.*

*If there are other children, their names should also be mentioned*

**Song OPTIONAL:** Called by Name, By Name I have Called you, All I Ask, Welcome Home or We will Rise Again

**Leader:** We gather in sadness to remember and to say goodbye to (...Name/baby...), a child of God, and the child of (...Name...) and (...Name...).

The birth of a child is a time of excitement and promise  
It is a time of new life and possibility.  
But for us there is the pain of death;  
the sadness of a life ended almost as soon as it was begun.  
There is an aching emptiness for a child we barely knew.

The trees and the flowers blossom and die,  
the birds of the air, the fish in waters, and all the animals of the earth.  
They too are born and in time return to the dust of earth.  
But only the human family asks why.  
Only we shake our fists in anger and demand to understand!  
Why? Why? Why?

Only humans remember the dead.  
Only the human family carries the memory of a lost loved one forever.  
Only we have hope that life is changed, not ended.

In faith, we cling to the hope in Jesus Christ.  
We gather in the presence of the God who wept as Jesus,  
embraced death on the cross, the God who raised Jesus to life.

God of all the peoples you call each of us by name,  
and our names are written indelibly in your heart.

We pray for (...Name...) and (...Name...),  
That they might know the comfort and strength of family and friends in their time  
of grief, as they stand within the mystery of human life and death.

### **Word of God**

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. Even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:29)

### **Commendation of the Child**

*A candle of remembrance may be lit. This candle might be used on the anniversary of the child's death or at family gatherings to hold the memory of this child in place.*

**Leader:** Into your hands, loving God, we entrust the life of our baby, (...Name...).  
Sure and certain that in you nothing is lost or wasted, we trust that you will hold our baby secure for all eternity.

### **Final Prayer**

Loving God,  
in good times and in bad, in darkness and in light,  
in joy and in sadness, we cling to you.  
Help (...Name...) and (...Name...) to trust your love  
and to find comfort in the presence of their family and friends

May baby (...Name...) and all those who have gone to everlasting life, rest in peace. Amen.



## A Prayer After a Death

*This prayer could be prayed by a person who is in grief; it might be used by a minister with a person/s or a group. Music could be added and a suitable setting arranged, e.g. with a photo and some symbol of hope.*

Friends, we have come together because we loved (...Name...).  
As (...father, mother, family, friend....etc...)  
We mourn his/her passing as we remember and honour his/her death.  
We hope that in gathering we can comfort and support each other.  
We believe that all human life is valuable  
And that the goodness, the truth and the integrity  
Which resides in each life, lives on.  
While we cannot understand death, or even life  
We cling to the hope that all that was good in (...Name...)'s life  
Will live on in the lives of all who loved him/her.

*There could be a time to share memories of the person*

We pray our grief will not be made heavier to carry  
By regrets, for things done or left undone,  
For words said, or not said, or moments that never happened.  
We lay aside all those regrets, any blame or anguish,  
To honour the Spirit of (...Name...) who would not want them carried into the future.

To love someone is to risk the pain of parting,  
But not to love is never to have lived: the grief we feel honours our love.  
Let us be silent for a moment to remember.

*pause*

God of our living and our dying as we come face to face with death  
We face a mystery that is greater than our understanding.  
Be with us as we journey through these hard days  
And help us to hold firm to the memory of (...Name...)  
So that nothing of his/her life will be lost from us.

As we return to our daily lives,  
Let us be glad that we have loved  
Even as we weep for the one we have lost;  
Even as we hold each other in our human frailty.  
Walk with us on our journey  
Help us to travel in peace and in hope,  
With our love, into your hands,  
Who hold us gently all the days of our life  
This day and forever. Amen.

## Prayer for Reconciling Family

*We all find it hard to say "I'm sorry!" Often it is hard in the business of life to find the right moment to take time to discuss an issue that has been a source of tension or anger.*

*Children learn by example - it is good for them to see that when their parents argue, hurt each others feelings, or face the disagreements and tension that are a healthy part of all adult relationships - they say that they are sorry and seek reconciliation.*

*Make a regular time, each night before bed, or one particular night of the week, and sit down as a family and talk about your life together, the things that have gone wrong, and the ways these might be improved.*

*Then say this simple prayer (or makeup your own)*

We give you thanks, loving God  
for our family  
and for the special gift each person is to us.  
We are sorry for the times we have hurt each other  
and we ask for forgiveness from each other and from you.  
Help us to be kind and loving, to think of others,  
and to try to help each other every day in whatever way we can.  
Be with us as we try to learn to love you and each other more and more.  
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen

*Offer each other a kiss of peace.*

### **Blessing**

May God bless each of us  
With loving and compassionate hearts.  
With the gift of forgiving and forgetting.  
With grateful hearts for the gift of each other and for all that we have.  
Today and every day. Amen.

## On the Death of a Pet

God created all the plants and animals, and so God loves our pets as much as we do. God is sorry when we lose a pet and weeps with us. Let us thank God for (...Name of pet/s...) and ask God to bring him/her safely to animal heaven.

### Call to Prayer

In the book of the prophet Isaiah there is a passage that says when the day of God's kingdom comes, all animals and children will play happily together, and so we can hope that we will meet (...Name...) again one day.

"The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fat lamb together, and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The baby shall play over the hole of the poisonous snake, and the child shall lie on the snake's den." (*Isaiah 11:6-8*)

### Prayer

*Children could write the blessing of their own pet/s listing all the things that make the pet/s special. They could also use the following short prayers and pray for all pets.*

Loving Creator, giver of every gift,  
we give you thanks for all the animals that enrich our lives:  
for the pets who brighten our days and bring us happiness

We especially thank you for (...Name...)  
And for all the happiness and fun that (...Name...) brought to our family.

Listen to our memories of (...Name...) *Stories are shared*

*Loving God, be with us in our sadness as we bury/take leave of (...Name...).*

*The pet's body can be buried or prepared for disposal in some other way. Parents can explain that while the pet's body goes into the ground only the bones and skin remain - the real life of the pet has returned to God.*

Help us to remember and give thanks that (...Name...) was a part of our lives.  
May we meet (...Name...) again in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

# *Times of Transition*

## Moving House

*The family home is like a treasure chest of memories. It is a symbol of the life of a particular family. Leaving the family home, or any home, after some time is a very difficult and painful thing to do. Yet often families have to move for any number of reasons. The simple ritual below can help to name the pain of leaving and to honour the memory of the time lived within the home.*

*The ritual begins at the front door. The person who leads the liturgy opens and closes it. During the ritual they move from room to room as desired.*

**Leader:** God of all times and all seasons we remember and give thanks for the many people who have passed through this door over the years.

*The family members can name some of the people who come to mind.*

We ask your blessing on those we remember, and those we may have forgotten...

**Leader:** We remember our own comings and goings. Holidays, trips to visit our families, first days at school, bringing home the babies, leaving for a wedding

*The family members can name some of the events which come to mind.*

We give thanks for the many wonderful times we had together, and we remember the difficult times and give thanks that we went through them together.

Let us bless God

**All:** It is right to do so!

**Leader:** *(The family room)* We remember the nights when we sat around watching TV or playing games. We remember the parties we had here, the fights, the tears and the laughter.

*The family members can name some of the events which come to mind - even some of the major TV stories - We watched the first man walked on the moon.*

Let us bless God for so many memories

**All:** It is right to do so!

**Leader:** *(The kitchen)* We remember this central place and for [mum....or Name] who cooked so many meals here. Our favourite meals...the everyday ones. Breakfasts on the hop and long family celebrations...Christmas dinners.

*The family members can name some of the events which come to mind*

We give thanks for the stories we shared in here, the time we spent together over cups of tea/ coffee, for the fights over washing up, for all the good times.

Let us bless God for so many memories

**All:** It is right to do so!

**Leader:** *(The bedrooms)* We remember our bedrooms, and for the comfort and security they brought us. We remember sleep overs and day sick in bed; We remember love shared, and anger put aside.

*The family members can tell some of the stories which come to mind*

We give thanks for the love and the life we shared together, and for all the people and things that enriched our lives.

Let us bless God

**All:** It is right to do so!

*The family might like to write a farewell for other rooms or places, such as a favourite tree or a cubby house, or a dog kennel...*

**Leader:** *(The back door)* This back door shows the signs of its age. We remember it as the way we came and went - to the car, to the laundry, to the garden. It has been opened and closed more times than we can remember - in excitement, in fear, in sorrow and in delight. It opens out into a larger space.

As we prepare to leave this home which has embrace our family for so long we give thanks that the time we have spent here has helped to form us into people who have a place beyond these walls.

*When the family leaves for the last time - as the key is placed in the door*

We leave our home and walk out into the space beyond. We pray that we will build a new home and a new life together. We will not come into this house again. Our leaving is like a rehearsal for the other times ahead when we step out into a new life.

We ask that the Spirit of love and peace will come upon each of us and on all those who have shared our life in this house.

We ask God to bless the new owners of this house. May they know happiness here and grow into the mystery of love and wisdom that transforms house to home.

With thanks for the many blessing we have received, let us go forth in peace.

Let us bless God

**All:** It is right to do so!

Adapted from A Ritual of Farewell to a Family Home by Shawn Madigan in Liturgy Vol 14 No 1

## Children Leaving Home

*In rural communities children often leave home for boarding school at a relatively young age. The parents and the community are diminished by the loss. Children also leave home for trips, university, and to move somewhere else for employment, marriage etc. This ritual is a model which could be adapted for use in the family, parish or community.*

**Leader:** *Welcomes and says a few words about who is going and why, and the reality that the person/s will be greatly missed.*

(...Name...) we have come together today because we are sad that you are leaving.  
We will miss your presence in our lives and in the life of the community.  
We give thanks to God for who you are,  
And for the opportunity you have to travel and to learn.  
We pray for your safety, your good health and for a remembering heart  
That knows that we love you, we miss you, and that we are here if you need us.

*Invitation to all present to extend their hands in blessing or to place a hand on the shoulder of the one leaving.*

### PRAYER OF BLESSING

Blessed are you God of all our journeys,  
Who walked our way in Jesus,  
Be with N.  
As he/she prepares to set off for N. (place)  
And spread before him/her a path that is safe,  
Happy and full of adventures.

May he/she have room in his/her luggage  
For memories of those who love him/her  
And who await his/her return;  
For wonder at the many new things he/she will see and learn;  
And joy in the company of many friends.

### Presentation

*Some small and meaningful gift is presented to the one leaving, with a card or letter signed by all the family and friends etc.*

(...Name...) as you prepare to leave we want to give you this gift, to remind you of us, so that you will never forget how important you are to us.

### Final Prayer

God of all who travel,  
We place (...Name...) into your hands confident that you will keep him/her from all harm and bring him/her safely back to us.  
We ask your blessing to come on him/her and remain on him/her today and forever. Amen.

## *Seasons and Other Celebrations*

### Prayer for Times of Drought

*The family or small group gather. On the table is a candle, a terracotta saucer of dry earth and a glass bowl of water.*

- Leader:** *Picks up the bowl of dry earth and speaks about the drought in these or other words. The response is said after each statement*  
We gather to remember the many people who depend on good seasons for their livelihoods.
- All:** The earth is hard and dry; and we remember them.
- Leader:** We call to mind those who run herds of cattle and sheep; those who grow grains and vegetables, fruits or feed for the animals.
- All:** The earth is hard and dry; and we remember them.
- Leader:** We remember the businesses that rely on the trade of those on the land, who also suffer when times are bad.
- All:** The earth is hard and dry; and we remember them.
- Leader:** We remember those who have lost hope and despair about their future.
- All:** The earth is hard and dry; and we remember them.
- Leader:** We call to mind those who have lost, or may have to lose, family farms.
- All:** The earth is hard and dry; and we remember them.
- Leader:** We remember that our brothers and sisters are suffering; we stand with them in their pain, we name the hardships and the suffering which is a part of their lives.
- All:** The earth is hard and dry; and we remember them.

**Word of God:**

Surely God is great, and beyond our understanding; the number of God's years is unsearchable. For God draws up the drops of water; and distills mist in rain, which the skies pour down and drop upon mortals abundantly. Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunders of his pavilion? See, God scatters lightning all around and covers the roots of the sea. For by these God governs peoples and gives food in abundance. (Job 36:26)

*OR*

Sing to God with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre.  
God covers the heavens with clouds, prepares rain for the earth,  
makes grass grow on the hills.  
God gives the animals their food, and the young ravens when they cry.  
Praise the God, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! (Psalm 147)

**Leader:** *Picks up the bowl of water and prays, or all may pray together*

Creator God,  
At the beginning of time you formed the earth,  
and made rain to fall on the land,  
producing crops of every kind.  
We thank you for this gift of water which refreshes and renews.  
We ask you to send rain upon those areas affected by drought,  
to give food and drink to all living animals,  
and to make all things grow.  
Help us to be grateful for all the good things that we have  
and to be generous in sharing our gifts with others.  
Hear our prayer for those on the land who are disheartened and distressed.  
May they experience comfort through the love and concern of many friends.  
We ask this of you who hear our prayer,  
today and every day. For ever and ever. Amen.



## Blessing of farm, fields, harvest or livestock

**Leader:** In the beginning, God created the universe from nothing. God set us over the earth to care for it and bring it to life. We are co-creators of the earth. Just as God saw divine plans go wrong, so we have known our plans to go awry. As co-creators we know the pain of drought; frost; illness etc... as co-creators we keep working in hope to reach our goal. Today we gather to give God thanks for this farm/field/harvest/livestock and to ask God's blessing on it.

### **Prayer of Blessing for Crops**

Creator God

We thank you for all the gifts that come to us from you.

We thank you for the wonder of creation

And for the plants that spring from the earth

And bear their fruits in due time.

Bless this .....

And bring fruitful results to our labours.

Protect our crops from drought and from fire;

From diseases and from bad weather.

Bless the work of our hands

And bring these crops to an abundant harvest. Amen.

### **Prayer of Blessing for Harvests**

Creator God

You are blessed in this abundant harvest,

As in all the gifts that come from you.

We thank you for protecting our harvest

From all that would damage or destroy it.

We ask you to watch over all who work on this land

And to protect this harvest until it reaches its destination.

May these fruits of the earth provide good nourishment

And good health to those who enjoy them.

We give you thanks and praise,

Today and every day. Amen.

### **Prayer of Blessing for Fields**

Loving God

The cycles of life and death, of planting and harvest,

Are a part of the mystery of life.

We thank you for the skills that you give us

For the wisdom to care for our earth with gentleness and reverence.

We ask you to bless these fields that they might provide

Good pasture for animals/good nourishment for our crops.

May they not be damaged by the ravages of drought, fire, frost or wind.

May our care of them enhance their richness

and ensure their long term productivity.

We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

### **Prayer of Blessing for Livestock**

Creator God, in the beginning of time you gave life

To all the birds and animals that live on the earth with humankind.

You gave them all into our keeping.

You provide us with all good gifts,

And you provide for all our needs.

For this we thank you with gratitude.

We ask you to bless these .....

As they grow and develop.

And keep them from all that would harm them

Through Jesus the Christ. Amen.

## Blessing of Animals

*Might be used in October around the feast of St Francis on 4<sup>th</sup> October*

**Leader:** God created all of the plants and animals, and so God loves our pets as much as we do. Let us thank God for (Name of pet/s) and to bless them and keep them safe.

### Scripture Reading

In the Book of the prophet Isaiah there is a passage that says when the day of God's kingdom comes, all animals and children will play happily together, it will be like this:-

“The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fat lamb together, and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The baby shall play over the hole of the poisonous snake, and the child shall lie on the snake's den.”

(Isaiah 11:6-8)

### Prayer

*Children could write the blessing of their own pet/s listing all the things that make the pet/s special. They could also use the following short prayers and pray for all pets.*

Loving Creator, giver of every gift,  
we give you thanks for all the animals that enrich our lives:  
for the pets who brighten our days and bring us happiness

- the cats who pick the best chair and love to lie in the sun
- for the dogs that always come to greet us with tails wagging
- for the birds that keep us company, and sometimes speak to us
- for fish that relax and soothe us
- for the horses that run with such long-legged beauty

and for all the other pets that brighten our lives.

We give you thanks for the guide dogs who lead their owners in safety and in freedom

- the therapy dogs who help their owners live an easier life
- for the pets that live as companions to the elderly
- for the dogs and cats that visit nursing homes and hospitals  
bringing laughter and a warm nose
- for the police dogs and horses, and the dogs that work for our security

We give you thanks for the vets and trainers who help our pets to be healthy and well-behaved members of the community.

## **Blessing**

Loving God, bless our pets,  
and those in all homes in our community.  
Keep them safe from accident and illness  
that they might help us to create a happier, and a more peaceful world.  
today and every day. Amen.

## Blessing an Advent Wreath or Southern Cross

*Advent is a time of preparation for Christmas. An Advent wreath, while another European symbol, can be helpful in reminding a family that Christmas is on the way. It is not so much the greenery of the wreath, but the candles, which help us to mark the weeks leading to Christmas. Australian dried flowers and all white candles work well. A fifth candle and some decorations and ribbons can turn it into a Christmas wreath for the table. With very small children, Advent calendars are popular. Also very effective is to set up a piece of blue material to which a star is added each week until it forms the southern Cross - it can be left in place and form the backdrop for a Christmas decoration.*

### **Blessing of the Wreath**

#### **Week 1**

We wait. We wait for rain to fall, for the crops to ripen, for the harvest. We wait for school to finish. We wait for holidays. We wait for Christmas. We wait for our presents.

Advent is a time of waiting - we light a candle/place a star every week for the four weeks of Advent as we count down to the celebration of the birth of Jesus. We wait in hope for day when we will meet Jesus in glory. As we wait let's ask God to help us remember that Christmas is a time for giving, and for celebrating. It is a time to remember God's gift to us - Jesus.

God of all the peoples of the earth,  
Bless this wreath which we use to remind us of your great gift to us in Jesus.  
This is the first week of Advent,  
*light candle or place star now*  
there are four weeks to go until Christmas  
Help us to be kind and generous as we wait to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Amen.

#### **Week 2**

God creator of all the world ,  
Bless our preparations for Christmas.  
As we begin this second week of Advent,  
*light candle or place star now*  
help us to remember that Jesus comes into our lives every day  
in the people who love us and care for us.  
May we bring him to others by our kind words and the giving of gifts  
So that we will be ready to celebrate his birth day at Christmas. Amen.

### **Week 3**

Loving God

Your gift of Jesus to our world showed us how much you love us.

Help us to remember that Christmas is a special time of year

When we show our love for you and for each other.

As we begin this third week of Advent,

*light candle or place star now*

Help us to remember that the best gifts are gifts which come from the heart  
gifts of family and friends, gifts of kindness and love;

gifts of food, clothing and toys for those who have very little.

Bless our family with your gift of love today and every day. Amen.

### **Week 4**

God of surprises,

You shocked everyone when you sent Jesus into the world as a baby

Born in a stable, surrounded by shepherds, sheep and animals.

As we begin this third week of Advent

*light candle or place star now*

Help us to remember that we meet you in surprising places.

You are in the poor people who are hungry.

You are in the children who have no parents.

You are in the people who suffer in wars and violence.

You are right here in our family - in the grown ups and in the children.

Help us in this last week of Advent

To recognise you in others

So that we will treat everyone with respect and with kindness. Amen

### **Placing of the Christmas Candle on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day**

God of love,

we light this last candle to remind us that Jesus came as a light to the world when he was  
born in Bethlehem. Like a light He brightens our lives and shows us the way to live.

Bless this last candle which we light

*light candle or place star now*

To celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Help us to be kind and thoughtful to each other;

And to give and receive gifts with generous hearts,

Grateful for all the good things that we have to enjoy.

May our Christmas celebrations be a time of happiness and peace,

And help us to love you and each other every day. Amen.

## Blessing of the Christmas Tree

*Christmas is a time for families to come together and to celebrate life. While many countries and ethnic groups have many customs and traditions Australians do not. Some families have had these introduced by parents and grandparents; some families are looking for new ways to make Christmas special. The following could be adapted for use in a family or small group; perhaps a community group or small parish.*

**Leader:** Our tree is a special tree. It reminds us of Christmas, and as we place our gifts under it - it turns into a giving tree. The gifts we give each other remind us of Jesus, who was God's special gift to our world.

The tree is also a sign of God's love for us. It became a custom in Europe, in winter when few trees have leaves, to have a tree in the home as a reminder that God's love remains the same at all times. It never withers or fails. Decorations of flowers and fruits reminded the people that through God's love the earth would blossom once more in springtime with the gifts from the earth.

In our Australian summer, this lush green tree reminds us that God's love survives and flourishes even in difficult situations such as drought and fire. The beauty of the decorations fill us with wonder and awe and remind us that God's gift of Jesus is something that makes us happy and which we should celebrate.

### Prayer of Blessing

God, giver of all gifts,  
At times we are greedy and selfish  
We want all the good things for ourselves.  
We don't want to share with others.

But at Christmas we learn the happiness that comes from giving,  
And we delight in sharing our table with family and friends.

May this Christmas tree remind us of your gift to us - Jesus the Christ child  
And remind us of all the good things that we enjoy in this country.  
Help us to give generously to others, all the year round,  
And teach us to be especially generous to those who have less than us.

May the lights we hang on the tree remind us of Jesus,  
who came like a bright light into our world.  
May the decorations remind us that Christmas is a time to celebrate.  
May the gifts we place beneath this tree  
be a sign of the love we have for one another, today and every day. Amen.