



# CULTIVATING HOPE IN ADVENT



Rewild Your Part of the World



**Trocaire**  
TOGETHER AND A BETTER WORLD



IRISH CATHOLIC  
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE  
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE



Advent is a time of waiting. Nature shows us what it means to wait. The days are shorter, creatures hibernate, growth slows, the soil rests and our attention is drawn inwards. It is a time for reflection, a time to awaken to what is happening to our planet. What if during this time we prepared the ground for planting at home, in school or parish? Nature is preparing for spring and new possibilities. Can we rewild our world during this time?

**'The world sings of an infinite love:  
how can we fail to care for it?'**  
(Pope Francis, *Laudate Deum*, 65)



## Advent Wreath Prayers

*Cultivate hope by lighting the Advent candles in awareness of the interconnectedness of all things.*

### **First Sunday of Advent**

As the earth turns away from the sun and enters the season of darkness, a darkness that is necessary for the bulbs and seeds to ready themselves for the burst of growth in spring, so too do we enter the time of waiting that is Advent. We pray that we may use this time as wisely as the earth does, preparing our hearts and spirits for the celebration of the wonder that is the incarnation, God becoming flesh and living among us. We light this candle for hope. Amen.

### **Second Sunday of Advent**

Silent but attentive God, as we light this second candle, we pray for the protection of what remains of the wilder parts of our world. Remind us, Lord, that we need wild places for the restoration of our deeper selves. Only in such places can we be drawn into harmony with nature in its wonder, its playfulness, its surprise, its beauty and its lavishness. Lure us, Lord, into the wilderness and speak to our hearts (Hosea 2:14) so we can remember that we are all called to live with nature as brothers and sisters and to share her gifts generously with one another. Pour Advent peace on us as we gather here around this wreath. Let us be brave and active, our best gift to the world in this troubled Advent time. Amen.

### **Third Sunday of Advent**

O God, source of light and darkness, let the lighting of this third candle be a sign of our willingness to speak for the light; to be, like John the Baptist, a witness to the light. It is to John we turn for inspiration today as one who found in the wilderness the grace of seeing clearly. May we find in our time a voice to protect our wild places for 'in wilderness is the preservation of the world' (Henry David Thoreau). We pray that the Holy Spirit fills our hearts with

the light of joy and thanksgiving so that we may live as children of the light, blessing one another and the sacred earth by what we say and do. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus, the light of the world. Amen.

**Fourth Sunday of Advent**

Spirit of God, calling together the creatures of the earth, the vulnerable with the powerful. By your becoming one with creation renew the earth. Come to our divided world. Come to our fragmented lives. Come to heal and save. In you our life is one again and all things come together, each connected to the other, ourselves and all things living: heaven and earth, time and space, the whole created universe in you. Through Christ, amen.





## Staying Awake

Fr Sean McDonagh

Staying awake helps us to understand that the greatest threat to humanity and all of creation is the current destruction of biodiversity globally. It is having an enormously negative impact both on the planet and on human well-being. Right now, we are experiencing the sixth-largest extinction of life since life began 3.8 billion years ago. This is largely caused by human activity. Faith communities have great potential to change our way of relating to the earth and all its creatures. St Columban (AD 545-615) tells us that if we want to know God, we must study creation.

In his 'Canticle of the Creatures' St Francis blesses and thanks God for all creation as 'every creature is the object of the Father's tenderness, who gives it its place in the world'. Pope Francis goes even further and says that 'all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God' (*Laudato Si'*, 83). As religious people, our faith should encourage us to get to know the natural world more thoroughly, understand what is threatening biodiversity more fully and do all we can to create a friendly world for every creature.



**Rewilding** is an excellent way to heal ecosystems that have been destroyed by human activity. Rewilding our lawns will bring back insects like bees, hoverflies and beetles, which in turn will bring back more birds. All of this contributes to increasing biodiversity. Rewilding larger areas, such as parks and roadsides, provides even more space for nature and allows natural processes like soil restoration and carbon capture to take place.

## Prepare to Rewild Your World

### At Home, in Our Parishes and Local Communities

Advent is a time when we can plan for the coming growing season and put in place the necessary resources to move towards biodiversity in our natural spaces. Here are some ways that you can begin.

**Pray:** During reconciliation services this Advent encourage your parish to use the Ecological Examen, which helps us to reflect on our relationship with God's creation: [ecologicalexamen.org](http://ecologicalexamen.org)

**Reflect:** Would your parish like to run a book club to discuss Pope Francis' encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, or organise a screening of the documentary from Pope Francis, *The Letter: A Message for Our Earth*, and see where it takes you? Contact: [laura.madrigal@trocaire.org](mailto:laura.madrigal@trocaire.org)

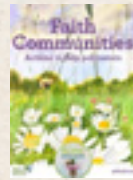
Include short *Laudato Si'* quotes weekly in your parish bulletin during Advent and beyond.

**Act:** Prepare now and plan to make next year the year you rewild the parish. Look around your parish grounds and see where you can begin.

- In a statement in spring 2023, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference said, 'Parishes are asked to expand their circles of solidarity, to protect and care for biodiversity and creation on 30% of their grounds, and to care for this as a haven for pollinators and biodiversity, that can be enjoyed by the whole community.' You can find guidance on 'returning to nature' on the Irish Catholic Bishop's Conference website: <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/laudato-si/returning-to-nature/>
- Have you gathered any fallen leaves? There is still time to make leaf mould. Or you can leave them around the base of a tree or bush as a type of blanket to protect against the winter frost. You can find more information here: <http://www.ipcc.ie/advice/composting-diy/composted-leaves-leaf-mould/>
- Invite local community groups, such as the Men's Shed, TY students, local eco-groups, to help your parish rewild this Advent.
- There is still time to plant some pollinator-friendly bulbs, such as crocus, grape hyacinth and allium. The pollinators will thank you next spring and summer.



- The Faith Community Pollinator Plan includes guidelines for various aspects of rewilding, including why we need to take these actions as we 'recognise that we are profoundly united with every creature' (*Laudato Si'*, 246). The pollinator plan is available here: [pollinators.ie/communities/faith-communities](https://pollinators.ie/communities/faith-communities)
- It is good to buy seeds that suit local creatures, so try to source Irish ones. You will find guidance at [fruithillfarm.com](https://fruithillfarm.com) or [wildflowers.ie](https://wildflowers.ie). Seeds make lovely gifts for birthdays, special occasions and Christmas.
- Planting a native wildflower meadow with native trees is another wonderful way to bring nature home.

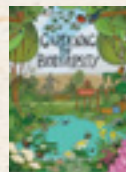


**Reconnect:** Winter and Advent are special times to be in nature. Now the leaves have fallen, we can see the shapes of the trees and their branches more clearly. It is a time to look and listen. Some birds will be singing. You might see a squirrel or hear a little field mouse rustling around in the leaves. If you lift a log gently you will see lots of little creatures underneath so put it back very carefully; this is their home. Many creatures are beginning to hibernate now, so it is a good time to learn about them and get ready to spot them when they re-emerge in spring.



## Further Resources

This beautiful booklet, *Gardening for Biodiversity*, gives the overall framework for your garden. It is available to download for free here: [laois.ie/gardening-for-biodiversity](https://laois.ie/gardening-for-biodiversity)



This super colouring book, suitable for all ages, is also available: [laois.ie/garden-biodiversity-colouring-book](https://laois.ie/garden-biodiversity-colouring-book)



Would you like some advice on how to begin? Reach out to your local county council biodiversity officer or to local eco-groups like Tidy Towns and Men's Sheds.



**'St Francis asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty.'  
(Laudato Si', 12)**

**This leaflet is prepared by the Laudato Si' Working Group of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference and Trócaire.**



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