

LENT 2019

Prayer
for the
Blessing
of Land



trócaire

BLESSING OF THE LAND

This prayer service is for use at home, at school or in the parish. Adapt it for your particular setting. This might be on farm land, in a garden, at home, in a park, in a forest, wherever people feel a sense of connection to a place and to nature. Music and songs that echo the gift of home and land would greatly enhance the service.

Leader: Yours is the land, sea and sky.

All: *O God, creator of all, hear our prayer.*

Leader: You have given us the earth for our home.

All: *O God, creator of all, hear our prayer.*

Leader: May we all share in your gift of the earth.

All: *O God, creator of all, hear our prayer.*

Psalms 65:8–10

Reader:

The whole earth is filled with awe at
your wonders;
where morning dawns, where
evening fades,
you call forth songs of joy.

You care for the land and water it;
you enrich it abundantly.

The streams of God are filled with
water
to provide the people with corn,
for so you have ordained it.

You drench its furrows and level its
ridges;
you soften it with showers and
bless its crops.

Blessing of the Land

Each person is given a small container of water.

Leader: Let us bless the land given to all.

All sprinkle the earth with water.

Leader: Let us bless the land given to all as a home to all.

All sprinkle the earth with water.

Leader: Let us bless the land given to all for food for all.

All sprinkle the earth with water.

All: *We bless you Lord for this gift for all.*

Leader: As we give thanks for the gift of the land in which we live, we listen to the stories of communities whose homes are threatened.

Reader: *Choose at least two of the following stories and light a candle for each of the communities as their story is told.*

1) *In Guatemala*

In the Polochic Valley in northern Guatemala, indigenous Q'eqchi

communities are living in fear of being forcibly evicted from lands that their ancestors lived on for hundreds of years. Original land titles for these lands were either never formalised or destroyed during various conflicts in the region. Paraná is one of the communities living in constant fear of violent eviction. The people in this community moved to this land in 2010 to try to make a better life for their families. Where they had been living previously they could not grow enough food to feed themselves and saw no hope for the future. They see these lands as their ancestral home.

2) *In Lebanon*

The civil war in Syria has been ongoing for over seven years. Hassan and Maram have lived as refugees for almost that entire time. As the conflict escalated, they fled the war with their children. They left behind their old lives and everything they owned.

‘After the war began, my life turned upside down,’ says Hassan. ‘Something stopped. We went from good to horrible.’

For the last seven years they have endured a life of fear, poverty and uncertainty. The war still continues in Syria, and it’s not clear if they will ever be able to return to the place they called home.

3) *In Uganda*

For Evelyn, the land grabbing began in a seemingly innocuous way. Shortly

after her husband died in 2011, his uncle told her that an acre of land must be sold to pay for his burial. She was okay with this. But the selling continued, bit by bit. It is true that Evelyn was not legally married to her husband. Traditionally in Uganda, the groom pays a dowry for his wife that is set by her family. Frequently the price is too high for the husband to pay in full so a verbal agreement of marriage is made; however, without full payment of the dowry, the marriage is not considered official. The case is then made against the woman and her children having any rights to family land.

4) *In Ireland*

Learning about land rights in Uganda, Guatemala and Lebanon makes us more aware of social justice issues that impact on people in Ireland, such as housing and homelessness. Trócaire raises awareness about the root causes of global poverty and injustice, our common human struggles and the importance of solidarity across all humanity in these struggles.

Leader: Our hearts are drawn to each of these communities and others like them all around the world, where the greed and power of some steals the land and homes of families and communities.

O God, creator of all, give us courage to speak out against these injustices.

All: *O God, creator of all, hear our prayer.*

Leader: Give strength and wisdom and funding to charities supporting these families and communities.

All: *O God, creator of all, hear our prayer.*

Leader: Love casts out all fear. We can love because God has first loved us.

Let us go from this place acting in love and justice for all.

All: *O God, we go in your name. Amen.*

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Front cover: Evelyn (36) on her plot of land in Northern Uganda. Photo credit: Gary Moore

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