



Hello again! Last week, we thought about everyone – including **you** – being a unique gift from God – uniquely made, uniquely precious, and with unique gifts and skills to offer the world. For our second Advent reflection, we’re thinking about something simple, unexpected and often overlooked: the orange in the stocking.

There are lots of traditions about why we place an orange in a Christmas Stocking. Some would say it goes back to the legend of St. Nicholas gifting gold to three poor women who had no dowry for their marriages. Others remember times when oranges were scarce and rarely seen in the shops, particularly during the war, so an orange was a special treat. And others say it just a handy way to pad out a Christmas stocking and make it look fuller!

These days, with the relentless pressure of increased consumerism, and adverts constantly encouraging us to spend on costly things, many would say that an orange is not much of a gift at all. It’s certainly not as flashy even as, say, chocolate coins, and it might get a bit squishy in the bottom of the stocking. But it is a reminder of simpler times, of being grateful for the smaller pleasures of life.

An ‘attitude of gratitude’ is so important! There are so many everyday miracles in our lives – and it’s so easy to become blind to them, to forget about them. As I write, the sun is out and there are beautiful wintry cloud patterns across the sky. What an amazing world we live in! An amazing world gifted to us by an amazing Creator, who made each one of us – who made **you** – to a unique design.

The orange is also a reminder that the little things matter. In one of the Bible readings for this Sunday (Matthew 3:1–12), John the Baptist, who prepared people for the ministry and teaching of Jesus Christ, encourages us to “bear fruit”. This is an encouragement to us all to live in a way that blesses others.

Sometimes that fruit looks like kindness, or patience, or a smile when someone least expects it. The gift of time spent with others is so very precious. You might feel ordinary, but to someone else your small act of care, or the time you spend with them, could be the sweetest part of their day. The best bit of their stocking.

This week, let's all try to notice the 'fruit' around us. Thank someone for their thoughtfulness. Appreciate a quiet kindness. And remember: the everyday gifts – small, simple, ordinary – often matter the most. And you are able to gift them to others.

**Gift-giving God,
may Advent be for us a time of giving
and receiving.**

Holy God, the greatest gift giver of all times,
you are not the 'stocking filler' or little extra,
you are the greatest and best gift that can be given.

**Gift-giving God,
may Advent be for us a time of giving
and receiving.**

Holy God, you call us to be the gift of God
to neighbours and strangers.

You call us to be life-giving
to all those we encounter.

You call us to be a blessing to the Church
and the world.

**Gift-giving God,
may Advent be for us a time of giving
and receiving.**



May we sort the wheat from the chaff in our lives.

May we not be just little stocking filler extras
but full to overflowing with your love.

May we truly seek to be the holy gift
you call us to be.

**Gift-giving God,
may Advent be for us a time of giving
and receiving. AMEN**