

An African Canticle

A canticle is a song of praise to God in the Christian tradition. This canticle is based on a traditional African prayer.

It has been adapted from one written at Kilakala Girls School, Morogoro, Tanzania. (www.maryknollafrica.org/ComHealeyDocs6.htm)



The girls had based theirs on 'All you big things bless the Lord' published in 'An African Prayer Book' (Desmond Tutu, Hodder and Stoughton, 1995)

On Kagera Day this canticle or the shorter original version is used in the closing worship but it can also be used in a variety of other ways.

What else can you do with this African canticle?

- Research it as a prayer. Find out about the animals and plants. Talk about what the people singing or praying it are trying to say to God.
- Create a big wall display using the words and illustrate the different verses with pictures and words from your research. Different classes or groups can work on different verses.
- How would you rewrite the different verses for us here in Suffolk?
- Try to find out what the call and response words would be in Swahili. Perform the prayer in a celebration assembly or at your local church. Use a Swahili response if you can - but tell people what it means.
- Can the prayer be set to music? It is a canticle, after all, and should be sung. Work on a melody or a drum and percussion accompaniment. Could there be actions or dance to the call and response parts?
- Where on the African continent are the places in the opening lines? Mark them on a map of Africa.

Our African Canticle

AFRICA, all its people, all its places

BLESS THE LORD

All you Far-off ones
from Cairo to Cape Town
From Dar es Salaam to Lagos,
From Kagera and Murgwanza
Join us here and,

BLESS THE LORD

Praise and extol Him forever and ever.

All you BIG things.....

BLESS THE LORD

Mount Kilimanjaro and the River Nile,
The Rift Valley and the Serengeti Plain,
Fat baobabs and shady mango trees,
All eucalyptus and tamarind trees,
You hippos and giraffes and elephants.....

BLESS THE LORD

Praise and extol Him forever and ever.

All you TINY things

BLESS THE LORD

Busy black ants and hopping fleas,
Wriggling tadpoles and mosquito larvae,
Flying locusts and water drops,
Pollen dust and tsetse flies,
Millet seeds and dried dagaa.....

BLESS THE LORD

Praise and extol Him forever and ever.

All you SHARP things.....

BLESS THE LORD

Sisal plant tips and tall lake reeds,
Maasai spears and Turkana hunting arrows,
A rhino's horn and crocodile teeth.

BLESS THE LORD

Praise and extol Him forever and ever.

All you SOFT things.....

BLESS THE LORD

Sawdust and ashes and kapok wool,
Sponges and porridge and golden ripe mangoes,
Mother's hand and father's heart.....

BLESS THE LORD

Praise and extol Him forever and ever.

All you SWEET things.....

BLESS THE LORD

Wild honey and papaws and coconut milk,
Pineapples and sugar cane and sun-dried dates,
Slow roasted yams and banana juice.....

BLESS THE LORD

Praise and extol Him forever and ever.

All you BITTER things.....

BLESS THE LORD

Quinine and blue soap,
Sour milk and maize beer.....

BLESS THE LORD

Praise and extol Him forever and ever.

All you SWIFT things.....

BLESS THE LORD

Wild goats and honking matatus,
Cheetahs and leopards,
Long-legged gazelles
Frightened centipedes and lightning flashes.....

BLESS THE LORD

Praise and extol Him forever and ever.

All you SLOW things.....

BLESS THE LORD

Curious giraffes and old bony cows,
Brown humped camels, grass munching sheep.....
Laden bicycles, and long bank queues

BLESS THE LORD

Praise and extol Him forever and ever.

All you LOUD things.....

BLESS THE LORD

Monsoon rains on aluminum roofs,
Midnight hyenas and feast day drums,
Train stations and busy bus stops.....

BLESS THE LORD

Praise and extol Him forever and ever.

All you QUIET things.....

BLESS THE LORD

Candle flames and just sown furrows,

Heaps of clouds and sunny benches,
The Pyramids and Sahara Desert,
Huge land snails and crawling turtles,
Grazing zebras and stalking lions.....

BLESS THE LORD

Praise and extol Him forever and ever.

All you creatures that never talk,
STILL BLESS YOU THE LORD.
PRAISE AND EXTOL HIM FOREVER AND EVER.

