



# Evening Prayer

Sunday, December 20, 2020  
Fourth Sunday of Advent

## THE ADVENT WREATH *(by David Miller Kohlmeier, adapted with permission)*

Each year, many of us observe the tradition of lighting the candles of an Advent Wreath. These candles mark the Sundays of the season of Advent. They remind us Advent is a time for reflection as we prepare our hearts to come close to the mystery of Christmas. In most years we light a new candle each week, and the light grows brighter each Sunday. This year, however, we're doing something a little different; because light is not the only path toward Christmas. Darkness, too, can draw us close. And, perhaps, is the better path to follow in this strange and often troubling year. We begin with all the candles lit, and each week we extinguish another flame, until, gradually, we enter into the full darkness.

### *The Fourth Candle*

Today, we extinguish the fourth candle as we reflect on the gift of mystery. Our world is full of mysteries; questions we may never know the answers to or even figure out how to ask. Mysteries are born in darkness--from the darkness of our deepest oceans, to the farthest reaches of our galaxy, and even to darkness of the womb. Darkness invites us to dwell in mystery, to wonder at the mysterious and sometimes unknowable ways of God and creation. In moments when our desire for answers becomes more important than the question itself, we pause and give thanks for the holy darkness of un-knowing. May we be blessed by the gift of mystery.

## OPENING SENTENCE

*Officiant:* Let my prayer be set forth in your sight as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.  
(Psalm 141:2)

## CONFESSION OF SIN

*Officiant:* Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

**People:** Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen.

*Officiant:* Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. Amen.

## THE INVITATORY

*Officiant:* O God, make speed to save us.

**People:** O Lord, make haste to help us.

**All:** Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen!

## O GRACIOUS LIGHT *(Phos hilaron)*

**All:** O gracious light, pure brightness of the everliving Father in heaven, O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed! Now as we come to the setting of the sun, and our eyes behold the vesper light, we sing your praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices, O Son of God, O Giver of Life, and to be glorified through all the worlds.

**CANTICLE 15** (*The Magnificat, Luke 1:46-55*)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;

for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:

the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him

in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,

he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,

and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,

and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel,

for he has remembered his promise of mercy,

The promise he made to our fathers,

to Abraham and his children for ever.

**All:            Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now,  
                  and will be forever. Amen!**

**A READING FROM THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL (7:1-11, 16)**

When the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you."

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

*Reader:*        The Word of the Lord.

**People:**        Thanks be to God.

**A SONG TO THE LAMB (CANTICLE 18)**

*Revelation 4:11;5:9-10,13*

**All:            Splendor and honor and royal power are yours by right, O God Most High, For you created everything that is, and by your will they were created and have their being; And yours by right, O Lamb that was slain, for with your blood you have redeemed for God, From every family, language, people, and nation, a royal priesthood to serve our God. And so, to the One who sits upon the throne, and to Christ the Lamb, Be worship and praise, dominion and splendor, for ever and for evermore. Amen.**

## **A READING FROM PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS (16:25-27)**

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith--to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

*Reader:* The Word of the Lord.

**People:** Thanks be to God.

## **A SONG OF FAITH (CANTICLE M)**

*1 Peter 1:3-4,18-21*

**All:** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by divine mercy we have a new birth into a living hope; Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, we have an inheritance that is imperishable in heaven. The ransom that was paid to free us was not paid in silver or gold, But in the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb without spot or stain. God raised Jesus from the dead and gave him glory so that we might have faith and hope in God.

## **A READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE (1:26-38)**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

*Reader:* The Word of the Lord.

**People:** Thanks be to God.

## **THE SERMON**

### **THE APOSTLES' CREED**

**All:** I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

### **THE PRAYERS**

*Officiant:* The Lord be with you.

**People:** And also with you.

*Officiant:* Let us pray.

**All:** Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

*Officiant:* That this evening may be holy, good, and peaceful,

**People:** We entreat you, O Lord.

*Officiant:* That your holy angels may lead us in paths of peace and goodwill,

**People:** We entreat you, O Lord.

*Officiant:* That we may be pardoned and forgiven for our sins and offenses,

**People:** We entreat you, O Lord.

*Officiant:* That there may be peace to your Church and to the whole world,

**People:** We entreat you, O Lord.

*Officiant:* That we may depart this life in your faith and fear, and not be condemned before the great judgment seat of Christ,

**People:** We entreat you, O Lord.

*Officiant:* That we may be bound together by your Holy Spirit in the communion of all your saints, entrusting one another and all our life to Christ,

**People:** We entreat you, O Lord.

## THE COLLECTS

### *The Collect of the Day*

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### *A Collect for Sundays*

Lord God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ triumphed over the powers of death and prepared for us our place in the new Jerusalem: Grant that we, who have this day given thanks for his resurrection, may praise you in that City of which he is the light, and where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

### *A Collect for Peace*

Most holy God, the source of all good desires, all right judgements, and all just works: Give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, so that our minds may be fixed on the doing of your will, and that we, being delivered from the fear of all enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through the mercies of Christ Jesus our Savior. Amen.

### *A Collect for Mission*

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen.

## THE GENERAL THANKSGIVING

**All:** Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days;

through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

### **A PRAYER OF ST. CHRYSOSTOM**

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. **Amen.**

### **THE DISMISSAL**

*Officiant:* Let us bless the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen. (*Ephesians 3:20, 21*)