



Reflections for the Spiritual Explorer

ADVENT PRAYER SERVICE

*And I said to the one who stood at the gate of the year,
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."
And that one replied, "Go out into the darkness and put your
hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than
light and safer than a known way." --Louise Haskins*

Begin by lighting the candle(s) of the Advent wreath

*Take a moment to quiet yourself, let go of everything but
this present moment. Place into God's care your family,
friends, needs, anxieties, hopes and fears.*

Leader: O God come to our assistance.

R: O Lord make haste to help me.

L: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

R: As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

PSALM (Isaiah 35:1-6A, 10)

Side 1: The desert and the parched land will exult;
the steppe will rejoice and bloom.
They will bloom with abundant flowers,
and rejoice with joyful song.

Side 2: The glory of Lebanon will be given to them,
the splendor of Carmel and Sharon;
they will see the glory of the Lord,
the splendor of our God.

Side 1: Strengthen the hands that are feeble,
make firm the knees that are weak,
say to those whose hearts are frightened:
Be strong, fear not!

Side 2: Here is your God, he comes with vindication;
with divine recompense he comes to save you.

Side 1: Then will the eyes of the blind be opened,
the ears of the deaf be cleared;
then will the lame leap like a stag,
then the tongue of the mute will sing.

Side 2: Those whom the Lord has ransomed
will return and enter Zion singing,
crowned with everlasting joy;
they will meet with joy and gladness,
sorrow and morning will flee.

All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew (11:2-11)

When John the Baptist heard in prison of the works of the Christ, he sent his disciples to Jesus with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

As they were going off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces. Then why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you.



Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

R: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

At this time view the DVD *With You Always*

Reflection Questions—*Reflect on whichever of the following question(s) draws your attention.*

- 1) How have people shown compassion to me? How has God shown compassion to me? How do I show compassion to others?
- 2) What do I think allowed Mary to say “Yes” to the unknown? What gives me the courage to say “Yes” when faced with a difficulty?
- 3) What darkness have I overcome? How did God/a Higher Power/Spirituality help me through it?
- 4) What from this experience do I want to take with me into tomorrow?

Concluding Prayer—

Dear Lord, I wait in the darkness for your coming. As I walk this journey, give me eyes to see your light and carry it within my heart. Grant me wisdom in my decisions, a memory that you are always with me, and a hope to share with others. Amen.

LENTEN PRAYER SERVICE

Do not look forward to the changes and chances of this life in fear; rather look to them with full hope that, as they arise, God, whose you are, will deliver you out of them.

God is your keeper: God has kept you hitherto. Do you but hold fast to his dear hand, and God will lead you safely through all things; and, when you cannot stand, he will bear you in his arms.

Do not look forward to what may happen tomorrow. Our Father will either shield you from suffering, or will give you strength to bear it.
— St. Francis de Sales

Begin by lighting a candle and/or placing before you the symbol of the cross/crucifix.

Take a moment to quiet yourself, let go of everything but this present moment. Place into God's care your family, friends, needs, anxieties, hopes and fears.

Leader: O God come to our assistance.

R: O Lord make haste to help me.

L: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

R: As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Canticle: Ezekiel (36:24-28; 37:12-14)

Side 1: I will take you from the nations,
and gather you from foreign countries,
and bring you back to your own land.

Side 2: I will sprinkle clean water upon you
to cleanse you from all your impurities,
and from all your idols I will cleanse you.



Side 1: A new heart I will give you,
and make you live by my statutes,
careful to observe my decrees.

Side 2: I will put my spirit within you,
and make you live by my statutes,
careful to observe my decrees.

Side 1: You shall dwell in the land
which I gave to your ancestors;
you shall be my people and I will be your God.

Side 2: O my people, I will open your graves
and have you rise from them,
and bring you back to the land of Israel.

Side 1: Then you shall know that I am the Lord,
when I open your graves
and have you rise from them, O my people!

Side 2: I will put my spirit in you that you may live,
and I will settle you upon your land;
thus you shall know that I am the Lord.
I have promised, and I will do it, says the Lord.

All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew (7:7-12)

Jesus said to his disciples: "Ask, and you will receive.
Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For
the one who asks, receives. The one who seeks, finds. The one
who knocks, enters. Would one of you hand your child a stone
when asked for a loaf, or a poisonous snake when asked for a fish?
If you, with all your sins, know how to give your children what is

good, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things
to anyone who asks him!

"Treat others the way you would have them treat you: this
sums up the law and the prophets."

The Gospel of the Lord.

R: Praise be to you Lord Jesus Christ.

At this time view the DVD *With You Always*

Reflection Questions—*Reflect on whichever of the following
question(s) draws your attention.*

1) **What change do I need to make in my life in order to live
more at peace with myself/others? I now ask God/my Higher
Power to help me**
(fill in the blank)

2) **What word or passage from this reading touched me?
Why?**

3) **Sometimes we live/work with a difficult person or situation
that cannot be readily changed. What can I do to live in hope,
with a positive attitude?**

4) **From this experience, what do I want to take with me into
tomorrow?**

Concluding Prayer--

Dear God, show me your face. Help me to listen, see,
touch, taste and smell my way to you. In your presence you love
me completely, and all the wounds that life has inflicted on me
close up. Teach me courage, so that I may hold fast to that which
is good; and not to render evil for evil. God, grant me your
gracious mercy and protection. Amen.



ORDINARY TIME PRAYER SERVICE

*Do what you can
then pray to God
to give you the power
to do what you cannot.*

--St. Augustine

Begin by lighting a candle or place in front of yourself an open book of the Scriptures.

Take a moment to quiet yourself, let go of everything but this present moment. Place into God's care your family, friends, needs, anxieties, hopes and fears.

Leader: O God come to our assistance.

R: O Lord make haste to help me.

L: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

**R: As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

PSALM 23

Side 1: Yahweh, you are my shepherd;
I shall not want.
You make me to lie in green pastures.
You lead me to restful waters, to restore my soul.

Side 2: You guide me in paths of righteousness
for the sake of your name.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of
death, I fear no evil; for you are with me;
your crook and your staff give me comfort.

Side 1: You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows.

Side 2: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in your holy house for ever and ever.

Side 1: Glory be to the Father
and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

Side 2: As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles (10:34, 37-43)

Peter addressed the people in these words: "I take it you know what has been reported all over Judea about Jesus of Nazareth, beginning in Galilee with the baptism John preached; of the way God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good works and healing all who were in the grip of the devil, and God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem.

They killed him finally, 'hanging him on a tree,' only to have God raise him up on the third day and grant that he be seen, not by all, but only by such witnesses as had been chosen beforehand by God—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commissioned us to preach to the people and to bear witness that he is the one set apart by God as judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets testify, saying that everyone who believes in him has forgiveness of sins through his name."

The Word of the Lord.

R: Thanks be to God.



At this time view the DVD *With You Always*

Reflection Questions—*Reflect on whichever of the following question(s) draws your attention.*

- 1) What made me feel that God/a Higher Power was with me this week?
- 2) What good works do I perform?
- 3) Because God is with me, I have the courage to
.....
(fill in the blank)
- 4) From this experience, what do I want to take with me into tomorrow?

Concluding Prayer--

Loving God, you are in all places and time, keep me from dreading responsibility and the decision to make changes. Be my strength when I fear the unknown. Teach me to know you, Lord, amid the noise and bustle of business, but lead me, also, to quiet times where I can regain my balance. Thank you for another day and all the blessings that have come to me. Amen.

HOW BEAUTIFUL

A Reflection featuring the Song "How Beautiful" performed by Twila Paris

{ These reflection questions may be used with the DVD; or, if using them within the prayer service, they can be reflected upon and shared during the time after the Scripture reading. }

Reflection Questions—*Reflect on whichever of the following question(s) draws your attention.*

- 1) How would you describe your relationship with God?
- 2) When have you been angry with God? Have you gotten past your anger? Was it really God with whom you were angry, or, were you angry at not being in control of your life's circumstances?
- 3) How has your life moved through the cycles of winter and spring?
- 4) What gives you hope in difficult circumstances?
- 5) How have other people shown you the loving/comforting face of God?
- 6) When do you feel a part of the Body of Christ?
- 7) What do you do to build your relationship with God?
- 8) Name the talents/gifts you use to build up the Body of Christ.



PRAYER SERVICE (I)

[Note: If you would like to use the section *How Beautiful and the following Prayer Service as part of a grieving process, please begin by taking a photo or symbol of the person whom you have lost and are grieving and place it next to a crucifix.]*

View the DVD *How Beautiful*

Take a moment to quiet yourself, let go of everything but this present moment. Place into God's care this person and your hopes and fears.

**"As a mother comforts her child,
so will I comfort you." -Isaiah 66:13**

Leader: O God come to my assistance.

R: O Lord make haste to help me.

L: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

R: As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

PSALM

(Psalm 121)

Side 1: I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From whence comes my help?

My help comes from you, O God,
who made heaven and earth.

Side 2: You will not let my foot stumble,
you, who preserve me, will not sleep.
Behold, you who keep Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

Side 1: You, O God, are our keeper; you are our shade.
The sun shall not smite us by day, nor the moon by night.

Side 2: You will guard us from all evil;
you will preserve our lives.
You will protect our goings and comings
both now and for ever.

All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A reading from the Prophet Isaiah (52:7-10)

How beautiful upon the mountains

are the feet of him who brings glad tidings,
announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation,
and saying to Zion, "Your God is King!"

Hark! Your sentinels raise a cry, together they shout for joy,
For they see directly before their eyes, the Lord restoring Zion.
Break out together in song, O ruins of Jerusalem!
For the Lord comforts his people,
he redeems Jerusalem.

The Lord has bared his holy arm in the sight of all the nations;
All the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God.

The Word of the Lord.

R: Thanks be to God.

[spend a few minutes in silence]

Concluding Prayer—(prayed together)

God of all consolation, you pursue us with untiring love.
Wipe away our tears. Be our refuge and our strength, O, Lord,
and lift us from the depths of grief into the peace and light of your
presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



PRAYER SERVICE (II)

Begin by placing before you a symbol which you consider to be beautiful. (You may want to sit before a beautiful scene of nature—trees, flowers, a sunrise or sunset).

View the DVD *How Beautiful*

Take a moment to quiet yourself, let go of everything but this present moment. Thank God for the beauty of this moment before you.

Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything that is beautiful, for beauty is God's handwriting – a wayside sacrament. Welcome it in every fair face, in every fair sky, in every flower, and thank God for it as a cup of blessing.

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

Leader: O God come to our assistance.

R: O Lord make haste to help me.

L: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

**R: As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

Canticle: Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) (42:15-25)

Side 1: Next, I shall remind you of the works of the Lord,
and tell of what I have seen.
By the words of the Lord his works come into being
and all creation obeys his will.

Side 2: The shining sun looks down on all things,
and the work of the Lord is full of his glory.



Side 1: The Lord has not granted the Holy Ones the power
to tell of all God's marvels
which the Almighty Lord has solidly constructed
for the universe to stand firm in his glory.

Side 2: God has fathomed both the abyss and the human heart
and seen into their devious ways;
for the Most High knows all there is to know
and sees the signs of the times.

Side 1: God declares what is past and what will be,
and reveals the trend of hidden things.
Not a thought escapes the Lord,
not a single word is hidden from God.

Side 2: God has embellished the magnificent works of wisdom,
The Lord is from everlasting to everlasting,
Nothing can be added to God and nothing taken away.

Side 1: How beautiful, all your works,
how dazzling to the eye!
They all live and last for ever,
And, whatever the circumstances, all obey.

Side 2: All things go in pairs, by opposites,
God has not made anything imperfect:
One thing complements the excellence of another.
Who could ever grow tired of gazing at God's glory.

All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Ephesians

(4:7, 11-16, 32)

Each of us has received God's favor in the measure in
which Christ bestows it.

It is he who gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors
and teachers in roles of service for the faithful to build up the body
of Christ, till we become one in faith and in the knowledge of
God's Son, and from that perfect man who is Christ come to full
stature.

Let us, then, be children no longer, tossed here and there,
carried about by every wind of doctrine that originates in human
trickery and skill in proposing error. Rather, let us profess to the
truth in love and grow to the full maturity of Christ the head. If we
live by the truth and in love, we shall grow in all ways into Christ,
who is the head by whom the whole body is fitted and joined
together, every joint adding its own strength, for each separate part
to work according to its function. So the body grows until it has
built itself up, in love.

Be generous to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one
another as God in Christ forgave you.

The Word of the Lord.

R: Thanks be to God.

[spend a few minutes in silence]

Concluding Prayer—(prayed together)

God, bless and renew me each day with courage and love
of life. Give me your strength and imagination so that I may
develop my talents. Help me to become whole; lead me, O Lord,
to a fulfilled life that is pleasing to you. Teach me to share my
gifts with others and to always be thankful to you, loving God.
Amen.