

# Sunday, December 3, 2017

## First Sunday of Advent

### Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection awaken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### First Reading: Isaiah 64:1-9

*This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40–55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account—to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past.*

<sup>1</sup>O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,  
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—  
<sup>2</sup>as when fire kindles brushwood  
and the fire causes water to boil—  
to make your name known to your adversaries,  
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!  
<sup>3</sup>When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,  
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.  
<sup>4</sup>From ages past no one has heard,  
no ear has perceived,  
no eye has seen any God besides you,  
who works for those who wait for him.  
<sup>5</sup>You meet those who gladly do right,  
those who remember you in your ways.  
But you were angry, and we sinned;  
because you hid yourself we transgressed.  
<sup>6</sup>We have all become like one who is unclean,  
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.  
We all fade like a leaf,  
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.  
<sup>7</sup>There is no one who calls on your name,  
or attempts to take hold of you;  
for you have hidden your face from us,  
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.  
<sup>8</sup>Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;  
we are the clay, and you are our potter;  
we are all the work of your hand.  
<sup>9</sup>Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,

and do not remember iniquity forever.  
Now consider, we are all your people.

## **Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9**

*As the Christians in Corinth await the advent of Jesus, Paul reminds them how the Lord has already enriched them through spiritual gifts and will continue to strengthen them until the coming day of the Lord.*

<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup>I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, <sup>5</sup>for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—<sup>6</sup>just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—<sup>7</sup>so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>8</sup>He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **Gospel: Mark 13:24-37**

*In today's reading, Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.*

[Jesus said:] <sup>24</sup>“In those days, after that suffering,  
the sun will be darkened,  
and the moon will not give its light,  
<sup>25</sup>and the stars will be falling from heaven,  
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

<sup>26</sup>Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup>Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

<sup>28</sup>“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup>So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. <sup>30</sup>Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. <sup>31</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

<sup>32</sup>“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup>Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. <sup>34</sup>It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. <sup>35</sup>Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, <sup>36</sup>or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. <sup>37</sup>And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

## Prayers of Intercession

*The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.*

Guided by the light of Christ, let us pray for the coming dawn of joy, healing, and comfort for all God's people.

*A brief silence.*

Give light to your people, Lord. As the darkness grows and we await the return of daylight, give new life to your church. Shape our communities to be faithful vessels of the gospel for the sake of the world. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Restore your creation, Lord. You give the earth opportunities for both sleep and awakening. Thank you for the gift of restful seasons so new life may grow according to your appointed time. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Bring peace to the nations, Lord. Keep us alert to injustice and oppression, give us courage to cry out for what is right, and guide world leaders toward fairness and peace for all. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Stir up compassion in us for all who wait for you. Be near to those whose lives are shaken, those who are experiencing loss, those who long for healing and wholeness, those who live with HIV and AIDS, and those who are in any kind of need (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

We pray for child care workers, teachers, Sunday school leaders, and all who nurture and educate children. We give you thanks for their diligence and devotion. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

From ages past, your faithfulness has never failed. Shine your face upon us and bring us into the company of all your saints in light (*especially the missionary Frances Xavier*). Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

We raise our prayers to you, O God, in the name of the one who is, who was, and who is to come, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## Dismissal

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

# Sunday, December 10, 2017

## Second Sunday of Advent

### Prayer of the Day

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### First Reading: Isaiah 40:1-11

*In grand, flowing, poetic lines, the prophet announces that the exile of God's people in Babylon is over. The Lord will deliver Israel and will care for her as a shepherd cares for his sheep. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of the Lord.*

<sup>1</sup>Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.

<sup>2</sup>Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the LORD's hand  
double for all her sins.

<sup>3</sup>A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup>Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

<sup>5</sup>Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

<sup>6</sup>A voice says, “Cry out!”

And I said, “What shall I cry?”

All people are grass,  
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

<sup>7</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades,  
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;  
surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades;  
but the word of our God will stand forever.

<sup>9</sup>Get you up to a high mountain,

O Zion, herald of good tidings;  
lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,  
lift it up, do not fear;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
“Here is your God!”  
<sup>10</sup>See, the Lord GOD comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.  
<sup>11</sup>He will feed his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms,  
and carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead the mother sheep.

## **Second Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-15a**

*This short letter deals with pressing concerns regarding the final advent of Jesus, especially concerns that could arise over its apparent delay. The author of the letter calls on Christians to anticipate the promised coming of the Lord through conduct dedicated to God.*

<sup>8</sup>Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

<sup>11</sup>Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup>waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? <sup>13</sup>But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; <sup>15a</sup>and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

## **Gospel: Mark 1:1-8**

*The Gospel of Mark does not begin with a story of Jesus' birth but with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord.*

<sup>1</sup>The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

<sup>2</sup>As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,  
“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way;

<sup>3</sup>the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.’”

<sup>4</sup>John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. <sup>8</sup>I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

## **Prayers of Intercession**

*The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.*

Guided by the light of Christ, let us pray for the coming dawn of joy, healing, and comfort for all God's people.

*A brief silence.*

We long to see your glory. Prepare our hearts for your arrival by healing divisions in your church and blessing those who work for reconciliation within it. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

We pray for your creation. Bring renewal to open spaces, parks, forests, mountains, and grasslands. Restore the creatures and lands that are damaged or destroyed. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

We long for your peace. Make places of welcome for people fleeing violence. For nations facing conflict or crisis, deliver relief. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

We seek healing for all people who long for justice, freedom, and comfort. Sustain them in their time of need. Be with all who wait for you, who suffer in body, mind, or spirit (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for those who are ready to help in times of crisis. Give courage to disaster and emergency response teams, police officers, nurses, doctors, surgeons, chaplains, and all who work for the sake of others. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

We are your beloved flock and you are our shepherd, O God. Along with the saints already at rest in you, bring us together as your people under your holy rule. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

We raise our prayers to you, O God, in the name of the one who is, who was, and who is to come, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

# Sunday, December 17, 2017

## Third Sunday of Advent

### Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

*Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of the Lord, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.*

<sup>1</sup>The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;

<sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;

<sup>3</sup>to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.

They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.

<sup>4</sup>They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.

<sup>8</sup>For I the LORD love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

<sup>9</sup>Their descendants shall be known among the nations,  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.

<sup>10</sup>I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,

my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

<sup>11</sup>For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

## **Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

*Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by encouraging them to live lives of continual joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. The closing blessing is grounded in the hope of Christ's coming.*

<sup>16</sup>Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup>pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. <sup>19</sup>Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Do not despise the words of prophets, <sup>21</sup>but test everything; hold fast to what is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil.

<sup>23</sup>May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

## **Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28**

*John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.*

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

<sup>19</sup>This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" <sup>20</sup>He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." <sup>21</sup>And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." <sup>22</sup>Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" <sup>23</sup>He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,  
'Make straight the way of the Lord,'"  
as the prophet Isaiah said.

<sup>24</sup>Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. <sup>25</sup>They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" <sup>26</sup>John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, <sup>27</sup>the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." <sup>28</sup>This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.



## Prayers of Intercession

*The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.*

Guided by the light of Christ, let us pray for the coming dawn of joy, healing, and comfort for all God's people.

*A brief silence.*

Guiding Lord, bless church leaders, volunteers, teachers, musicians, acolytes, deacons, pastors, seminarians, and those discerning a call to ministry. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Creating God, protect Earth's wilderness, especially where the lands are isolated and unexplored. Watch over all living creatures who remain free from human exploitation. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Prince of Peace, send us your Spirit of unity, so that justice may spring up among the nations.

Give us the will to repair the broken systems that perpetuate injustice. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Merciful God, comfort your children who are mourning, bind up the brokenhearted, and heal our wounds. We pray for those who are homeless or imprisoned, refugees, those who struggle with addiction or mental illness, and all in need (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Lord of justice, strengthen and increase the ministry of food pantries, meal service deliveries, employment training programs, and advocacy for equity among all classes and races. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Eternal God, clothe us in your garments of salvation, so that together we may rejoice in your presence with the saints who have died and with those unable to be with us today. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

We raise our prayers to you, O God, in the name of the one who is, who was, and who is to come, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## Dismissal

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

# Sunday, December 24, 2017

## Fourth Sunday of Advent

### Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

### First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

*Instead of David building a house (temple) for the Lord, the Lord promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, the Lord's anointed.*

<sup>1</sup>Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, <sup>2</sup>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." <sup>3</sup>Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

<sup>4</sup>But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: <sup>5</sup>Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>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?" <sup>8</sup>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; <sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>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, <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

### Second Reading: Romans 16:25-27

*Paul closes his letter to the Romans by praising God because in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ God has revealed the promised, divine plan of salvation for all humanity. Paul proclaims this gospel of Christ in order to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations.*

<sup>25</sup>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 <sup>26</sup>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—<sup>27</sup>to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

## **Gospel: Luke 1:26-38**

*In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people (Mary) from littleknown places (Nazareth). This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in his gospel.*

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>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. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup>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. <sup>36</sup>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. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>38</sup>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.

## **Prayers of Intercession**

*The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.*

Guided by the light of Christ, let us pray for the coming dawn of joy, healing, and comfort for all God's people.

*A brief silence.*

Your eternal reign has come into the world. Give us ears to hear your call to serve your kingdom, and send us out to those who are hurting and in need of good news. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

You created the mystery and beauty of the earth. Replenish rivers, lakes, seas, and all bodies of water, so that plants, animals, and humans can have life and be refreshed. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

You bring down the powerful and raise up the lowly. Where war rages, shatter hatred with forgiveness and peace. Where fear rules, make your all-powerful and eternal presence known. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

You remember us with mercy, Lord, as you have done for all generations. Fill us, comfort us, strengthen us, and enlighten us. Make your will known to all in need. Today we pray especially for . . . Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

You called Mary to bear your Son. We pray for pregnant women, for mothers and fathers of infants and small children, and especially for couples who bear the pain of infertility, miscarriage, or stillbirth. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Your kingdom has no end. With your servants throughout time, women and men, old and young, unite us forever in your reign of peace and joy. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

We raise our prayers to you, O God, in the name of the one who is, who was, and who is to come, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **Sunday, December 24, 2017**

### **Nativity of Our Lord I: Christmas Eve**

#### **Prayer of the Day**

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

#### **First Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7**

*This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!*

<sup>2</sup>The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.

<sup>3</sup>You have multiplied the nation,  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing plunder.

<sup>4</sup>For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.  
<sup>5</sup>For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.  
<sup>6</sup>For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
<sup>7</sup>His authority shall grow continually,  
and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne of David and his kingdom.  
He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onward and forevermore.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

## **Second Reading: Titus 2:11-14**

*The appearance of God's grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. Consequently, in the present we live wisely and justly while also anticipating the hope of our Savior's final appearance.*

<sup>11</sup>The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, <sup>12</sup>training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, <sup>13</sup>while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup>He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

## **Gospel: Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]**

*God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.*

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around

them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

[

<sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.]

## Prayers of Intercession

*The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.*

This night the eternal Word of God is born in us. We pray for Christ’s light of life to take flesh in the church, the creation, and all people of God.

*A brief silence.*

We bring to the manger our longing for the visible unity of the church of Jesus Christ, that undivided it proclaim the one whose birth brings good news of glad tidings to all people. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

We bring to the manger hope for the well-being of creation, that every valley be exalted and every rough place be made plain so that every living thing may flourish. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

We bring to the manger a vision of the reign of the Prince of Peace, that the nations, tribes, and peoples of this world will see and cherish in each other the very image of Christ, whose scepter is mercy and whose judgment is love. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

We bring to the manger concern for those who have no place to lay their heads this night and for those who dwell in the shadow of loneliness, despair, illness, or death (*especially*). We come begging that the child for whom there was no room will open the doors of our hearts to the needs of our neighbors and ourselves. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

We bring to the manger all people who, like the holy family, gather with children in the splendor of this most holy night, that the gift of faith be lavished on another generation. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

We bring to the manger the hopes and dreams of all the years, that with Mary and Joseph, angels and archangels, saints and martyrs, loved ones of every time and every place, our prayers and praises join in a common song uniting heaven and earth in a single peace. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your outstretched arms, O God, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in Jesus Christ, the light and life of the world.

**Amen.**

## **Dismissal**

Glory to God in the highest!

**Peace to God's people on earth!**

Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **Sunday, December 31, 2017**

### **First Sunday of Christmas**

#### **Prayer of the Day**

Almighty God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and yet more wonderfully restored it. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of the one who came to share our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

#### **First Reading: Isaiah 61:10--62:3**

*To the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet proclaims that the Lord's salvation will fully come to pass. Jerusalem will become a shining light to the nations and righteousness and praise will spring up as surely as the earth puts forth vegetation.*

<sup>10</sup>I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

<sup>11</sup>For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

<sup>62:1</sup>For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,  
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,

until her vindication shines out like the dawn,  
and her salvation like a burning torch.  
<sup>2</sup>The nations shall see your vindication,  
and all the kings your glory;  
and you shall be called by a new name  
that the mouth of the LORD will give.  
<sup>3</sup>You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,  
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

## **Second Reading: Galatians 4:4-7**

*Paul seeks to show the Galatians that the purpose of Christ's birth was to liberate us from the law's condemnation so that we would be fully adopted into God's family as sons and daughters.*

<sup>4</sup>When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.

<sup>6</sup>And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

## **Gospel: Luke 2:22-40**

*Luke's narrative continues with stories that emphasize Jesus' connection to Judaism. His family is devout in its observance of the law, and Jesus himself is recognized as one who will bring glory to Israel.*

<sup>22</sup>When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, [Joseph and Mary] brought [Jesus] up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), <sup>24</sup>and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

<sup>25</sup>Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. <sup>27</sup>Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

<sup>29</sup>"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,  
according to your word;

<sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen your salvation,

<sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

<sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup>And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup>Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed <sup>35</sup>so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

<sup>36</sup>There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup>then as a widow to the



age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup>At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

<sup>39</sup>When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup>The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

## Prayers of Intercession

*The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.*

Drawn near to God as children and heirs of Christ's promise, we pray for all people of God, for our nation and our world, and for those in need.

*A brief silence.*

For the faith communities of this *city/town/village* and for faith communities throughout the world. Help us to see ourselves in our neighbors, especially those who differ from us, and draw us together in common service to those who are hungry, poor, and oppressed. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

For the well-being of the earth as we begin another year entrusted with its care. Give us lively imaginations to see ways to conserve its limited resources, harness its renewable energies, and conform ourselves to its natural goodness. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

For peace among nations, for peace in our homes, and for peace in our hearts. Urge us to cry out at injustice and inequality among your people until vindication comes and righteousness prevails. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

For those who wait in the shadow of death, for those who are ill, for those who struggle to see the future, and for all who lack even their basic needs. Transform our love toward them with the vision of eyes that have seen the salvation of God. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

For those who cannot see, for those who cannot hear, for those who have varied use of their limbs, and for those able to exercise all the senses. Help us to appreciate the fullness of God's gift of life in our varied abilities, and to celebrate the diversity that reveals a more complete image of the one who makes us all family. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

We give thanks for those who have gone before us in this year and now rest in you (*especially*). Led by Mary and Joseph, Anna and Simeon, let us live in your praise until the day we depart in your peace. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Into your outstretched arms, O God, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in Jesus Christ, the light and life of the world.

**Amen.**

## **Dismissal**

Glory to God in the highest!

**Peace to God's people on earth!**

Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.

**Thanks be to God.**

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