

As expected in a book with this title, the authors outline the historical development of the Liturgy of the Hours and explain the value of this traditional “prayer of the Church.” Their unique contributions, however, include many suggestions for the actual planning of and praying the Hours with young people. *As Morning Breaks and Evening Sets* both addresses the theory and encourages the practice. Along with its numerous recommendations, reminders, and directives, this most practical manual also offers fifteen ready-to-use models of the Hours that address the events and situations young people encounter as they go about their routines—and as they find their routines interrupted by the extraordinary and the unexpected.

Directors of youth groups, teachers, pastors—all whose ministry touches the lives of young people—will find *As Morning Breaks and Evening Sets* a valuable hands-on guide for introducing, promoting, and praying the Liturgy of the Hours with our young generation of Catholics.

Rev. Kurt Stasiak, OSB
Director of Spiritual Formation
St. Meinrad’s School of Theology

How refreshing it is to discover anew the ageless value of the Liturgy of the Hours through this well-researched and creatively presented resource book for all who collaborate in pastoral ministry. The Psalms and the Gospel words of Jesus take on new life when prayed as these gifted authors suggest.

Msgr. Lawrence M. Purcell, S.T.D.
Pastor
Diocese of San Diego

As
Morning Breaks
and Evening Sets

For Jean McDermott, who invited me to sing in church:
model teacher, music minister, and mentor.

—Tony Alonso

For my Aunt Mitzi, who is the best pray-er I know.

—Laurie Delgatto

For Rev. Noah Casey, OSB

—Robert Feduccia

As Morning Breaks and Evening Sets

Liturgical Prayer Services
for Ordinary and Extraordinary Events
in the Lives of Young People

Tony Alonso, Laurie Delgatto, Robert Feduccia

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Introduction

For many Roman Catholics, mentioning the Liturgy of the Hours might conjure up images of robed monks or chanting in a far-off monastery. The most familiar communal prayer for most of us is the Sunday Eucharist, the very source of our Catholic identity. This may be the only liturgical prayer some Catholics experience in their lives. But the Liturgy of the Hours is the daily prayer of the whole Church. In its balance of ritual and simplicity, song and silence, it forms us in what it means to pray regularly as a community, and it prepares us for the Sunday Eucharist.

As Morning Breaks and Evening Sets is a tool for unearthing, dusting off, and tapping into the treasures of this ancient form of prayer, but in ways that are contemporary in style and relevant to young people. In stark contrast to the belief that youth ministers require nothing less than a light show, a smoke machine, and a rock band to reach teenagers' souls, more and more youth have actually been moving toward depth and quiet and away from constant motion and noise. They are exploring ancient spiritual practices and realizing the treasures of their own faith tradition.

This resource provides an introduction to the Liturgy of the Hours, a rich and time-tested way for Christians to pray with their community of faith. This type of prayer immerses believers in the word of God found in the psalms, canticles, and scriptural readings of the Church's Tradition. *As Morning Breaks and Evening Sets* offers an introduction to this type of prayer for those who work with

young people and explains how to do it. Included in this introduction is a brief history of the Liturgy of the Hours and guidance on how to prepare and implement these services in a youth ministry or high school setting.

At the core of this project are the prayer services, which serve to embody the wisdom of Tradition in a very accessible form. They address some significant events in the lives of young people and can be used in a variety of situations, from celebrating the opening of a new school year to helping youth mourn the loss of a classmate, teacher, or youth minister. The settings can vary from a Confirmation retreat to a summer mission trip—wherever youth are gathered. Whether formal or informal, these services are intended to connect real-life experiences with the rich prayer tradition of the Church. The services are brief (20 to 30 minutes), easy to use, and fully Catholic in content and format. They will, however, require some thoughtful preparation.

Music Feature

A special music collection called *As Morning Breaks and Evening Sets: Psalms, Canticles, and Hymns for the Liturgy of the Hours* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2004) was written specifically to be used in connection with this book. It offers wonderful, new contemporary musical settings from three of today's top liturgical composers: Tony Alonso, Michael

Mahler, and Lori True. These musical settings correspond to the psalms and canticles referred to throughout this book. Both the music collection (G-6401) and a compact disc recording (CD-609) are available through GIA Publications (*www.gia-music.com*). Although musical renditions for many of the psalms and canticles are found in parish hymnals and may likewise be used with this book, we encourage the use of these specially chosen compositions during prayer and the use of the corresponding recording as a demonstration for performance as well as personal prayer.

Communities are encouraged to use music that is familiar so that everyone is able to participate fully. However, the companion piece mentioned previously that's published by GIA Publications offers psalms and canticles that may be difficult to find elsewhere. The settings are accessible to groups of varying resources and instrumentation. In addition to the music collection, a CD of all the songs is also available. It may be particularly helpful in parishes and schools with limited musical resources. We encourage you to use this special collection of music as you implement the services in this manual.

Overview of the Liturgy of the Hours

As Christians we are the spiritual daughters and sons of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Rachel. With the Jewish people, we share a common faith in the one God, and we share common Scriptures in the Old Testament. This sharing is part of our inheritance from the people of Israel. Likewise we have inherited a pattern of worship that serves as the roots for the Liturgy of the Hours.

Central to the prayer life of Jews during Jesus' time was the recitation of the Shema (Deut. 6:4–5), both in the morning and in the evening. The recitation of the Shema was not a mere recollection of these two verses of Scripture. Rather it included a remembrance of the Ten Commandments, prayers of thanksgiving, and a remembrance of God's faithfulness during the Exodus from Egyptian slavery.

It was a structured prayer that corresponded to the two daily sacrifices in the Temple in Jerusalem that occurred in the morning and in the evening. The Scriptures indicate that Jesus also prayed in this manner as a faithful Jew.

Even though the content of the prayer changed from the Jewish prayer to the Christian expression, the early Church held on to these fixed times for prayer. Later, as the Church grew, while the celebration of the Eucharist was reserved for Sunday, the faithful gathered daily at the bishop's church, his cathedral, for the singing of hymns and psalms in a more structured manner at specific hours of the day. Those times of prayer became known as the cathedral hours and took shape as ritual for offering a sacrifice of praise to God.

In the cathedral hours of the faithful, the rising of the sun was seen as a symbol of Christ, as was the lighting of candles for evensong. With such a devotion to the symbol of light, Psalm 63 became part of morning praise, and Psalm 141 became part of evensong. Psalm 63 speaks of seeking and pinning for God. The Church recognized this psalm as a morning plea to pursue the Lord throughout the day, and Psalm 141 speaks of prayer as an evening sacrifice. For that reason, the authors of this resource have chosen these psalms as the primary psalms for these prayer services. As part of the sacrifice of praise, other psalms and hymns appropriate to the time of day found their way into the liturgy, in addition to Scripture readings, responses, canticles, and intercessory prayer. Eventually a sophisticated ritual for both morning praise and evensong emerged in the cathedrals.

At the Second Vatican Council, the Church emphasized that the Liturgy of the Hours is to be celebrated faithfully so as to sanctify the day. *As Morning Breaks and Evening Sets* hopes to fulfill the intention of the council. It hopes to take the ordinary and extraordinary events in the lives of young people and grieve with them, rejoice with them, intercede with them, and offer praise with them so that their lives may be sacrifices of praise in union with the whole Church.

The Structure of the Liturgy of the Hours

The Liturgy of the Hours is structured in the following pattern:

- invocation
- hymn
- psalmody
- reading from the Scriptures
- response to the reading
- Gospel canticle
- intercessions
- dismissal

All liturgical prayer follows this pattern of dialogue. The Liturgy of the Hours is no exception. The presider calls us to prayer in the invocation, and the hymn brings together the many different voices into one. As communal prayer, it is vital to an authentic experience of prayer that the faithful gathered be forged as one body in Christ. The hymn serves that function.

Gathered as one body, the faithful offer a sacrifice of praise to God. In the Eucharistic celebration, the People of God offer the gifts of bread and wine. Likewise, the psalms as the inspired word of God are gifts from God offered back to God. The psalms are words of perfect praise to the Lord and constitute a perfect sacrifice of praise.

This dialogue with God continues as the word of God is proclaimed in the Scriptures and the faithful respond as a community. After the response to the Scripture readings, the faithful pray the Gospel canticle.

As morning praise and evensong are the hinges upon which the day turns, the Gospel canticles are hinges upon which the entire liturgies turn. In the morning, the Canticle of Zechariah is sung as a hymn to God's faithfulness, faithfulness that has seen us through the night into the light of a new day. In the evening, we sing the Canticle of Mary as a hymn to God's providence and justice. Throughout the day, we have seen God's word go out and bear fruit. The hungry are filled, the lowly are raised high, and God has helped the people.

After the canticle, the people are invited to bring their needs before the Lord. God's care for us invites us to ask: What are the needs of the Church, the world, and the community? What are our needs? All our prayers and petitions then culminate as we pray the perfect prayer, the Lord's Prayer. Finally, just as in the Eucharistic celebration, we are sent forth from our worship to live in the light and to bear the light of Christ to a world plagued by shadows.

To Sing or Not to Sing?

The authors of this resource hope the richness of the Liturgy of the Hours is made available to young people. Because of the unique situation of each parish and school, it is important to remember that the prayer services in this book should be adapted to meet your distinctive needs. Keep in mind though that to be faithful to the Liturgy of the Hours, the official prayer of the Church, these services need to be both communal and musical.

The Liturgy of the Hours is not the prayer of the individual. Rather, it is the prayer of the entire Body of Christ. Even though those who commit to praying the Liturgy of the Hours daily (deacons, priests, and bishops) most likely pray the Liturgy of the Hours privately, it does not take away from the prayer's communal nature. By praying at morning and evening, they join with others who are also praying at that moment. Although separated by distance, those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours are never alone. Other voices are praying with them.

The psalms and canticles in the Liturgy of the Hours are meant to be sung. At the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours, if at all possible, try to have present cantors capable of leading the assembly in melodic praise and musicians able to play skillfully. If that isn't possible, the music collection to be used in tandem with this book, *As Morning Breaks and Evening Sets: Psalms, Canticles, and Hymns for the Liturgy of the Hours*, can be a helpful resource (see page 9).

If the psalms and canticles are to be proclaimed in spoken word rather than sung, maintain a musical sense even in the absence of a cantor or musicians. The psalms and canticles have inherent rhythm. The psalmist can help to reveal that rhythm by proclaiming the verses of the psalm and inviting the assembly to respond after each stanza with a line from the psalm used as a refrain. Or you may choose to have the presider and the assembly take turns reciting the stanzas. Another option is to divide the assembly into two groups and take turns reciting the stanzas. Although these approaches are not melodic, such back-and-forth recitations of the psalms and canticles are musical in their rhythm. Rhythmic translations of the psalms can be found in *Christian Prayer: The Liturgy of the Hours* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co.,

1976). You can also find various translations in an electronic format (see page 118 for a list of Web sites). The text for the canticles using this format can be found in the appendix.

Ministers of Prayer

As in all liturgical prayer, the role of the assembly is the most important one. Without the assembly there could be no liturgy. However, various ministers are needed to fulfill specific roles. This section includes descriptions of the ministries and how to prepare people to participate in each of them. Again, remember to keep in mind the resources of your parish or school. In their fullness, the prayer services in this book can involve all of the different ministries listed, but in some situations you may be able to enlist only a presider, a reader, and a psalmist.

The Presider

The presider will need the most preparation. He or she proclaims the prayers, sings the psalms, and experiences the silences as part of the assembly, but in a way that engages everyone else's participation. He or she determines the pacing of the prayer, especially the silences, and therefore needs to be extremely familiar with the structure of the prayer service. The presider should never be looking ahead in the script for what comes next but needs to know the rhythm of the entire prayer by heart. The presider must also know the prayers well, having practiced them silently and aloud several times before the service. With time and experience comes the grace and skill of a strong presider. Spend time in the worship space with the presider, reviewing even the smallest details of choreography and proclamation. A liturgy director or a priest also may be able to offer some guidance to the presider in his or her preparation.

The Reader

The reader who proclaims the Scripture reading needs to know her or his reading inside and out. She or he must spend time reflecting on the reading alone or with others, getting to know its historical context, and practicing it aloud. After the

person assigned to read has had adequate time to prepare alone, let her or him practice the reading aloud for you in the worship space. Work on pacing, diction, and eye contact. When multiple readers are used for a reading, it is important that they rehearse together several times so that the use of multiple readers enhances the reading rather than detracts from it.

The Cantor

As in the Sunday Eucharist, the cantor has a crucial role in the Liturgy of the Hours. The cantor is the person who leads all prayer that is sung. More than just knowing the songs, the cantor needs to be comfortable with gestures and facial expressions that invite the entire assembly into participating in the gathering and gathering song, canticle, and other sung responses. Cantoring may be a difficult skill for people who are accustomed to performing *for* others. The cantor's primary task is to allow the entire assembly to "perform" for God. Make sure the cantor's gestures, relationship to the microphone, and knowledge of the music reflects an engaging dialogue between him or her and the assembly.

The Psalmist

The psalmist proclaims the sung psalm and invites the assembly's response with her or his gesture. The psalmist's role is similar to that of a lector, but is proclaiming the Scriptures in song rather than in spoken word. If your school or parish is small and has a limited supply of vocalists, you may need to have the psalmist lead a spoken version of the psalms. But if you have many talented singers, a good way to involve one or two of them (if two psalms will be used) is to include a psalmist capable of proclaiming the psalm in song in addition to a cantor.

The psalmist, like the reader, needs to know the psalm in its biblical context and its relationship to the liturgy. He or she needs to pray or sing the words many times before proclaiming it for the assembly. Through the psalmist's proclamation of the psalm, he or she should be able to convey the psalm in a way that shows strong preparation and understanding of the poetry. Like the cantor, he or she must also remember that the invitation of the

assembly to sing its part (or respond in spoken word) is as important as the parts that he or she will proclaim alone.

The Choir

Although you may invite singers to support the assembly's singing, don't emphasize their role, especially in smaller settings. If you use a choir, consider placing them in the midst of the assembly. Having well-prepared, strong singers encourages everyone to participate.

Instrumentalists

The support of talented instrumentalists can greatly enhance any prayer service. The key is to prepare the instrumentalists in a way that emphasizes that their role in leading the assembly's sung prayer requires a different set of skills than does other types of playing. Teach them when it is appropriate to play and when it is not, that their ministry is at the service of the assembly and the song. This takes practice and patience. Also, take care to monitor the volume of the instruments in relationship to one another and the assembly so that the instrumentalists don't overpower the assembly's voice.

The Person Offering the Reflection

If you are including a reflection, it is important that the person who offers it can handle the responsibility. It is also essential that you work with her or him to prepare and that you approve the final draft so that it is theologically and pastorally appropriate. A good way to begin the process is to break open the word with a few young people and the person who will give the reflection. If you are not comfortable with this role, your parish priest or campus minister may be able to help. More information on how to prepare a reflection can be found on pages 116–117 of this manual.

Discerning Roles

Everyone has different gifts. Sometimes it may be necessary to encourage a young person to share a special talent or skill. Other times you may need to help a person discern a ministry that is best suited

to his or her skills when one is not obvious. Besides participating in the ministries mentioned in the steps that follow, people can help plan the services, create the art and environment, write the prayers, and greet people as they enter the worship space. No matter how big or small the ministry is, make sure the ministers are clear about their roles as both servants to and part of the assembly.

Take enough time to familiarize the young people with their roles and to make sure they are comfortable with what they are doing. The amount of time you spend preparing them will reflect the importance of doing this ministry well.

Planning a Prayer Service with Young People

The Liturgy of the Hours is the sustained, formal, yet nonsacramental prayer of the Church. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy stresses the redemptive power of the liturgy and the importance of active participation. This is especially true of the Eucharistic celebration but encompasses all liturgical prayer, particularly the Liturgy of the Hours. In light of this, take great care in planning it. Below are a few things to keep in mind when planning to use the services in this book. Additional information on planning prayer services can be found in the appendix.

Step 1. Assemble a team. At its root, *liturgy* means "the work of the people." Make it the people's prayer. Gather a small group of young people who will lead the planning of the prayer. Be sure to include someone who is able to represent the musicians well. As you get into the planning, you may discover a particular piece of music fits the occasion. If so, make sure it is a piece that the musicians are comfortable with.

Step 2. Set the agenda for the first meeting. You are choosing to use this resource for prayer because you are celebrating a particular event. In order to plan effectively, answer *who, what, when, and where*:

- **Who will be gathered, and who will be ministering?** We must minister to those who gather, not to those who do the gathering. What songs

are they familiar with? Do they have any favorites? Would any particular symbols speak to them? What songs are the musicians and cantor comfortable with? Who should preside or read?

- **What is the event?** What is the mood of the group likely to be? Which of the services best articulates the prayer of the group? What do the young people need to hear from God or say to God from their hearts about the event? In order to authentically speak to and hear from the Lord, you will need the pulse of the group.
- **When is the prayer service to occur?** During which liturgical season will the prayer be prayed? To be authentic to the intention of the Liturgy of the Hours, prayer during Easter should express the Resurrection, as opposed to Lent's focus on the cross. What time of day will the prayer service take place? The psalms and the canticles are dependent on the time of day. Also, if the service is prayed in the evening, you may need to address special needs, such as lighting for the presider, the reader, and the musicians if the room lighting will be dimmed.
- **Where will the people gather?** Will there be enough space to accommodate everyone? Is the space too large to maintain an intimate feel? Are there enough hymnals and resources in the space?

Bringing up such questions at the first meeting will help provide a prayerful experience for both the leaders and the participants. Be sure to designate who is responsible for assembling the musicians, setting the art and the environment, and providing all of the necessary print materials for the leaders and the assembly.

Step 3. Choose your leaders. Make sure you choose leaders who are capable of doing the task. Some young people are comfortable in front of people. Others are not. Regardless of their natural ability, empower the young people for success. Provide the presider with the order and text of worship well in advance and, if possible, rehearse with her or him in the worship space. Be sure the reader has the reading and the opportunity to rehearse in the worship space. Likewise, all those involved with the music—the choir, the instrumen-

talists, the cantor, and the psalmist—should have their music before the first practice. They will need time to practice as a group in the worship space.

Step 4. Invite the participants. If you are in a school, it will be easy to announce the prayer service. However, if you are in another setting, be sure to allow time for people to make plans.

Step 5. Secure any materials. Check in with the people responsible for art, environment, and any printed materials. Everything should be ready to go the day before.

Step 6. Pray. Don't let the busyness of planning a prayer service distract from your own need for prayer.

Some Final Thoughts

Take time with this manual before implementing these services. Get to know the history of the Liturgy of the Hours and its structure. That will enable you to begin to implement the prayer services with a strong understanding of the elements that make up morning and evening prayer. Work with the music director to find music that the young people will know. Spend time with the young people preparing them for their ministry. Investing a significant amount of time to beginning to pray this way will pay off in many ways as your community makes this prayer its own. Most important, trust that the gifts and spirituality of the young people you serve are as incredible as they are varied.

For the Liturgy of the Hours to truly reach its full potential as a way of prayer, it needs to be done regularly and to happen gradually. Begin with special occasions, using the topics in this book as potential opportunities to pray together. Work toward seasonal, monthly, then weekly prayer services. Soon the morning and evening prayer of the Church will become an integrated part of your ministry with young people. In time you will find yourself planning liturgies with young people and adapting them in length and content to the circumstances of the occasion.

Prayer Services for Ordinary and Extraordinary Events

In Times of Newness

IN THE CONTEXT OF MORNING PRAYER

Overview

This prayer service celebrates the blessing of newness in the lives of young people. It provides an opportunity to celebrate and reflect on the possibilities and joy that come with the beginning of a new year, a new school year, a new member of the group, or simply a new day. This prayer service would be especially appropriate for Morning Prayer during the Easter Season, when we celebrate fifty days of pure joy and delight in a God who makes all things new.

same vision in this passage from Revelation: a glimpse of the good that is still to come as we look forward to the great homecoming feast in heaven. This vision of the Reign of God wakes us up to the fact that it is something that can be celebrated in the present. Every new day presents the opportunity to experience the newness of life and to get glimpses of the Reign of God on earth. How can we touch the Reign of God each day? What opportunities do new experiences provide us with? How can we make the best out of newness in our lives? How open are we to letting God renew us each day?

Preparation

Guide for Preparing a Reflection

If you are including a reflection after the Scripture reading, Revelation 21:1–5, give a copy of the following guide to the person who will be leading it and suggest that he or she adapt it to his or her own style and purpose:

God is good, all the time! The Bible begins with the Genesis story of Creation, recounting God's creation of the world as being something "very good." The Bible ends with the

Preparing the Music

When choosing the gathering song for this service, choose something that is familiar to all so that everyone can easily join in singing. The following selections can be found in the second edition of *Gather Comprehensive*, published by GIA Publications:

- "All Things New," by Rory Cooney
- "Send Us Your Spirit," by David Haas
- "Fresh as the Morning," by Tony Alonso
- "Christ Is Alive," by Lori True and Brian Wren
- "Sing a New Song," by Dan Schutte

Order of Prayer: In Times of Newness

All the prayers in this service are led by the presider unless otherwise indicated.

Gathering Song

The person leading song stands, motions for all to stand, and invites the assembly to join in the gathering song.

At the conclusion of the song, all sit. If necessary, the presider motions for all to sit.

Psalmody

After all are seated, without rushing, the cantor or the choir begins the first psalm. The cantor or the choir sings the verses, and the assembly sings the response. If the psalms are proclaimed, the responses can be used after each verse.

First Psalm: Psalm 63

[All respond.] "As morning breaks I look to you; I look to you, O Lord, to be my strength this day" (Gather Comprehensive).

After a brief period of silence following the conclusion of the psalm, the presider stands and motions for all to stand, and she or he proclaims the psalm prayer.

Psalm Prayer

Let us pray. *[Pause.]*
God of all creation,
source of all light and life,
as morning breaks,
we sing our praise and thanks to you
for the wonder and beauty
of this new day.
May our prayer glorify
your holy name

and our work this day
be an offering to you.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

[All respond.] Amen.

After the psalm prayer, the presider motions for all to sit. Without rushing, the cantor or the choir begins the second psalm.

Second Psalm: Psalm 66

[All respond.] "Let all the earth cry out in joy to the Lord" (Gather Comprehensive).

After a brief period of silence following the conclusion of the psalm, the presider stands and motions for all to stand, and he or she proclaims the psalm prayer.

Psalm Prayer

Let us pray. *[Pause.]*
God of life,
we cry out in joy to you
for the glory of each new breath we take,
and for the blessings of your
relentless love in our lives.
As we call upon you,
on this new day,
lead us from death to new life,
in Christ Jesus, your Son and our Lord.

[All respond.] Amen.

After the psalm prayer, the presider motions for all to sit. Without rushing, the reader or readers stand to proclaim the reading from the Scriptures.

Scripture Reading: Revelation 21:1–5

A reading from the Book of Revelation:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals.
 He will dwell with them;
 they will be his peoples,
 and God himself will be with them;
 he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
 Death will be no more;
 mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
 for the first things have passed away.”

And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.”

The word of the Lord.

[All respond.] Thanks be to God.

Optional Reflection

After the reading, observe a period of silence. If there is to be a reflection, the person giving it stands. If there is no reflection, after the silence, all stand for the canticle.

Canticle

As the cantor begins the Canticle of Zechariah (the Benedictus), the presider and all make the sign of the cross. If this is to be read, see page 120 for a copy of the text.

Intercessions

All remain standing as the presider invites the assembly to pray the intercessions. After the reader has led the petitions, the presider concludes by offering a final prayer of petition:

Let us place our needs before God, who makes all things new, as we say, *Lord, let your face shine on us.*

- For open eyes and hearts to the blessings of each new day and new experience, we pray, . . . [all respond] Lord, let your face shine on us.
- For courage to accept new things in our lives, in times of joy and in times of sorrow, we pray, . . . [all respond] Lord, let your face shine on us.
- For renewed energy for all those who serve as teachers and mentors to students of all ages, we pray, . . . [all respond] Lord, let your face shine on us.
- For relief and comfort for all those who suffer in body, mind, and spirit, especially for those we now mention aloud [mention names], we pray, . . . [all respond] Lord, let your face shine on us.

- For all those who have gone on to the new and eternal Jerusalem, for lasting peace and eternal joy, especially [mention names], we pray, . . . [all respond] Lord, let your face shine on us.
- For the prayers we hold in our hearts and those we offer aloud [pause for prayers offered by the community], we pray, . . . [all respond] Lord, let your face shine on us.

God of abundance, hear our prayers
 and grant us each day the newness of your love
 and the beauty of your grace.
 We ask this through Christ, our risen Lord.

[All respond.] Amen.

Closing Prayer and Blessing

The following prayer and blessing are led by the presider:

The Lord’s Prayer

As baptized people thankful for the blessings of this new day, let us pray the prayer Christ himself taught us. [All join in.] Our Father . . .

Closing Blessing

Let us bow our heads and pray for God’s blessing:
 May the joy of knowing
 God’s unending love
 guide our steps in ways of peace
 this day and always.

[All respond.] Amen.

And may almighty God bless us,
 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[All respond.] Amen.

Sign of Peace

My sisters and brothers, let us go forth sharing with one another a sign of Christ’s peace.

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In Times of Crisis

IN THE CONTEXT OF EVENING PRAYER

Overview

This prayer service provides an opportunity for prayer and communal support during times of crisis. It may be used when an unexpected death occurs, in the aftermath of a natural disaster (such as a hurricane, a fire, a tornado, or an earthquake), during times of civil unrest, or in times of terrorism. It is also appropriate when a community is experiencing the loss of industry and jobs or when harm has been done to an individual or a community (such as from a school shooting, looting, or violence). Whatever the situation, the service offers the participants an opportunity to pray for and about a crisis or its aftermath.

Preparation

Guide for Preparing a Reflection

If you are including a reflection after the Scripture reading, Romans 8:35,37–39, give a copy of the following guide to the person who will be leading it and suggest that she or he adapt it to her or his own style and purpose:

The events of our lives, especially the painful and difficult ones, stay with us forever. All our experiences become a part of the fabric of our lives and offer opportunity for growth. But we have a choice: to grow through such events or to

be hardened by them. What has happened is not something to be gotten over. It is not something to forget and put behind us. It is something we learn to live through, and we carry the lessons with us into the future. God's invitation in these events is to trust that God will sustain our lives under any circumstances. This time is not comfortable—quite the opposite. But it is the quintessential teaching moment.

To trust is to recognize that Christ is in our midst, healing us, transforming us, renewing us, and guiding us. Nothing separates us from God. Trust in the Lord, who misses nothing that happens in our lives, who has the power to bring joy out of sorrow, wholeness out of brokenness, and hope out of despair.

Preparing the Music

When choosing the gathering song for this service, choose something that is familiar to all so that everyone can easily join in singing. The following selections can be found in the second edition of *Gather Comprehensive*, published by GIA Publications:

- “Neither Death Nor Life,” by Marty Haugen
- “Why Stand So Far Away, My God?” by Michael Mahler and Ruth Duck
- “The Cloud’s Veil,” by Liam Lawton
- “O God, Why Are You Silent?” by Marty Haugen
- “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say” (traditional English)

Order of Prayer: In Times of Crisis

All the prayers in this service are led by the presider unless otherwise indicated.

Gathering Song

The presider stands and motions for all to stand. The person leading song invites the assembly to join in singing the gathering song.

At the conclusion of the song, all sit. If necessary, the presider motions for all to sit.

Psalmody

After all are seated, without rushing, the cantor or the choir begins the first psalm. The cantor or the choir sings the verses, and the assembly sings the response. If the psalms are proclaimed, the responses can be used after each verse.

First Psalm: Psalm 141

[All respond.] “Let my prayer rise before you like incense, O Lord, and my hands like an evening off’ring” (*Gather Comprehensive*).

After a brief period of silence following the conclusion of the psalm, the presider stands and motions for all to stand, and she or he proclaims the psalm prayer.

Psalm Prayer

Let us pray. *[Pause.]*

Source of all love and life,

hear our voices as we cry out to you.

We call out to you,

O Lord, to fill our hearts with your Spirit,

so that as we are faced with the difficulties and anxieties

that life has brought us,

we may remember your eternal love,

and trust in the promise of your presence.

O God, our strength and stay,
our times are in your hands:
you uphold us in the chances and changes of our lives,
you do not abandon us in our distress.
Give us courage in this time of trial,
make us gracious and generous even as we suffer,
and lift our spirits that we may live always
in the confidence of your nearness and love.
We ask this through your Son,
our Lord, Jesus Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.

[All respond.] Amen.

After the psalm prayer, the presider motions for all to sit. Without rushing, the cantor or the choir begins the second psalm.

Second Psalm: Psalm 121

[All respond.] "Our help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth" (Gather Comprehensive).

After a brief period of silence following the conclusion of the psalm, the presider stands and motions for all to stand, and he or she proclaims the psalm prayer.

Psalm Prayer

Let us pray. *[Pause.]*
Lord God, maker of heaven and earth,
our help comes from you and you alone.
You, O God, give meaning to our hopes,
to our struggles, and to our strivings.
Without you we are lost, our lives empty.
And so when all else fails us, we turn to you!
When in agony, we are bystanders to our own confusion.
We look to you for peace.
Give us strength to face life with hope and courage,
that even from its discord and conflicts we may draw blessings.
We believe that you will hear us
in this time of difficulty and suffering.
Help us keep the image of your Son ever before us,
and let us feel the healing calm of your embrace.

God, all-powerful, you know our pain and see our tears.
Listen to our prayer, for we know our help comes from you.
We pray this in your Son's name.

[All respond.] Amen.

After the psalm prayer, the presider motions for all to sit. Without rushing, the reader or readers stand to proclaim the reading from the Scriptures.

Scripture Reading:

Romans 8:35,37-39

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans:

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor heights, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The word of the Lord.

[All respond.] Thanks be to God.

Optional Reflection

After the reading, observe a period of silence. If there is to be a reflection, the person giving it stands. If there is no reflection, after the silence, all stand for the canticle.

Canticle

As the cantor begins the canticle, the presider and all make the sign of the cross.

For evening prayer, the Canticle of Mary is the standard canticle. If the prayer service is held later in the evening, the Canticle of Simeon may be used instead. If the prayer is to be read, see page 119 or 121 for a copy of the text.

Intercessions

All remain standing as the presider invites the assembly to pray the intercessions. After the reader has led the petitions, the presider concludes by offering a final prayer of petition:

Surely Christ has borne our grief and carried our sorrows. Therefore we turn to God in prayer during this time of crisis, saying, *O Christ, hear us.*

- God of the nations and all peoples, we cry to you for consolation. We pray, . . . [*all respond*] O Christ, hear us.
- God of all power, we come to you in fear. We pray, . . . [*all respond*] O Christ, hear us.
- Unshakable God, we call out to you in grief and anxiety. We pray, . . . [*all respond*] O Christ, hear us.
- All-seeing God, keep watch over all who have been harmed and those who minister to them. We pray, . . . [*all respond*] O Christ, hear us.
- Compassionate God, send your Holy Spirit to soothe the suffering and comfort the afflicted. We pray, . . . [*all respond*] O Christ, hear us.
- Ever-present God, help us to feel your nearness in the midst of this ominous day. We pray, . . . [*all respond*] O Christ, hear us.
- Welcoming God, bless the dying and receive them into the arms of your mercy. We pray, . . . [*all respond*] O Christ, hear us.
- God of blessing, support our national leaders and all who hold authority in the nations of the world. We pray, . . . [*all respond*] O Christ, hear us.
- Finally, O God of truth, work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth and to unite us in harmony and love. We pray, . . . [*all respond*] O Christ, hear us.

Great God of all, have mercy and heal us.
 God of love, God of truth, God of life, God of hope,
 you know our needs are great at this time.
 You know them better than we can even state them now.
 In your mercy, hear our prayer.
 In your wisdom, grant us those things
 that will lead us forward to wholeness, love, and peace again.
 In your grace, bless us in this time with your holy and life-giving
 presence.
 For blessed are you, O God, and blessed is all that you do.

[*All respond.*] Amen.

Closing Prayer and Blessing

The following prayer and blessing are led by the presider:

The Lord's Prayer

As a sign of unity and reverence for one another, let us join hands and pray the perfect prayer. [*All join in.*] Our Father . . .

Closing Blessing

Let us bow our heads and pray for God's blessing:
 The God of love be with us all.

[*All respond.*] Amen.

The Christ of grace be for us all.

[*All respond.*] Amen.

The Spirit of peace be among us all.

[*All respond.*] Amen.

Let us go forth into the world trusting the power of God's grace and love.

[*All respond.*] Thanks be to God.

Sign of Peace

Let us conclude our prayer by extending to one another a sign of God's peace.