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OPENING AND CLOSING  
*Prayers*

FOR THE LITURGICAL YEAR



LORRAINE L. KILMARTIN

# Opening and Closing Prayers for the Liturgical Year

Lorraine L. Kilmartin



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## INTRODUCTION

Whenever we gather as Christians, we open and close with prayer. We call to mind that we are in the holy presence of God, and we invoke God's blessing.

When we pray with young people, we do even more. We teach them how to respond to God's gracious gifts. We familiarize them with Catholic spirituality. We show them how to make connections between the content of our faith and our lived experience. Ideally we present a variety of prayer forms so they can discover for themselves the spiritual path that will lead them most assuredly to a devout life.

*Opening and Closing Prayers for the Liturgical Year* helps teachers, catechists, youth ministry leaders, and anyone else who works with young people to achieve those objectives. For any given session with youth, this book offers a few options for prayer. You will find a choice of prayer styles, ranging from traditional prayers every Catholic should know to litanies, from Scripture readings to conversational prayers. Each prayer deals with the personal or social justice concerns of young people. Furthermore, every opening and closing prayer includes introductory material, which you may use as a lead-in to prayer or may want to incorporate into your session content.

This book loosely follows the *Roman Missal* in its grouping of prayers. The book opens with sections of prayers for use during Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. These are followed by a section of prayers for Church feasts and secular holidays. The book concludes with a brief section of general prayers for Ordinary Time

and ordinary circumstances. Peruse the table of contents from time to time to consider the options available for prayer on a given day.

When we meet with young people, any amount of time we give to prayer is time well spent. Through shared prayer, young people can come to know more fully the God who created them, who saves them, and who makes them holy.





# Prayers for Advent

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## The Season of Advent

### OPENING PRAYER

The calendar of the Church year begins with Advent. Advent is the season of waiting for Jesus' birth. Have you ever waited with hope and joy along with a friend or family member who was expecting her first child? Mary was a little like that woman, but her wonder was even greater: an angel had announced that her child would be the Son of the Most High God. Mary expressed her great joy in the *Magnificat*, a hymn of praise found in the Gospel of Luke. We praise God, along with Mary, as we wait for the birth of the Savior of the world.

### *Let us pray:*

We join together in praying Mary's hymn of praise in responsorial form. Our response will be "My soul rejoices in my God."

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;  
 my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
 for he has looked upon his lowly servant.  
 From this day all generations will call me blessed: *R.*

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

He has mercy on those who fear him  
 in every generation. *R.*

He has filled the hungry with good things,  
 and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
 for he has remembered his promise of mercy. *R.*

*(Lectionary for Mass, Third Sunday of Advent,  
 Year B: Isaiah 61:10; Luke 1:46–48,49–50,53–54)*

Let us pray together for Mary's intercession:

Hail Mary . . .

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

We often see images of Mary as Madonna: a young mother with a baby in her arms. But during Advent, we can picture her as a pregnant woman, waiting, like us, for Jesus to come into the world. In Advent, we wait for the season of Christmas and the birth of the Savior. We wait for Jesus to come more fully into our own lives. We also wait for the Lord's return, when he will fulfill God's plan once and for all. Saint Paul says that we are waiting for creation to "be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). He goes on to say, "We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies" (8:22–23).

### ***Let us pray:***

God, we celebrate Advent each year, but we may not really understand what we are waiting for. We have a vague feeling that something more is coming: a deeper relationship with you, a greater faith in your promises, a firmer hope that all will be well. Bring all of these to birth in us. At the same time, we see that our world needs your justice and peace. We are not sure how it will happen, but we wait for you to bring your healing power into the whole world. Amen.