

She Brought Forth Her First Born Son – An Advent Devotional

Edited by
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Universalist National Memorial Church

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Washington DC 20009

The following Prayer will be used throughout the Devotional

Jesus Prayer

Our Creator, who is in heaven, hallowed be your Name.

Your realm come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the realm, and the power, and the glory

forever and ever. *Amen.*

The following feast days occur in Advent:

St. Nicholas: December 6

Black Madonna: December 12

Sancta Lucia (St. Lucy of Syracuse): December 13

Winter Solstice: December 21 or 22

Festival of Lights - Hanukkah (Judaism)

Las Posadas: December 16-24

First Week of Advent

Sunday

Morning Rite to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.

The Call to Prayer

Come oh Jesus, for we abide in darkness. With our whole hearts, we are waiting for your redeeming Light.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Famished are we for you. We are seeking the path of truth and of learning. Show us your Great and Redeeming Light.

Morning Reading

Jeremiah 33:11, 14-15, KJV, adapted

The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the God of hosts: for God is good; and God's mercy endureth for ever;

Behold, the days come, saith God, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

Psalm of the Day – 19

The Jesus Prayer

Concluding Prayer

Oh God most holy, you have cast away the darkness to start this new day. Thank you for bringing me to this hour so I can offer my praise to you. Give me strength for what will come to me and gratitude for all that I have. Lead me to your Light so that I can follow the path you have given me. Amen

Midday Rite to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Great and Loving God, we are waiting here. We are waiting here for a sign. We are waiting here for a sign of your love for us.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Ah, come be with us, Most Holy God. We await the Child you are sending us so that we will not have to be in darkness any longer. We can barely contain our excitement!

Midday Reflection

Waiting for anything is hard for most humans. Our patience can be sorely tried if we have to wait in line at the grocery store, wait in our car for the light to turn green, wait for the game we've wanted to see all week come on TV. Now we have to wait for this Savior to show up. The darkness continues. We are trying to be patient, but it's not easy.

Psalm of the Day – 19

The Jesus Prayer

Concluding Prayer

Our lives, dearest God, are to be lived together, as you have shown us. We are grateful for those we can spend time with today. Teach us to be ever mindful of those in need, those who suffer, and those who just need a kind word or a touch of a hand. Help us to offer them a little of ourselves, because it is what you have taught us to do and it is the right thing to do. But mostly, it takes our minds off of ourselves and our petty troubles. Jesus taught us to pay attention to the least of these. Let us remember to do that today. Amen

Vespers Rite to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

We come hungry to feel you with us, O Thou who gave us life. Find us in this cacophonous world. Hear our deepest fears and wishes.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Unto thee, Oh God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks; we call on thy name and declare thy wondrous works.
Psalm 75:1 Book of Common Prayer, Kings Chapel

Vespers Reading

Matthew 25: 31-40, KJV adapted

When the Promised One shall come in glory, and with all the holy angels, then shall sit upon the royal throne and all the nations shall be gathered round. As a shepherd divides sheep from goats, so shall the nations be divided one from another. The sheep will be set at the right hand and the goats at the left.

Then shall the ruler say unto them at the right hand, Come, ye blessed ones of the Creator, inherit the realm prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; Naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer and say: When did we see thee a hungered, and fed thee? Or thirsty and gave thee drink? When did we see thee a stranger and took thee in? Or naked and clothed thee? Or when did we see thee sick or in prison and come unto thee? The ruler shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my sisters and brothers, ye have done it unto me.

Psalm of the Day – 19

The Jesus Prayer

Concluding Prayer

All Encompassing Compassionate One. We are grateful for this bounty you have provided for us. We eat of your love, your compassion and your divine food. The Light we crave at this time of year is waiting just at the edge of the dark. Your Child of Light will be coming soon. We anxiously wait. Now we light our candles and say Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah. Amen.

First Monday

Morning Rite to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.

The Call to Prayer

We beseech you, Oh Yahweh, to come and be with us now. Find us in the busy day, find us where we are, find us in our iniquity.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Oh, One who fills us with Love. Let us greet this day with joy. Let all of our cares, be for those others who are in need. Help us to stand at the ready for your Call.

Morning Reading

Matthew 5:14-16, ASV adapted

Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before all, that they may see your good works, and glorify God who is in heaven.

Psalm of the Day – Psalm 119: 169-176

The Jesus Prayer

Concluding Prayer

Oh God in Heaven,

Help us to find You in our lives and in those we love. Help us to find You in people we meet and those we see each day. You are our food and our drink. We know our lives depend on what you provide us. Give us the tools we need to spread Your Light into all of the world. Our candles are lit in your Hope and Promise. Amen

Midday Rite to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Almighty God, I am your servant. I am here to help those in need, in whatever form you send them to us. I am the candle ablaze that you have lit. Help me as I seek to be that Light to everyone I meet. Give me the strength to hold that Light up high. Amen

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Psalm 119: 105 NRSV

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Midday Reflection

*Crescent Moon by Karen Sandberg**

In November

the evening dipper holds dark early
holds silence in a cool embrace
circling the north star
I know you are not
there in the imperious black
you used it to deepen green
in your paintings full of light
I learn again to love the dark wrapped
around me enveloping me like a soft cloak
against fear I see the big dipper circle
the great ions of the north
flicker in green
dance in waves
holding
night above the morning planet Venus
while dark begins to fall
down the handle of the dipper
star by star
waiting
for dawn

Psalm of the Day – Psalm 119: 169-176

The Jesus Prayer

Concluding Prayer

Dear God, who is both Mother and Father to us. Light our hearts so that we can reflect your Light unto others. Give us strength for this day and guidance to do what needs to be done. Shine your Light on us so that our work is Your work. Amen

Vespers Rite to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Holy One,

We are here to do your will.

We are here to hear your Voice.

We are here.

As it is and forever shall be, Amen.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Creator Source, we are here to hear, to do, and to be. Let us find your Light and our Life. Knock on our door and we shall answer.

Vespers Reading

Psalm 119: 65-68, NRSV adapted

You have dealt well with your servant, Oh God, according to your word.

Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments.

Before I was humbled I went astray, but now I keep your word.

You are good and do good; teach me your statutes.

Psalm of the Day – Psalm 119: 169-176

The Jesus Prayer

Concluding Prayer

God in Heaven,

We light candles this evening for You, for us, for those we know and love and for the coming of your Child, Jesus. Help us to remember that we can also be candles in this busy world. As we partake of your bounty, let this food give us strength to be a candle for those most needing one. Amen

First Tuesday

Morning Rite to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.

The Call to Prayer

Almighty God, we bless and praise you that we have awakened to another earthly day. How shall this day be spent? In praise of our being here.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Almighty Mother, we greet you as you enter our humble presence. Almighty Father, we welcome you to this sacred time. Make yourselves comfortable, and hear our innermost desires.

Morning Reading

Luke 1:12-15 NRSV adapted

When Zechariah saw the angel, he was terrified and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of God.'

Psalm of the Day -Psalm 22

The Jesus Prayer

Concluding Prayer

O One Who Gave Us Life, give us this day.

We are indeed grateful for our life and for this day just opening.

Give us this day to live so that You are reflected in us.

Let us embody the love you have given us.

Let us not forget sow love and peace as we go about our day.
Amen

Midday Rite to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Blessed be you, Our God. For You gave us life. We live that life reflecting Your love, Your peace, Your Abundance. We say 'Hallelujah' and 'Amen'.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Zephaniah 3:14 NJB

Shout for joy, daughter of Zion, Israel, shout aloud!

Midday Reflection

We should remember that the celebration of Christmas is really the celebration of birth, of everyone's birth. We are reminded that every child born is a special child. When we light our candles today, we will remember that Jesus was one of God's special children, but not the only one. So many children born are not wanted, so many children born are not nurtured, so many children born do not get enough food to eat, or shelter or clothes. Jesus didn't talk about his specialness so much as how we should treat others. Let us remember that Jesus came into this world to remind us of the need to treat others with kindness and love, and that the 'least of these' are

included. God's love is reflected in Jesus, and Jesus' love is the cornerstone of our faith in God.

Psalm of the Day -Psalm 22

The Jesus Prayer

Concluding Prayer

O Thou Infinite One, who fills the universe with your presence and dwells in every heart. We come with a psalm of thanksgiving. May we find you in the ordinariness of our daily lives. We ask that your spirit rest upon us as we go about this day. May we never forget You are with us always. Amen

Vespers Rite to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Come, blessed Jesus, come. We eagerly await your Light and your saving way. We are thirstily awaiting your Coming. Come, blessed Jesus, and give us the light we so need.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

O God, You are great. As we prepare for Jesus' coming, we light our candles now in awe of your power and your love.

Vespers Reading

Psalm 25: 1,4-6, NRSV adapted

To you, O God, I lift up my soul.
Make me to know your ways, O God; teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.
Be mindful of your mercy, O God, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day -Psalm 22

Concluding Prayer

Heavenly Mother and Father, give us the ability to cast away darkness. As we light our candles this evening, put upon us the armor of light as Jesus did when he came to this earth. Jesus displayed humility in his life. Let each of us learn that lesson also. Give us your bounty, O Heavenly One, as we eat and drink of it now in this life and with hope in for the next. Amen

First Wednesday

Morning Rite to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.

The Call to Prayer

Let us walk in light to you, God, to proclaim your glory. Let us join with all creation to offer praise and thanks to you, O God, our God.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Come blessed Holy One. Come near and we will sing praises.

Morning Reading

Joel 2:1, 13-16, ESV adapted

Blow a trumpet in Zion, sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitant of the land tremble, for the day of God is coming; it is near,

and rend your hearts not your garments, return to God, your God, for Yahweh is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and God relents over disaster.

Who knows whether God will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind, a grain offering and a drink offering for God, your God.

Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day – Psalm 26

Concluding Prayer

You, O God, are faithful and loving in all You do. We praise and thank you for all creation. We know you do great things for all of us, and great things in this world. Your glory and love is everlasting. We wait in patience for your Child to appear and spread your Light to all that suffer and are in pain. Amen

Midday Rite to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Mother of Creation, Father of All, we seek your heavenly guidance as we go through our day. Come, sit here beside us. Give us your presence and love.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Praise and honor to you O God of creation. We ask you to be with us awhile. We humbly ask you to speak to our hearts.

Midday Reflection

'All desire leads to God.', Bernard of Clairvaux states in his writing, On the Love of God. It is funny that someone who dedicated some of his time to rooting out heretics said that. It seems to fly in the face of the love that God encourages us to practice. Perhaps Bernhard did not read his Bible as thoroughly as one would expect from a learned man. Or perhaps he only paid attention to those parts that suited his own belief. We all do that sometimes. But reading scripture that fits our own beliefs is one way to cultivate intolerance. That is not what God wants us to do. Its like going to church to find only comfort, when what we truly need is to feel uncomfortable.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day – Psalm 26

Concluding Prayer

Beloved God,
your gift of grace is so needed in this world.
Your love and compassion is needed in my life and those around me.
Teach me to share these gifts with everyone. Amen.

Vespers Rite to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Traditional Jewish prayer

I am thankful before You,
Living and Sustaining Ruler,
Who returned my soul to me with mercy.
Your faithfulness is great. Amen

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Blessing, honor and glory to you O God, Our God. We seek your presence and your salvation. Be with us now.

Vespers Reading

Isaiah 40: 1-5 TNIV adapted

Comfort, comfort my people says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and proclaim to her that her hand service has been completed,
that her sin has been paid for,
that she has received from God's hand double for all her sins.
A voice of one calling: 'in the wilderness prepare the way for
God;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a
plain.
And the glory of God will be revealed,
and all people will see it together.
For the mouth of God has spoken.'

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day – Psalm 26

Concluding Prayer

O God, thou is the fountain of everlasting love, thy spirit
dwells within us as water brings unending life. Let our
thoughts and motives be cleansed in its life-giving stream. Let
us resolve to grow and become the fruit of your spirit as we
thy children praise you in grateful adoration. Amen

First Thursday

Morning Rite to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and
9:00 a.m.

The Call to Prayer

We call on you, God, to be with us. We call on you, God, to
find our humanity within us. We call on you, God, to forgive
us, for we often know not what we do.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Ah, You come when we call, you come when we are least
expecting You. You come even when we can hardly hope for
salvation, You come because You love us.

Morning Reading

Luke 3:2-4 TNIV adapted

during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiphas, the word of
God came to John son of Zachariah in the wilderness. He went
into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of

repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the
book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: A voice of one calling
in the wilderness, prepare the way for God, make straight
paths for Yahweh.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day – Psalm 130

Concluding Prayer

O all redeeming Supreme Being. We know we often fall short
of your expectations. Be with us today as we go about what
we need to do, and keep us from committing acts that we will
later regret. Give us the strength to call out those who speak
badly of others, to show the love that You have given us, to do
and be as You would have us be and do. Amen

Midday Rite to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am
and 2:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Gracious and loving God, we ask for your presence now. We
ask you to be with us as we pause in our day. Be with us now
as we come to acknowledge that we cannot go on without
You.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

We are here, God. We are here to hear you. We are here to
hear your Word and feel your redemption.

Midday Reflection

Think back over this week. What have you done that you
regret? Ask God for forgiveness. What words have you said
that you would like to take back? Ask God for forgiveness.
What did you not do that you wish you had? Ask God for
forgiveness.

We all do things that do not show the love that God has for
each of us. Luckily not only can we ask God to forgive us, but
we know that God has already forgiven us. That is true
religion. God loves us so much, that when we sin (which
means to miss the mark), we are forgiven. It is both
comforting and healing to know this. Now, let us move on and
go about what needs to be done. Our hearts are lightened, our
souls salved. We are whole. God gives us this without asking.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day – Psalm 130

Concluding Prayer

Father, Mother, we humbly ask for your forgiveness and blessing. We know that our lives do not always follow the path You have laid down for us. We know that we often miss the mark, but in this knowing we can do better and will. Lay Your divine hands upon us and forgive us. Now, we will go on to forgive those who have trespassed against us. In forgiving, we cannot always forget, but we will move on. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Vespers Rite to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

O heavenly One, we beseech you to stand with us now. We are in great need. Our hearts are heavy and our mind in turmoil. Settle our inner maelstrom and help us to breathe deeply of your love. Stand with us now.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

We feel your presence beside us. You are here standing with us in our pain, our sorrow, our anger, our dread. Let us breathe in your Essence and be calm.

Vespers Reading

Mark 1:4-6, NRSV

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the 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.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day – Psalm 130

Concluding Prayer

Everlasting and gracious God, I confess my sins to you. I have missed the mark. I humbly repent of all my trespasses. Forgive me now and lay your loving hands on me. Now the day is over and I give up to you all of transgressions, all of my anger, all of my grudges, all of my missteps. I lay them all at your feet. Thank you most loving and forgiving God. As you lived through Jesus, the light of the world, live through me now. Give me the rest I need and the blessing I long for. I am ever your Child, as Jesus was. Amen

First Friday

Morning Rite to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.

The Call to Prayer

We sit straight up, hands clasped, feet flat and breathing deep. We are ready to listen. We are ready to listen deeply. Come, O Wondrous God. Come, O Extraordinary Jesus. Come and sit with us. We are ready to hear.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Yahweh you are with us! But Jesus, Yeshua, stands back. Waiting. Your time has not yet come. But we will wait. Wait for Yahweh's divine Light. Though we are anxious, we must wait. It is not time. We must have patience.

Morning Reading

Proverbs 8:32-35 TNIV adapted

Now then, my children, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways.

Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not disregard it. Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway.

For those who find me find life, and receive favor from Yahweh.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 139

Concluding Prayer

Yahweh, O Blessed One, we hear your voice. We are waiting patiently for your Light, Yeshua. Tonight, we will light our candles to warm the darkness and remind us that your Light is coming. Stay with us all day as we go about our lives. Bless all those we encounter today. May your love shine through us onto them. Amen

Midday Rite to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Beloved God, Yahweh, we are in the midst of our day, but we call to you. Stand beside us in our call. Your Light is coming, but sometimes all we see is darkness. Bestow upon us Wisdom to complete our day and Light to see.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

As we call to you O Yahweh, we feel you coming to be beside us. Your comforting Presence is with us. Now, let us hear what you say.

Midday Reflection

Wisdom is the Divine Feminine in the Bible. In Greek Her name is Sophia. She goes by many names outside of the Bible: Shekinah, Ruach, Hochma, Lilith, Inanna, Navaratri, Kuan Yin, Mary, (both Jesus' mother and Mary Magdalene), Black Madonna, Great Mother and on and on. There are so many names because every culture had Her. She never truly disappeared, but She did have to go underground for a long time in Western religious traditions. The longing for Her has begun to change the way people think of God. Genesis 1: 26, *NRSV: Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness;.* Notice the words 'us' and 'our'. She has been there all the time, but we had a hard time seeing Her.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 139

Concluding Prayer

O Yahweh, O Wisdom, O God. We continually seek You. We know You are with us all day, all the time. At times, it becomes hard to feel and see You, because we are too caught up in what is happening to us now. Let us breathe in and feel YOU. Thank You. Amen

Vespers Rite *to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Gracious God, our day is finally done. Let us breathe in your wondrous spirit. We eat of your bounty and are filled with your divine food. It is good to take this moment to fully relax within Your love.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

O Blessedness, welcome! We need You to be here with us now. Let us breathe in your presence and passion.

Vespers Reading

*Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach, NRSV
Apocrypha 24:30-34*

As for me, I was like a canal from a river, like a water channel into a garden. I said, 'I will water my garden and drench my

flower-beds.' And lo, my canal became a river, and my river a sea. I will again make instruction shine forth like the dawn, and I will make it clear from far away. I will again pour out teaching like prophecy, and leave it to all future generations. Observe that I have not labored for myself alone, but for all who seek wisdom.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 139

Concluding Prayer

Lady Wisdom, Father God, may you bless this singular body and all those who inhabit this world. Give your gifts to us so we may fulfill our destiny. As we prepare for the Light That Is Coming, help us to discern our path. We sorely need the Light That Is Coming, for we often get lost in the dark and lose our way. Help us find that canal that leads us to the river that leads to the sea. Now we light our candles to better to see Your Way. Amen

First Saturday

Morning Rite *to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.*

The Call to Prayer

I Corinthians 3:16 RSV

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Come, O Jesus, come for us. We are waiting for you. We light our candles, we eat of God's divine bounty and pray earnestly. Come, O Jesus, come for us.

Morning Reading

James 5: 7-11, TNIV adapted

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until Jesus Christ's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You, too, be patient and stand firm, because Jesus Christ's coming is near. Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of God. As

you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what God finally brought about. God is full of compassion and mercy.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 5

Concluding Prayer

Almighty and Everlasting God, you have brought upon me this new day. May I make it one to Your use. May everything I do, everything I say, everyone I meet, be as You would have it. Direct me in your will and your way. May your purpose for me be fulfilled. Amen

Midday Rite to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Oh God who is good, find me in the midst of today. Lay your hands upon me and breathe your life into me.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Eternal and life-giving Creator, hear me, see me, feel me. Stand by me as I try to accomplish all that is on my list. Help me to see YOU in all that is accomplished.

Midday Reflection

There is so much to do this time of year. We forget what it is really all about. Let us take some time right now, to slow down. Sit comfortably in a chair, feet flat on the floor, hands ready to receive the Holy Spirit. You can even do this in the middle of a shopping mall. Now, close your eyes and breathe deeply several times. What ever thoughts go through your mind, just let them pass. Don't concentrate on them, but concentrate on your breathing. Sit there for awhile, however long you need to. You'll know when you are finished. Now, keeping your eyes closed thank God for this time. Open your eyes and continue with your day. Do this exercise as many times a day as you can and as many times in a week as you can. It will help you to keep your focus and become a better Listener. After awhile, you will begin to realize that you are connecting with God.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 5

Concluding Prayer

Source of All Good, hear our prayer. Open our minds to your message, liberate our hearts to be open to its widest, and strengthen our souls so that we can live to the fullest of Your desires. For we are awaiting Your Redeeming Light. We have much to do before we can sit down to your Feast. In the name of the Source, the Word, and the Spirit. Amen

Vespers Rite to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

O God of Light, drive away the darkness. Help us light our candles, and to light the one in our heart. Let that light shine for everyone to see.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

As we light our candles, let the darkness slink back to the edge of our life. Let that light fill every corner in the room and fill us with happiness and joy. Welcome Holy One!

Vespers Reading

Isaiah 35:1-6 KJV adapted

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of Yahweh, and the excellency of our God. Strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold your God will come...Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb shall sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 5

Concluding Prayer

O Yahweh Our God, unstop my ears, open my eyes, let me leap as a deer and sing your praises for ever and ever. Amen

The Second Week of Advent

Second Sunday

Morning Rite to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.

The Call to Prayer

by St. Catherine of Siena

O Holy Spirit, O eternal God, O Christ, O Love, come into my heart;

By your power draw it to you, my God, and give me charity with fear.

Protect me, O ineffable Love, from every evil thought; inflame me and permeate me with your exquisite love, so that every pain may become a ray of light!

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Heartfelt Creator, be with me now. Sit beside me as the day is starting. Be with me as I step into the growing Light. Let that Light be my beacon of hope all day.

Morning Reading

Ode 38:1-6, Odes of Solomon (non-canonical)

I move up into the light of Truth as into a chariot and Truth takes me and causes me to come.

Truth causes me to pass across canyons and ravines and preserves me against waves smashing against cliffs.

Truth is my haven of salvation and puts me in the arms of Eternal Life.

Truth goes with me, soothes me, keeps me from error, because You were and are the Truth.

There is no danger for me because I constantly walk with You.

When I obey You, I am not in error.

Error flees from You and never meets You.

Truth proceeds on the upright Way.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 63

Concluding Prayer

O One of Everlasting Love, I give thanks to you for this day to come. I give thanks to you for my loved ones. I give thanks to you for the life I have. Lead me now into Your Light and help me grapple with the darkness that is within. Amen

Midday Rite to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

by Emily Dickenson

My period had come for Prayer-
No other Art-would do-
My Tactics missed a rudiment-
Creator-Was it you?

Silence

Greeting the Holy

O God of my Heart, I sing your Praises! You are here with me. My joy knows no bounds. Tend to my Heart's words here and now.

Midday Reflection

'There are many path's to God.', said a young American Indian shaman to me. I believe that is true. Some religions and some Christian denominations teach that there is only one path. How can that be? Each person determines their own path, and it is an individual one. There are millions of people on this earth, so how can only one path be the true one? And how would we know that is the one true path? God gave us minds to use. We must determine the path that we are to take, the one that God will show us, if we listen. Ultimately, we will take the right one for us.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 63

Concluding Prayer

Creator Mother, Father, I look in the sanctuary of my heart to find you. I am waiting for your Everlasting Light to dawn upon me. I know that I must wait. I will cultivate patience. I will listen for direction to the path I am to trod in this life. I am exceedingly grateful for your presence with me now and for the rest of this day. In Jesus' name and the Light He will bring, Amen.

Vespers Rite *to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

The day is ending. Let me light the candles. Let my heart pray.
Let my cares slide away.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Greetings, O Magnificent One! I am glad to feel you near.
Night is here. My candles flicker to frighten off the darkness.
Stay with me for my spirit falters and shakes.

Vespers Reading

Acts 17: 28-29, NRSV adapted

For in God we live and move and have our being; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are God's offspring'. Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 63

Concluding Prayer

O God in whom we live and move and have our being, be with us as we close out our day. We have eaten of your bounty, we have partaken of your blessing. Be with us through the night until the break of day. Amen

Second Monday

Morning Rite *to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Most Gracious God we call upon you to come be with us now.
We have awakened from the night slumber and are asking your blessing upon this new day.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Praise to you, Our God! We give thanks for your presence.
Show us clearly the path you have bidden us take. Give us strength, give us patience, give us joy.

Morning Reading

Proverbs 16:1-3, NRSV adapted

The plans of the mind belong to mortals, but the answer of the tongue is from God. All one's ways may be pure in one's own eyes, but God weighs the spirit. Commit your work to God, and plans will be established.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 51

Concluding Prayer

Merciful and Just God, we humbly ask for your assistance today. We know not what we will face, but with You, we can do anything. Keep us in your care and love. Amen

Midday Rite *to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Oh, God you sent angels to proclaim the Light of World and they sang and danced. Do you still send angels? Can I have just one? Please be with me now. I need your unconditional love and blessing. Come, sit beside me.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Nourishing Mother/Father God. I need you with me now. I am famished, but not for food. I need your spiritual sustenance. I can only get through this with you.

Midday Reflection

I have always been fascinated by angels. Though I have never knowingly seen one, I do know that others have. Angels are a presence in other religions besides Christianity. Within both Judaism and Christianity they have been written about for a very long time. Their appearance in the Bible at the time of Jesus' birth are an integral part of the Christmas story. Jesus couldn't have lived if not for angels. Let us open our eyes now and see if angels aren't around us. You must look very hard, for they don't usually just announce themselves. We have to find that 'inner eye' to truly see angels, but you may just come across one. If all that is just too much for you, then be an angel yourself to someone else. You may be surprised at how you feel doing that.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 51

Concluding Prayer

O Hidden One, I am so grateful for you. I can't see your angels, but I know You are with me always. Help me to find the strength I need to finish the day. I can't wait to light candles this evening to bring your Light of the World closer to me. Amen

Vespers Rite *to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Father God, Mother God I call to you. Be with me in this hour of repose. Hold fast my hand. Be with me now.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Come now and look upon this happy scene. The candles are it. The feast is coming. My heart is open to You.

Vespers Reading

Isaiah 11: 1-5 NRSV, adapted

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of God shall rest on him, the spirit of Wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the reverence of God. His delight shall be reverence for Yahweh. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;....Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 51

Concluding Prayer

Jehovah, Yahweh, Elohim, God thank your for this day. You were with me all day as I had prayed for. Bless me now as I sleep. Let all my dreams be of doing your work in the days to come. Amen

Second Tuesday

Morning Rite *to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.*

The Call to Prayer

As the sun pierces the darkness of night, we call to Jehovah. The new dawn is a signal for us of new life, a new day. Light

for humans is crucial, and at this time of year, we begin to crave its presence. Let us have this light guide us as we go about our day.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Let us awake to life, to the holy. Let us feel the breath of life and rejoice in this new day.

Morning Reading

John 1:1-5, NASB adapted

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through God, and apart from God nothing came into being that has come into being. In the Word was life and the life was the light of all. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 50

Concluding Prayer

O God, your light is so important to us. All things have come into being through you and we are thankful for your Creation. As this day unfolds, let nothing stand in our way as we walk the path you have laid out for us. Let your Light shine brightly. We need to see it and feel it. As we wait for the blazing Light you are sending us, we try to keep walking.

Midday Rite *to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

We call out to God for more light. Emanuel, God with us. We need you, God, to be with us now. Jesus was born to show that, indeed, God is with us. There is still a long way to go, but the light is coming closer. Jesus is coming closer.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Emanuel means God with us. The light will be with us soon. Jesus is Emanuel. He brought us to be closer to Go. The Child of Light will soon be with us. God will be ever closer.

Midday Reflection

We don't know exactly when Jesus was born. Scholars have posited he might have been born in late Spring or early in

October. We don't know the exact year he was born either. But none of that makes any difference really. We do know that he was born and that around the age of thirty he began his public ministry. His message of loving your neighbor, loving God, taking care of those who are hungry, naked and unloved is simple, but very powerful. His message is simple, but following it is not always easy. Many people today say they follow Jesus, but in other ways show that they haven't fully absorbed his message. The non-canonical Gospel of Thomas has no narrative as the canonical (those in the Bible) do. It is purely the sayings or teachings of Jesus. In it's starkness, it shows us that the embellishment of Jesus' message isn't necessary to truly and significantly understand what he had to say. Simplicity can add richness and clarity to what Jesus actually said. Find a copy of it in a bookstore or on the internet. It may help you to be a better follower of the One whose birthday we celebrate this month.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 50

Concluding Prayer

Loving One, to whom we sing praises, search our hearts and find Your love there. We know that God is with us each day, all day. Bless us as we continue to do the work we must do. We strive to carry out the message Emanuel was sent to tell. Amen

Vespers Rite *to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

The day is ending. We light our candles. Maybe we will light one or two more tonight than other nights. Hear our prayer, O Emanuel, O Word of God. Usher in the light we are so desperately seeking.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Thank you O Glorious One for being with me today. I am strengthened by your presence in my life. As I ponder the words, 'Emanuel' and 'The Word', I seek a deeper understanding of You.

Vespers Reading

Gospel of Thomas, verses 3 and 5 (non- canonical)

Jesus said, "If your leaders say to you, 'Look, God's realm is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say

to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, God's realm is within you and it is outside you. When you know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living God. But if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and you are the poverty."

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 50

Concluding Prayer

Bless me, O loving God Who Is With Us. Bless my restful sleep. In my dreams, show me your realm and your glory. Help me to let go of all that has happened today and to integrate it into my psyche. Let my soul rest, let me find peace and let my body refresh itself. Amen

Second Wednesday

Morning Rite *to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.*

The Call to Prayer

I can barely get up this morning. My heart is heavy and my burdens are loathsome. O God, help me to find the sweetness of dawn. I feel as if I am sinking into Sheol, the pit. Help me, God.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Are you with me, dear God? I raced through the time of silence, because I couldn't hear you. Please, show me that you are with me today.

Morning Reading

Lamentations 1:1-2, ESV

How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow she has become, she who was great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a slave. She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has none to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 13

Concluding Prayer

O God, who is with us always, hear my prayer. I feel very alone and unhappy. I will need to grit my teeth to get through this day. I feel as if I am slipping deeply into the pit of darkness, into Sheol. Sweet Jesus, pull me up. Amen

Midday Rite *to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Oh Light of Eternal Life, shine upon me. Let your light become like a fire in my heart to warm its darkest corners.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Spread upon me your delicious, all encompassing love. I am in great need and feel so alone. Zip up my garment of fleece that you harvested from the Lamb to warm my body to its correct temperature.

Midday Reflection

Sheol, in the Hebrew Scriptures is 'the pit'. In the New Testament it is associated with hell, but the original meaning in Hebrew was 'pit' or a place where you went after you died. In other words, once you went to Sheol, you didn't come back. It isn't necessarily a bad place, but one probably didn't really want to go there, either. In several of the Old Testament scriptures it indicates it is a place where one could end up in if one is feeling very depressed. At least, that is my interpretation of it. Often people at this time of year begin to feel very depressed. There is much less light than in summer or even fall. They start to think about how their life is not going the way they would like it to go, or they have unresolved issues from their past. They see others being happy and celebrating the season, but they don't feel that way inside. Sometimes they can barely get out of bed. It is not always easy to spot someone who is feeling this way, but be aware that many people do. They just manage to hide it really well.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 13

Concluding Prayer

O Merciful God, I do not want to go to Sheol. Keep me from sliding into that pit. Do not forget me and hide your face from me. Lighten my burdens and my soul. I am ever grateful to you. Amen

Vespers Rite *to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Consider my plight, O God of Ages. I need to hear your voice to calm the anxiety I'm feeling right now. It is hard to light my candles. It is difficult to consider sleep. Hear my cry, O God.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

You are so good to me, O Yahweh. Stay with me now and all through the night. I am your devoted servant and am trying to hear your mellifluous sound.

Vespers Reading

Psalm 86: 11-13, Book of Common Prayer, Kings Chapel, adapted

Teach me thy way, O God; I will walk in thy truth; unite my heart to venerate thy name. I will praise thee, O my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify thy name for evermore. For great is thy mercy toward me; and thou hast delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 13

Concluding Prayer

O God, I will walk with you in truth and love. My soul magnifies your name. I will walk around the mud that would let me slip down into the pit. Keep me sound until the break of day. In your Light, Your Truth, and Your Spirit. Amen

Second Thursday

Morning Rite *to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Almighty God, I humbly beseech thee. Grant upon me grace this morning. As the sun rises, I am aware of my many iniquities. I ask forgiveness, first, from you, O God.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Draw nigh unto me, O God. Your goodness and mercy continue on forever and ever.

Morning Reading

Jeremiah 17:5-8, The Message, adapted

Cursed is the strong one who depends on mere humans, who thinks one can make it on muscle alone and sets God aside as dead weight. That one is like a tumbleweed on the prairie, out of touch with the good earth. Life becomes rootless and aimless in a land where nothing grows. But blessed is the man who trusts God, the woman who stays with God. They're like trees replanted in Eden, putting down roots near the rivers— Never a worry through the hottest of summers, never dropping a leaf, serene and calm through droughts, bearing fresh fruit every season.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 103

Concluding Prayer

Almighty and Everlasting God, I humbly ask your forgiveness for all of my trespasses this past week. Today I will start anew and follow more closely Your Child of Light, Jesus. Even though it will be hard, I will ask forgiveness from anyone against whom I've committed a sin. I humbly ask for the strength to do this important task. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Midday Rite to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

O God show mercy to me, your humble servant. Receive my grateful praise and thanksgiving. Forgive my sins, for I know I have missed the mark.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

O God, make clean my heart and show lenience to me. Find me ready to receive you with gratitude.

Midday Reflection

As hard as it may seem, asking someone for forgiveness can be a cleansing experience. We don't often do that kind of thing, but it is a really important way to improve relationships with those around us. The person we ask may be very surprised and grateful or they may brush off your request. It doesn't matter, because at least you tried. Your gesture will not go unnoticed. Sometimes people have a hard time accepting an acknowledgement of wrongdoing. It may be because they had a part in it or because they have done the same thing to someone else and they wouldn't consider asking them for forgiveness. But no matter. You did what was right and that is what counts. At the very least, you will feel better.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 103

Concluding Prayer

Divine Father and Mother, remove from me my iniquities. I know I have committed many and I am humbly sorry. I regret these acts that have made others so unhappy. I pledge to do better. As I prepare for the coming of The Light of the World, I know that I must clean my heart and soul to make room for this Wonderful Gift. Amen

Vespers Rite to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

As I light the candles this evening, I will speak of all of the trespasses I have committed this week against others. I ask for your forgiveness, Good and Gracious God. Let all of these sins burn up in the bright flames.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

You are to be praised God Almighty. Your love, compassion and forgiveness are ineffable.

Vespers Reading

Mark 2:13-17, ESV

He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 103

Concluding Prayer

Almighty Redeemer, blessed are those who come in the name of God. Hosanna in the highest. Holy, holy, holy, God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Glory to you, O God, most high. Amen

Second Friday

Morning Rite *to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Mother of the Universe, Creator Divine, I call to you as dawn breaks. Humanity is in need of your healing. I am in need. Find in the seeping colors of sunrise, the paint by which you can create a New Jerusalem.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Morning Star, bright illumine, find me here. The Light of the World will soon be here. His nickname was the same. I greet you as you brighten the morn and embroider your crewelwork over the sky.

Morning Reading

*Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach 1:6-10
NRSV, Apocrypha, adapted*

The root of Wisdom-to whom has it been revealed? Her subtleties-who knows them? There is but one who is wise, greatly to be revered, seated upon his throne-God. It is he who created her; he saw her and took her measure; he poured her out upon all his works, upon all the living according to his gift; he lavished her upon those love him.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 146

Concluding Prayer

Blessed Sophia, Holy Wisdom I pray to you for guidance during this day. Give to me all of your knowledge and guidance. Be with me as I put my feet into your tracks. Amen

Midday Rite *to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Hildegard of Bingen

Sophia! You of the whirling wings, circling encompassing energy of God:

you quicken the world in your clasp,

One wing soars in heaven one wing sweeps the earth
and the third flies all around us.

Praise to Sophia!

Let all the earth praise her!

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Hail, Lady Wisdom! Your presence is exalted and your truth is to be praised.

Midday Reflection

Worshipping only a masculine deity or only a feminine deity promotes being unbalanced. Its like eating too much ice-cream and not enough vegetables. There are consequences to this deficiency. It can be seen in the lack of respect many women experience in society and the workplace. When only men's ideas are considered, then one point of view becomes the norm and anything else is considered heretical. This can be seen in health care. Doctors and scientists are finding that men and women have different symptoms for things such as heart attacks. Medications that work really well for men, may not work the same or as efficiently in women. So balance in ideas is key in religion also. Acknowledging the Feminine Divine and using inclusive language when talking about God restores balance to spiritual matters.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 146

Concluding Prayer

Mother of Creation, Father of All we thank you. We thank you for giving us Wisdom. We know that without Wisdom we are mere particles of dust glued together. Wisdom brings enlightenment and happiness. Amen

Vespers Rite *to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

The sun is setting. Darkness envelops us. We are awaiting the Divine Light. But it is not here yet. It takes so long to get to us.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

The light is very dim. But we are now in the presence of The Divine. We will wait patiently for The Light of the World.

Vespers Reading

Proverbs 3: 13-18, NRSV

Happy are those who find Wisdom, and those who get understanding, for her income is better than silver, and her revenue better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 146

Concluding Prayer

O Lord God and Lady Wisdom, we are indeed happy this evening. You have shown us how to live in a balanced world. We have taken your ways into our hearts. Our patient waiting will soon pay off, for the Light is coming. We ask for peaceful night's rest and a calm day tomorrow. Amen

Second Saturday

Morning Rite to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.

The Call to Prayer

Early in the morning I seek you, O God. I seek you to sing your praises. I seek you to revel in your spirit.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Open my eyes, O God, to You. Open my heart to your Word. Open my lips in praise.

Morning Reading

Jeremiah 23:3-6, NASB, adapted

Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply. "I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and

they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing," declares Yahweh. "Behold, the days are coming," declares Yahweh," When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And who will reign as ruler and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. "In those days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is the name by which they will be called, 'Yahweh, our righteousness.'

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 150

Concluding Prayer

Righteous God and Redeemer, who created all the Branches in the world, we are eagerly awaiting David's Branch. As another day begins, we, too, will not be afraid nor terrified. We will find you in everything we do today. Amen

Midday Rite to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Creator, we stand ready to receive your teaching. We are ready to hear your words.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

O God Most Holy, we are here to be spoken to. We are here to listen. Our praise is everlasting.

Midday Reflection

Christmas carols can be heard all over. You hear them in the car as you drive to and from work, in the grocery store, at the mall. They are ubiquitous. But they can serve a purpose. They can keep you focused because you know that in about two weeks time you will not be hearing any, which means Christmas is over. If you have a lot of tasks to accomplish before Christmas arrives, then you will be better able to what needs to be done. As much as we sometimes wish we could never hear a Christmas tune again, they are a finite commodity. Eventually, we won't!

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 150

Concluding Prayer

Heavenly One, there is yet so much to do. But we know it will all get done. Remind us to take time out to enjoy family and friends and getting together with them. Help us to practice

patience, humility and especially, generosity. We know that many don't have what we have and we must follow what Jesus taught us about taking care of others. So, we wait for that promised Great Light, and do what must be done and try to enjoy it all. Amen

Vespers Rite to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Let us sing of joy, of contentment, of sorrow. Our journey to the Light continues and we know that we will get there. Come, O Jesus, come.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Come, O Jesus come. Be with us as we light our candles. As we embrace the season in your name, bring us closer to our God and your God.

Vespers Reading

Revelation 1:7-8, NRSV adapted

Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen.

'I am the Alpha and the Omega' says God, who is and was and who is to come, the Almighty.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 150

Concluding Prayer

Merciful and Almighty God, thank you for this day. We have lit our candles, we have remembered You, we have remembered others. We are earnestly awaiting your Alpha and Omega. The wait is not long now, but still we anticipate a Grand Feast when the Light of the World comes. Amen

The Third Week of Advent

Third Sunday

Morning Rite to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.

The Call to Prayer

Alleluia! Praise God in the morning, praise God all day. Praise God for all of the blessings we have.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Offer gratitude for all that we have. Remember those who are without. It is good to offer praise and alleluia.

Morning Reading

2 Kings 4: 42-44, NLT, adapted

One day a man from Baal-shalishah brought the man of God a sack of fresh grain and twenty loaves of barley bread made from the first grain of his harvest. Elisha said, "Give it to the people so they can eat." "What?", his servant exclaimed. 'Feed a hundred people with only this?' But Elisha repeated, 'Give it to the people so they can eat, for this is what God says: Everyone will eat, and there will even be some left over!' And when they gave it to the people, there was plenty for all and some left over, just as God had promised.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 97

Concluding Prayer

O Wondrous Divine, as the suns peep over the horizon, I make plans for the day. Let me not forget to keep you in each of those plans. Together, we can accomplish everything. Praise and gratitude to You, One Divine. Amen

Midday Rite to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

O Merciful One, we want the peace of God that is beyond understanding. We want that peace to grab onto and hold tightly. It is the only kind of peace that makes sense to us. We are awaiting that peace to descend.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

We recognize You O Merciful One. We can feel you here. We await your peace that is beyond understanding.

Midday Reflection

Peace is something we all strive for in our lives. Countries want peace to be between themselves and other nations, though that currently doesn't seem to be happening. Individuals want peace in their lives. It is an ideal that we all wish we had more of, but it seems to be as elusive as ever. There are some people that feel it should be a priority in everyone's life and for every country. It's not that there is anything wrong with those ideas, but it is something that is extremely hard to accomplish. If countries are going to have peace among themselves, then changes must be made. Those changes will need to start with individuals, within families, because families, in particular, mirror society and nations. So those working for peace have to start with themselves, work with their own families and other's families and then they can move on to the international level. Peace starts at home and moves out into the world in an ever wider circle.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 97

Concluding Prayer

O God, let the peace that is beyond understanding descend upon us all. Let us start with ourselves. That is the hardest place to start. Give us the strength to learn to accomplish peace within each of us. Amen

Vespers Rite to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Compassionate God, be with us now. Spread your loving-kindness over us all. In earnest prayers, we seek to see Your realm come, Your will be done.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Our Rock who is compassionate and loving comes to fulfill the cause for which we are passionate about-that of seeing God's realm appear.

Vespers Reading

Genesis 28:20-22, NKJV, adapted

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then Yahweh shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.'

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 97

Concluding Prayer

O God, Father and Mother of all humans, may your Divine help be always with us. Grant us the peace that is beyond understanding. May Your realm come to fruition and Your righteousness be accomplished. As we await the coming of your Divine Child, we pray for our loved ones and the entire human family. May they all be under your loving wings. Amen

Third Monday

Morning Rite *to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.*

The Call to Prayer

The day dawns over the Earth. Our Mother Earth. We claim our responsibility for this great orb. God's hand is in every molecule of life here. We pray for it's life, for that is our life, too.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

We rejoice in God's creation. We are grateful for its beauty and its bounty. We are in awe of what has been made by the mere touch of Divine hand.

Morning Reading

Genesis 9:9-10;12-13, KJV

And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast on earth. And God said, 'This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations;

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 84

Concluding Prayer

Almighty God, you set your covenant with us and we must be responsible for this planet. We are your executors of that pledge. Today we will use less of your precious resources and conserve more. We will use this opportunity to live out our faith to intensify our spiritual growth. Amen

Midday Rite *to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

May the Holy Spirit come be with us now, as we renew our commitment to care for God's creation. We are commanded by God to tend for Mother Earth, and we must follow up on that assignment.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

O God, you are here. Guide us as we relearn how to be good stewards of our Mother. Find in us the fire of compassion for the planet we live on.

Midday Reflection

Praying for the healing of Earth's environment is something that people of many religious faiths are beginning to practice regularly. Getting their hands dirty and doing something positive is another form of activism currently seeing a resurgence. Christianity, for one, hasn't always been this way. We took literally the Genesis passage that says that we have 'dominion' over the Earth. We thought that meant that we could do anything to the Earth we wanted. Well, as any good Mother would do, Mother Earth began to let us know that wasn't responsible behavior. So, slowly, slowly, we have been forced to change that behavior to one that is more accountable. Today houses of worship conduct services devoted entirely to the subject. There even has been a Green Bible published recently that highlights environmentally themed passages. There is much to do to fix our dear Mother Earth. But all is not lost. We can, at least, pray, work and read and just maybe our spiritual lives will be enhanced.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 84

Concluding Prayer

We breathe your life-giving air and look upon your beautiful creation, God. We are thankful for what we have been given and filled with compassion for our planet Earth. Kindle within us a passion to fulfill your covenant and motivate us to action on behalf of ourselves. For we live on this Earth and our life will be in danger if we do not take the first step. Amen

Vespers Rite to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

As the sun sinks below the horizon and we light our candles, we can think of the miracle that is our Earth. The planet is turning steadily, though we cannot feel it. Night turns into day. Day turns into night. A baby boy is born and grows up to be The Messiah. A miracle.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Today was a miracle. Life is a miracle. Our Earth must be sustained as the miracle that it is, so that life can continue on it.

Vespers Reading

Deuteronomy 32:1-3, CEV adapted

Earth and Sky, listen to what I say! Israel, I will teach you. My words will be like gentle rain on tender young plants, or like dew on the grass. Join with me in praising the wonderful name of the Yahweh, our God.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 84

Concluding Prayer

Creator Mother and Father, you have given us air, dirt, water, plants, and animals. Let us inflame our desire to take care of all that we have been given. Help us to protect this precious planet and all that is on it. For there is only one and we have already done much damage. Impart to us the love you have given, so we may, in turn, pass it on to others and to the Earth. Amen

Third Tuesday

Morning Rite to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.

The Call to Prayer

It is so dark outside. I feel the darkness creep into my soul. O God, help me to light those inner candles.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

I hold the darkness and cold at bay, as I light candles inside my soul. You are here beside me, O Holy One and I feel your warmth.

Morning Reading

Matthew 5:13-15, NCV

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its salty taste, it cannot be made salty again. It is good for nothing, except to be thrown out and walked on. "You are the light that gives light to the world. A city that is built on a hill cannot be hidden. And people don't hide a light under a bowl. They put it on a lampstand so the light shines for all the people in the house.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 77

Concluding Prayer

O God, we wait for the Light of the World. We are salt of the earth, but fear losing our saltiness, our edge, our uniqueness. Today let us be beacons of your love and shine light where there is only darkness and loneliness. As we go out into the day and the light, give us the strength we need to do Your work. Amen

Midday Rite to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Is this what you call day, God? It is a pretty poor example. The light is weak, and it feels as if it is going to leave as soon as it can. We are all getting anxious to see your Light.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Holy One, if you are here, make a sign. Our faith is sometimes as weak as the light at this time of year.

Midday Reflection

As we get closer to the Winter Solstice, the sun's rays become weaker and less direct. Even people who normally are in good spirits start getting a bit grumpy, perhaps because they aren't getting enough sunshine. We humans are very sensitive to light. It is a basic need for us. Some of us start to get depressed as the sun daily begins to be seen less and less. Of course, in the tropics that is never a problem. There is a full twelve hours of daylight and then twelve hours of night, no matter the season. In northern climes, the Winter Solstice is a big deal, because it means that the sun is beginning to show itself more day by day. The area in which Jesus was born is closer to the equator, and so has more hours of daylight than we do at this time of year. They are probably less prone to feelings of sadness as the sun's time in the sky decreases. Those of us who live in less warm climates love getting out our candles at this time of year and lighting every one of them. Fires are good, too! So, go online and find out when the Winter Solstice is this year and plan a celebration around it. It doesn't have to be big, it can be just you or with family or a couple friends. It's a good excuse to buy more candles or to use every candle holder you have.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 77

Concluding Prayer

As there is less and less daylight, God of Light, help us to see Yours. Give us the resources we need to celebrate what we have in this life. Guide us to seek every source of light we can. And lastly, dear God, help us to shine Your light among those who need it most. Amen

Vespers Rite *to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

I am lighting candles for You, O God. Your Light is what gets me through each day. I light candles to remember that the Light of the World is coming soon. His healing touch is so needed all around us.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Yes. When I sit in silence and listen for you, God, I know that you are always with me. I am comforted by your presence. Lay your hands upon my fevered brow and administer your healing power. You are here.

Vespers Reading

John 9: 1-5 TNIV, adapted

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of The One who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 77

Concluding Prayer

O God, I call out to you. Hear me. Your healing power is all around. Let me use it for good in this world. The human race needs more light shone on the many inequities that exist all over. Help me to use Your light to enlighten those dark corners. Amen

Third Wednesday

Morning Rite *to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.*

The Call to Prayer

May Almighty God stretch out the Divine Hand to heal all those who are hurting, abused, or in pain.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

St. Theresa of Avila

Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion must look out on the world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which he is still to bless.

Morning Reading

Matthew 4: 23-24, 21st Century KJV

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria. And they brought unto Him all sick people who were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those who were possessed with

devils, and those who were lunatic, and those who had the palsy; and He healed them.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 3

Concluding Prayer

Beloved God, you heal those in pain and agony, whether in body or mind. Help me to be your hands and Jesus' hands in this world to relieve that pain and suffering. May I carry out Your Work, O God. Amen

Midday Rite *to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

The Lamb of God, who was Jesus took away sin and suffering. May I be part of that work, O God of compassion.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Oh God who works diligently for us, may I be used in Your work to relieve pain, abuse and suffering.

Midday Reflection

The highest form of love in Christian theology is charity or agape. Agape is a Greek word whose meaning encompasses both charity and love. It is also the unselfish love that we have for other human beings. Jesus' life and teaching shows that highest form, that agape. Let us take a moment to think about what we can do for others this holiday season. Is it volunteer or contribute money? In 1 Corinthians 13 it is the greatest of the three main Christian virtues: faith, hope and love. Those are also the names of three of the Sundays in Advent and three of the four candles in the Advent wreath. We proclaim that 'God is love', but we must do more than that. If God is indeed love and we follow Jesus' teachings, then we are compelled to action. What will you do for others during Advent?

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 3

Concluding Prayer

God who is the Father and Mother of us all, hear my prayer. Compel me to action to care for other human beings and creatures on this Earth. Help me find ways to serve others and relieve just a little bit of suffering. Quicken within me that

charity that is not easily provoked. By Your Grace then, good will may established on Earth. Amen

Vespers Rite *to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Let charity begin with me.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

God's spirit in this world is love. I light a candle for this love. May it always be in my heart, both day and night.

Vespers Reading

1 Corinthians 13, TNIV, adapted

If I speak in human or angelic tongues, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body [to hardship] that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 3

Concluding Prayer

O God, the Compassionate One, may my soul be renewed by your love. May that love transform me and renew my life so that I may show others compassion. I go now to rest, knowing that I am loved. Amen

Third Thursday

Morning Rite *to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Today I ask forgiveness for all of the misdeeds I have committed this past week.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

For all of my transgressions against you, God, I not only ask forgiveness, but commit to doing better. Stay with me today to prompt me when I start to stray from your laws.

Morning Reading

Daniel 9:15-17, NKJV, adapted

And now, O Yahweh our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as *it is* this day-we have sinned, we have done wickedly! O God, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers and mothers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us. Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and supplications, and for God's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 107

Concluding Prayer

Yahweh, hear our supplications for mercy. We know we have done wrongful acts, but we are heartily sorry. Not only were they done to others, but also against You. We know that to forgive is divine, but we must also forgive those who have trespassed against us. Lead me today in the direction You want me to go. Amen

Midday Rite *to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

I have a problem, O Faithful One. I say things about people I shouldn't. Sometimes I just say them in my head, but

sometimes they come blurring out of my mouth. I need your help and intervention.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

I know, I know. I need to take a breath before I speak. Maybe even a deep breath. I will try to remember to do that.

Midday Reflection

Speaking before we think is a universal problem. There are perhaps times when we take too long to speak, but usually we don't take enough time. This would be a good time to approach someone you have said something about and ask them for forgiveness. The good thing about seeking forgiveness is it makes you feel better. Forgiveness is also about forgiving yourself. That means that you no longer dwell on something that happened in the past and you move on with your life. You give it up, in other words. Give it up to God. In situations where you feel you cannot forgive someone, that is exactly what you do. You move on and no long dwell on what happened. Often easier said than done, but nonetheless a worthwhile endeavor.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 107

Concluding Prayer

Forgiving and Gracious God, I ask you now to help me forgive. Forgive those who have hurt me, forgive myself. I also ask you for strength and courage to ask forgiveness from those I have hurt. Amen

Vespers Rite *to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Today has been about asking for forgiveness from others and myself. Be with me now as I do that.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

As today comes to a close, I reflect on what I have done today and what I have been doing for the past week. It feels good to ask forgiveness, not only from others but from myself, too.

Vespers Reading

Isaiah 43:24-25, 21st Century KJV, adapted

Thou hast bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled Me with the fat of thy sacrifices. But thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins; thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am the One that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 107

Concluding Prayer

Dear God, as I blow out the candles tonight and seek my rest, I am truly grateful for your forgiveness. I know that I have committed many iniquities against others and myself and though I strive not to, I seem compelled to commit more. Your love and compassion comfort me. My soul is relieved. Amen

Third Friday

Morning Rite *to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Hildegard of Bingen

Then the heavens sent down dew over the grass, and the whole earth made happy, for its womb brought forth grain, and the birds of heaven set the nests in it. So food was made for men and women, and great was the joy of those who ate it.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Mother of All Creation, Sophia, Wisdom, Shekinah we greet thee this morning. We are safe with you protected by your savage passion. Oh, how we need that.

Morning Reading

Proverbs 8: 23-27, NASB

From everlasting I was established,

From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, When there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, Before the hills I was brought forth; While He had not yet made the earth and the fields, Nor the first dust of the world. When He established the heavens, I was there,

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 111

Concluding Prayer

Blessed Wisdom you were there from the beginning, sitting beside Almighty God as He established all the Earth. You were there even before humans were formed. You are still with us. You have always been there. You stand beside us day in and day out. We are grateful for your presence. Bless us as we start our day. Amen

Midday Rite *to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Teach me O Mother/Father Creator to be open to new things. Let me find peace in change. Help me to see both Mother and Father Creator in everyone I meet.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Here I am. I have space on each side of me. The Mother can sit on one side and The Father on the other. Now this is a Holy Family.

Midday Reflection

We are so used to thinking of God only as Father, never as Mother, that it sounds odd at first. But the more one says and thinks, 'God the Mother', the easier it is to conceive of it. Men have always had it easier because God is usually addressed as 'Father'. But women are left out essentially when that term is used exclusively. Say 'God the Mother' a few times and see how you feel about it. For men, this may be very hard to wrap your mind around, but think of it this way: you had a biological or adoptive mother, and since God made us in two varieties, and only two, why couldn't it be possible that beside God the Father was God the Mother? Women may have similar difficulties in dealing with God the Mother, though for many, they are relieved to find out that God can have a female face. The way I look at it is this: if you are male, then God the Father can work for you. If you are female, God the Mother. If you can believe the Trinity-three entwined together as one, then why not two standing together as The One?

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 111

Concluding Prayer

Mother God, Father God, here I stand, ready to receive you. Your works are great and righteous. Your judgments are fair and you render the helpless powerful. You are there when

your people need you and you stand firm in the face of the unholy. I gladly offer praise and thanksgiving for you. Amen

Vespers Rite *to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Dearest God, who created both women and men in your image, we call to you now as the day seeps into night.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

The candles are lit for Your Holy Presence. Silence has been filled with prayer and thanksgiving. Your words and guidance and most wanted.

Vespers Reading

Job 12:12-13, 16, NTIV, adapted

Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?

"To God belong wisdom and power, counsel and understanding. To God belong strength and insight and both deceived and deceiver.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 111

Concluding Prayer

Elisabeth Seton

O, let our souls praise You and all be devoted to Your service; then at the we shall praise you 'day without night' rejoicing in Your eternal courts. Amen

Third Saturday

Morning Rite *to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.*

The Call to Prayer

O God, those who are humble welcome your guidance and your grace. Let our mistrust, questions and indecisions melt with the rising sun.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

In seeking your will, grant us your Wisdom, O God.

Morning Reading

Jude 17-22, CEV, adapted

My dear friends, remember the warning you were given by the apostles of Jesus Christ. They told you that near the end of time, selfish and godless people would start making fun of God. And now these people are already making you turn against each other. They think only about this life, and they don't have God's Spirit. Dear friends, keep building on the foundation of your most holy faith, as the Holy Spirit helps you to pray. And keep in step with God's love, as you wait for Jesus Christ to show how kind he is by giving you eternal life. Be helpful to all who may have doubts. Rescue any who need to be saved, as you would rescue someone from a fire. Then with reverence in your own hearts, have mercy on everyone who needs it

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 88

Concluding Prayer

Infinite and Everlasting Spirit of Existence, we cultivate your love and light as a garden. At times it is hard to show the deep love that you have for us, but especially at this time of year, it is imperative to do so. We humbly ask for your blessing and are grateful for all of your support. We ask this in the name of Jesus, the coming Light of the World. Amen

Midday Rite *to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Life-giving God, in whom we live and move and have our being, inflame us with the love you have given us. We patiently await the coming of your Divine Child.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Come to your people, O Eternal One. Emancipate us from being caught up in the ways we have always done things. Eradicate from our minds the ability to think in only small structures.

Midday Reflection

This time of year, we are often drawn to 'the way we always have done things'. The old tradition has a massive hold upon us. Jesus encountered this in his time, too. Some people didn't want to hear about a new way of thinking or acting about God or their religious practices. They wanted the old stuff, the tried

and true. It was comfortable. But more often than we want to know, God calls us to change. We are not always supposed to be comfortable.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-*Psalm 88*

Concluding Prayer

Father God, Mother God, cleanse us of old, worn out ideas. Light a fire of passion for new ideas and for looking at everyday things in new ways. We love to sit in that oh-so-comfortable recliner and just lay back and close our eyes. But that is not what we are called to do. Sometimes we have to sit in straight-back chairs, concentrate and keep our eyes wide open. Help us to see that way as being really the most comfortable. Amen

Vespers Rite *to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

The time is drawing near when The Light of the World will appear. Will we be ready?

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Soon the Divine Child will be here. We have much yet to do. But we will take this time now to celebrate The Coming.

Vespers Reading

Infancy Gospel of James 13-14, (non-canonical) Scholars Version, adapted

Mary was in her sixth month when one day Joseph came home from his building projects, entered his house, and found her pregnant. He struck himself in the face, threw himself to the ground on sackcloth, and began to cry bitterly:.....So Joseph got up from the sackcloth and summoned Mary and said to her, 'God has taken a special interest in you-how could you have done this?....But she began to cry bitter tears: 'I'm innocent. I haven't had sex with any man.' And Joseph said to her, 'Then where did the child you're carrying come from?' And she replied, 'As Yahweh my God lives, I don't know where it came from.' And Joseph became very frightened and no longer spoke with her as he pondered what he was going to do with her.....But when night came a messenger of God suddenly appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Don't be afraid of this girl, because the child in her is the Holy Spirit's doing. She will have a son and you will name him Jesus....

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-*Psalm 88*

Concluding Prayer

Yahweh, ancient God, living God, we have our eyes wide open. We are watching for your Light. We are adjusting to new things, learning and seeing old things in new ways. It is like a veil has been lifted from our eyes and we can truly see. Far, far off in the distance, we can see a tiny Light. Oh, your Light of the World is almost here! We will go about doing what needs to be done, but will keep one eye on that distant Light. Amen

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Fourth Sunday

Morning Rite to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.

The Call to Prayer

Mother of All, Father of All you are our source of courage, love and compassion. You bring salvation and healing to everyone.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

In your Love, we flourish in body, mind and spirit.

Morning Reading

Malachi 2:10;3:1, Dead Sea Scrolls, adapted

Why are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our ancestors? Have we not all one Father, one Mother? Has not God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against another, profaning the covenant of our ancestors? Therefore, behold, I send my messenger, who shall prepare the way before me; and they will suddenly come to the temple, Yahweh, whom you seek and the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire; behold the messenger comes, says the God of hosts.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 96

Concluding Prayer

Most Gracious God, we are eager to see your messenger, Jesus, born of our sister Mary, who understood God's message and taught it to us. Mary, Mother, who represents our own mothers, who embodies our ideal of care and compassion, we honor you. Soon, you will enter that dangerous time of childbirth, one many women have experienced. We honor and pray for all women who labor and give birth to children, ideas and the New Jerusalem. Amen

Midday Rite to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

God is great and all creation glorifies Elohim. God is great and all creation praises Elohim. God is great and all creation blesses Elohim's name.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Psalm 67: 3, NJB

Let the peoples praise you, O God, let all the peoples praise you.

Midday Reflection

Elohim is one of the most ancient Hebrew names for God. It is in plural form. The first line of Genesis, in Hebrew is: *Bereshit bara Elohim*. A good translation of that would be: By means of beginning God (Elohim) created. There are some Biblical scholars who say that this term in plural form is the feminine plural. There She is, right at the Beginning.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 96

Concluding Prayer

O Elohim, we praise and glorify your Name. We luxuriate in your Divine creation.

From the beginning you were there, and you are with us now. Your love shields us and your strength emboldens us. Blessed be Your Name. Amen

Vespers Rite to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Open my ears to hear, and my lips will proclaim Elohim's goodness

Silence

Greeting the Holy

O ancient God of Israel, come be with your people. Find in us your reflection. We put our trust in You.

Vespers Reading

Zephaniah 3:14-15, NRSV, adapted

Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! God has taken away the judgments against you, and has turned away

your enemies. The ruler of Israel, our God, is in your midst; you shall fear adversity no more.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 96

Concluding Prayer

O God, our God, you are in our midst. How happy are we! Soon, your Divine Child will be in our midst, too. We are looking forward to that sacred time. We are preparing the feast. We can see that Light getting closer and our excitement rises with its steady beaming. Stay with us as we finish our preparations. Amen

Fourth Monday

Morning Rite *to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Psalm 90: 14, NJB

Satisfy us by your loving-kindness in the morning, so shall we rejoice and be glad all the days of our life.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Your goodness cannot be denied, O God! We bask in your Divine Love. We wait for the Light to dawn.

Morning Reading

Luke 1:27-33. KJV, adapted

To a young woman espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the young woman's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou art highly favored, God is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw the angel, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, fear not Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Child of the Highest: and God shall give unto him the throne of his father, David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his realm there shall be no end.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 33

Concluding Prayer

O Everlasting Divine One, we pray this morning for our family and friends. May you bless them and keep them safe. We pray for families everywhere. At this time of year many do not have what they need. Stir up our desire for benevolence to others and prompt us into action. A little love can go a long way. Amen

Midday Rite *to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Let us be like Mary, when told by the angel that she would conceive a very special child, pondered why she was greeted as a 'highly favored one'.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

We are ready to think about what we hear from God. God is not far away, but here with us. Emanuel: God with us.

Midday Reflection

Can you imagine being visited by an angel? And then that angel says that God considers you very highly? Then to top it off, you are told that you will give birth soon to a very special child? Mary must have been totally astonished! It is almost too much to conceptualize. In today's world that kind of scenario would still be considered amazing, but in that period of time, it must have been truly astounding. Here was a very young woman, highly favored by God, who would become pregnant and give birth to an extraordinary child. But why do we think that is such an astonishing story? Don't those kind of stories go on everyday in our world? What is so amazing about a young girl getting pregnant and having a baby who turns out to be out of the ordinary? It is the concept of ordinary that turns into extra-ordinary that captures us. Yes, these miracles happen every day, but that is the beauty of the story. Something that happens every day turns into a miracle.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 33

Concluding Prayer

O how wonderful it is to see and hear of miracles! We are so grateful for the occurrence of the birth of the Divine Child. We are waiting, but growing less patient as that Great Day approaches. We wait for hope, for love, for peace, and most of all for You, our God. Amen

Vespers Rite to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Good folk, the time for rejoicing is near. We light candles to remember, to hope to find in this season, joy.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Great tidings of fullest bliss! As we draw closer and closer to the Great Feast of God's Creation, let us ponder what the angel said and find if we can also be highly favored of you, God.

Vespers Reading

Ode of Solomon 38:15-19, non-canonical, adapted

You plant me and I am established and live and am saved. Your hands lay my foundation and I am secure. Truth sets the root, waters, adapts, and blesses. Truth yields fruits forever. Truth penetrates deeply, springs up, and spreads out. Truth is full and growing. I praise you, God, in Your planting and cultivation, in Your care and the blessing of Your lips. I praise You in the beautiful planting of Your right hand, in the fruition of Your planting in the understanding of the mind.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 33

Concluding Prayer

O Most High, we praise you and thank you for all of Your Creation. We await your Coming of the Light. We ponder the messages You have given us. As we cultivate and plant Your seeds, we continue to hope and have joy. Amen

Fourth Tuesday Morning Rite to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.

The Call to Prayer

Come, thou long expected Jesus. Bring us the Light we so desperately need.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

We await the coming of the Light. We await your Divine Child. We await.

Morning Reading

Lamentations 2: 10-11, 13 TNIV

The elders of Daughter Zion sit on the ground in silence;

they have sprinkled dust on their heads and put on sackcloth.

The young women of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground.

My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within; my heart is poured out on the ground...What can I say for you? With what can I compare you, Daughter Jerusalem? To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, Virgin Daughter Zion? Your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can heal you?

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 42

Concluding Prayer

O Creator, we feel like the elders of Zion and young women of Jerusalem, sitting on the ground, weeping and crying out for someone to save them. Who will come to save us, for our wounds are as deep as the sea? We must concentrate on the saving light that is Jesus, the Light that is coming to brighten our darkness. We must breathe deeply now and wait for the Light of the World. Amen

Midday Rite to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

O God who is in heaven, hear our cry from the depths. From the depths of Sheol, we cry.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

We cry from the depths. Can you hear us cry, O God of compassion? We cry from the depths. If you are here with us, you will hear our cry and take pity.

Midday Reflection

Some of us are still having a hard time seeing the Light others can already detect on the far horizon. The Light doesn't seem to be coming for us. Here again, we are in the Pit, Sheol. We can't just pull on our boot straps and get out of this deepness. It is hard to see anything that is positive. Our cries to God seem to go unheeded. We withdraw into ourselves and it becomes hard to reach out to others.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 42

Concluding Prayer

Oh God, hear our cries. We do not want to be down in the Pit once again. It is a most uncomfortable place. We want to participate in the coming feast, but it is hard to feel excited, it is hard to prepare. Great God, give your healing touch to us now and let us feel your peace. Amen

Vespers Rite *to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

Compassionate God, can you hear my cries? Are you here? Will you be here, soon?

Silence

Greeting the Holy

We still our cry, just long enough to listen. Is that the voice of God? Can we believe that our God has heard us? Is that a faint light we see?

Silence

Vespers Reading

Revelation 21:3-5, TNIV adapted

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and will dwell with them. They will be God's people, and God will be with them and be their God. Yahweh will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." The one who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 42

Concluding Prayer

Heavenly Father, Heavenly Mother, your light will overcome any darkness; everything that is dark in my life is yours to transform. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Fourth Wednesday

Morning Rite *to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.*

The Call to Prayer

We are waiting for you, O Light. You will make all things new. The darkness will soon be gone.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Your promise of light will soon be coming true. As we wait, we watch for it.

Morning Reading

Titus 2:11-13, The Message

God's readiness to give and forgive is now public. Salvation's available for everyone! We're being shown how to turn our backs on a godless, indulgent life, and how to take on a God-filled, God-honoring life. This new life is starting right now, and is whetting our appetites for the glorious day when our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, appears.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 67

Concluding Prayer

God of our Mothers and Fathers, your promise of Light that would be with us is almost fulfilled. In the silence of souls, at bottom of our deep imaginations, and in the heart of our lives be with us. Come, and fill us up to the brim with your love, now and forever. Amen

Midday Rite *to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

The sun is high overhead, or as high as it will get for this winter light. We are awaiting your Glorious Light.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

We laugh. We cry. We are anxious, apprehensive, uncertain. Why does it take so long for God's Light to appear?

Midday Reflection

This marathon of waiting is almost over. We are trying not to be or act like a little kid. Its not quite the same as when we were kids, but still the excitement is catching. As adults we can't wait for the special foods: cookies, turkey or roast beef or goose, pie, Grandma's side dishes, and Mom's bread. We can't wait to see family that we may not have seen for a year or more. Or maybe we'll be with friends instead of family and we

are really looking forward to relaxing with them. No matter how we celebrate, it's not going to be like any normal day and that is what makes us so giddy.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 67

Concluding Prayer

Dearest God, Our God, just like the first days of creation when you made the Light, it scatters all darkness to the far reaches of the universe. We are so happy that our long wait for that Light is almost over. The Divine Child, the Light of All Lights will arrive very soon and we are ready to be freed from the darkness that covers us. In the name of the Divine Child of Light we pray, Amen.

Vespers Rite to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

We stand by this night lighting candles, eating and waiting. But the wait is almost over and we are so grateful.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Psalm 74: 15-16, NJB

Yours is the day, yours also the night, you established the moon and the sun. You fixed all the boundaries of the earth, you made both summer and winter.

Vespers Reading

John 1:14 -15 KJV, adapted

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld the Word's glory, the glory as of the Only Child of the Father and Mother) full of grace and truth. John bare witness of the One and cried, saying: This is the One of whom I spake, The One that comes after me is preferred before me: for The One was before me.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 67

Concluding Prayer

Oh God, praise to you Almighty Ruler of creation. We are on the cusp of the coming of your Light. We have lit many candles and said many prayers. Now, as we go to our night's rest, we know that your promise will be kept. Amen

Fourth Thursday

Morning Rite to be observed between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.

The Call to Prayer

Like Earth at the end of winter, Mary held the seed of Jesus-growing in her womb. The time for fruition is at hand.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Woman/Earth holds her nearly ready fruit. Mary's clock time has run out and she already labors to bring forth the Light, the Logos, the Divine Child.

Morning Reading

Luke 2: 1-5, NRSV

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-Psalm 100

Concluding Prayer

We have finished our waiting time. Now the labor begins. Poor Mary on that donkey. But she wouldn't have been any more comfortable walking really. It might have sped up labor, which wouldn't have been good. We are putting the finishing touches on our Feast. Any minute now, the Light of the World will arrive. We are ready. Amen

Midday Rite to be observed between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 p.m.

The Call to Prayer

Psalm 31: 24, NJB, adapted

Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the One.

Silence

Greeting the Holy

Psalm 84:4, NJB, adapted

For God alone my soul in silence waits, truly my hope is in the One.

Midday Reflection

Mary had no idea what she was in for as she went into labor. Wrenching pain for one, as there were no pain-killers in her day. Childbirth is messy. In addition to pain, it's sweaty, as women can be in labor for hours and when hard labor commences, it is arduous work. Though to give Mary credit, she had probably seen other women in labor, since at that time babies were born at home and women of the village or neighborhood would have been with the mother helping. There were mid-wives at that time and we can only hope that Mary had one. They were the only health care professionals then. But helping at a birth and actually going through one yourself were two different things. And Mary was not in her home with familiar women hovering. Maybe, once they were settled in the cave with the animals or in the barn (depending on the story), Joseph went out in search of a mid-wife.

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-*Psalm 100*

Concluding Prayer

O God, we are glad to have this opportunity to celebrate the coming of your Light once again. Our happiness is tinged with the knowledge that some stay in agony all day because they suffer from either bodily or mental pain. We pray most earnestly for them and hope that their pain is relieved somewhat by your loving intervention. Our readiness for the coming of the Divine Child is done with the knowledge that many others can never get ready. They are the 'least of these' that Jesus talked about who don't have enough food, clothing or shelter. We pray for them seriously also and hope that through ours and other's efforts that they will have something they need. Most of all, Dearest God, let them all know that they are loved and others care for them. In the name of the Divine Child of Light, Amen.

Vespers Rite *to be observed between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.*

The Call to Prayer

The door is open. The Mother, Sophia, Shekinah, Elohim stand hovering about Mary. She is not alone after all.

Silence

Instead of being silent during this time, sing a few of your favorite Christmas carols.

Greeting the Holy

Standing back a bit from Mary and Joseph, is God, Yahweh, The One, Logos. They watch as Mary labors to bring forth the Light of the World, the Divine Child.

Vespers Reading

Infancy Gospel of James 17, non-canonical

Now an order came from Emperor Augustus that everybody in Bethlehem of Judea be enrolled in the census. Joseph wondered, '...what am I going to do with this girl?...And so he saddled his donkey and had her get on it....Joseph turned around and saw that she was sulking. And he said to himself, 'Perhaps the baby she is carrying is causing her discomfort.' Joseph turned around again and saw her laughing and said to her, 'Mary, what's going on with you?..... And she replied, 'Joseph, its because I imagine two people in front of me, one weeping and mourning and the other celebrating and jumping for joy.' Halfway through the trip Mary said to him, 'Joseph, help me down from the donkey-the child inside me is about to be born.'

The Jesus Prayer

Psalm of the Day-*Psalm 100*

Concluding Prayer

O God, Mary's labor is nearly over and we are about to sit down to your Feast. As any newborn child is welcomed into any family, we will welcome the Divine Child, and remember that every child born is special.