
Praying the *Liturgy of the Hours* for Christmas

Evening Prayer, December 24, 2020 | Morning Prayer, December 25, 2020

What is *Liturgy of the Hours*?

The *Liturgy of the Hours* is a “prayer of praise and petition... the prayer of the Church with Christ and to Christ” (GILH 2). When we participate in the *Liturgy of the Hours* (“the prayer of the Church”), we exercise our baptismal duty to worship God “as a spiritual temple and holy priesthood” (GILH 7) very similar to our participation in the Mass, that is, with the gift of Christ – the Word of God – offered back to God the Father. In the *Liturgy of the Hours*, we as the Church offer our “prayer of praise and petition” to God using the Word of God, specifically the Psalms. Christ himself would have prayed the Psalms during his historical life on earth, in accord with Jewish tradition.

Why pray the *Liturgy of the Hours*?

As stated above, the *Liturgy of the Hours* is the prayer of the Church. Although not everyone can be present at Christmas Mass this year, we can be connected to the universal Church in a special way by praying the prayer of the Church in our homes, which is the “domestic Church.” Those who have been called to Holy Orders and the religious life are obliged to pray the *Liturgy of the Hours* daily “to sanctify the day and the whole range of human activity” (GILH 11). Therefore, when you participate in the *Liturgy of the Hours*, even at home alone, you can rest assured that there are many others praying with you at the same time.

How do you pray the *Liturgy of the Hours*?

It’s simple! The words in **red** will guide you throughout the prayer on what to do. The words in black are the prayers that are spoken by a designated leader, a reader, or all together. The words will look different depending on who is to speak them (designated parts will also be labeled in red):

- *Italicized, not bold* = Leader alone
- Not italicized, not bold = All together or one group at a time (see group instructions below)
- **Not italicized, bold** = All together

Instructions for a group of people (if praying alone, all the parts are for you):

- *Psalms/Canticles*:
 - Traditionally, a group of people praying together will be divided into two, each group alternating praying each strophe (the divisions of the psalms/canticles into small sections) of the Psalm/Canticle. You could also choose to pray them all together.
- *Reading + Responsory*:
 - Traditionally, someone other than the leader is chosen to read the scripture selection and the Responsory to follow.

Traditionally, Evening Prayer is prayed around sunset, and Morning Prayer at dawn.

If you don’t do everything perfectly, *no worries!* God is still glorified and praised by virtue of the only one who is perfect, Christ our Lord. Let us simply strive to enter into the prayer of the Church with hearts full of love and praise!

Adaptations with Children

We all know it is important to keep children actively involved in prayer – even those little ones who do not yet know how to read. Since the lay faithful are not obliged to pray the *Liturgy of the Hours*, it may be helpful to adapt this prayer as needed to fit your family situation. Here are a some suggestions:

- Review the prayers ahead of time. Depending on the attention span of the child participating, you may find it helpful to shorten the prayer to just one or two Psalms.
- In place of the provided hymns, sing what is familiar to the children, such as “Silent Night” or “Away in a Manger.”
- If the child can’t read...
 - *Example for Evening Prayer:* Give the child a shortened antiphon (a short sentence recited before and after the psalm/canticle) to repeat after each strophe (the divisions of the psalms/canticles into small sections). The antiphon for the first Psalm (Psalm 118) is “He comes in splendor, the King who is our peace; the whole world longs to see him.” The child could simply repeat “He comes in splendor!” after each strophe at the indication of the parent.
 - *Example for Christmas Morning Prayer:* For the Canticle of Daniel (“Sun and moon, bless the Lord. Stars of heaven, bless the Lord...”), the child could say the part “Bless the Lord” at the indication of the parent.
- Rather than having the child sit through a reflection, you may choose to substitute the official reading and given reflection. For Evening Prayer you could read the Gospel of the Christmas Vigil Mass (Matthew 1:18-25) which is the beginning of the Nativity narrative. For Morning Prayer on Christmas morning, you could choose to read the Gospel for Christmas morning Mass (Luke 2:15-20) which continues the narrative with Jesus being found lying in a manger. Then you can tell your child in your own words what this story means to us as Christians.

Other Prayer Resources

Other family resources for prayer during the Christmas season can be found on the Diocese of Owensboro website under the Office of Worship: www.owensborodiocese.org/resources-for-prayer-at-home/. There you will find special Christmas season meal prayers, a short Christmas morning Litany of Thanksgiving (great to use right before opening gifts), a “Chalking the Door” guide for the blessing of your home on the Epiphany (January 3, 2021), and more!



Evening Prayer on Christmas Eve—*Liturgy of the Hours*

Special note concerning environment: It would be particularly appropriate to prepare the environment by lighting candles before Evening Prayer. Traditionally, during Evening Prayer, the ritual “lighting of the lamp” (called the *lucernarium*) would take place as the light of day fades into darkness. The flame of the candle reminds us of Christ’s light in the world, which is especially relevant on Christmas Eve as we celebrate the coming of Christ, the Light of the World. These can be any candles you find around the house. If you have been using an Advent wreath, you could switch out the Advent candles for white ones to symbolize the liturgical color of Christmas. You may also wish to light incense, which symbolize our prayers rising to heaven.

All make the Sign of the Cross while the leader begins:

(Leader) *God, come to my assistance.*

(All) **Lord, make haste to help me.**

(Leader) *Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:*

(All) **as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.**

Continue to next page.

HYMN

[Click here to access this song](#) performed and recorded by local musician Matthew Gray.

COME TO HIS MANGER

Casey McKinley

Verses 1, 3

1. O ho - ly night, ʔ still and won - der - ful,
3. Marked by a star, pro-claimed by an - gels,

1. in mean es - tate, a ba - by born. For this we've
3. wel - comed by choirs of heav'n - ly hosts. Shep - herds fall

1: to Verse 2
2: to Refrain

1. wait - ed, our tired eyes now see God's glo - ry.
3. down, ʔ their tired eyes now see God's glo - ry.

Verse 2

2. Con - ceived in grace, born of a vir - gin, all gen - er -

2. a - tions call his moth - er bless - ed. For this she la - bored, her

2. tired eyes now see God's glo - ry.

Refrain

So we come to his man - ger, wound - ed and wea - ry,
search - ing for more than our toil can tell. And we
find there our sav - ior, light in our dark - ness. In this new

1: to Verse 3
2: to Bridge

life all the hope for the hope - less dwells.

Bridge

O Light from Light, God from God, the new-born's cry is the

Fa - ther's love. For he has come to wake our hearts. He

to Refrain

is Em-man-u - el. Je - sus, Em-man-u - el.

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PSALMODY

(Leader) Antiphon 1: *He comes in splendor, the King who is our peace; the whole world longs to see him.*

Psalm 113

Praise, O servants of the Lord,
praise the name of the Lord!
May the name of the Lord be blessed
both now and for evermore!
From the rising of the sun to its setting
praised be the name of the Lord!

High above all nations is the Lord,
above the heavens his glory.
Who is like the Lord, our God,
who has risen on high to his throne
yet stoops from the heights to look down,
to look down upon heaven and earth?

From the dust he lifts up the lowly,
from the dungheap he raises the poor
to set them in the company of princes,
yes, with the princes of his people.
To the childless wife he gives a home
and gladdens her heart with children.

It is traditional to bow your head while saying "Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit" to show respect to the Holy Trinity.

***bow head* Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, *cease bowing*
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.**

(All) Antiphon 1: **He comes in splendor, the King who is our peace; the whole world longs to see him.**

Prayerful silent pause...

(Leader) Antiphon 2: *He sends forth his word to the earth, and his command spreads swiftly through the land.*

Psalm 147:12-20

O praise the Lord, Jerusalem!
Zion praise your God!

He has strengthened the bars of your gates
he has blessed the children within you.
He established peace on your borders,
he feeds you with finest wheat.

He sends out his word to the earth
and swiftly runs his command.

He showers down snow white as wool,
he scatters hoar-frost like ashes.

He hurls down hailstones like crumbs.
The waters are frozen at his touch;
he sends forth his word and it melts them:
at the breath of his mouth the waters flow.

He makes his word known to Jacob,
to Israel his laws and decrees.
He has not dealt thus with other nations;
he has not taught them his decrees.

***bow head* Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, *cease bowing*
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.**

(All) Antiphon 2: **He sends forth his word to the earth, and his command spreads swiftly through the land.**

Prayerful silent pause...

(Leader) Antiphon 3: *The eternal Word, born of the Father before time began, today emptied himself for our sake and became man.*

Canticle | Philippians 2:6-11

Though he was in the form of God,
Jesus did not deem equality with God
something to be grasped at.

Rather, he emptied himself
and took the form of a slave,
being born in the likeness of men.

He was known to be of human estate
and it was thus that he humbled himself,
obediently accepting even death,
death on a cross!

Because of this,
God highly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name
above every other name,

So that at Jesus' name
every knee must bend
in the heavens, on the earth,
and under the earth,
and every tongue proclaim

to the glory of God the Father:
JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!

bow head Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, ***cease bowing***
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.

(All) Antiphon 3: The eternal word, born of the Father before time began, today emptied himself for our sake and became man.

Prayerful silent pause...

READING | Galatians 4:4-5

(Leader or appointed reader:)

When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption.

Prayerful silent pause...

REFLECTION

Below are a series of reflections based on the Evening Prayer antiphons and reading. You may use this as a family discussion prompt or for personal reflection. You may choose to go through all reflections, or choose to focus on just one or two, as your time permits.

"He comes in splendor, the King who is our peace; the whole world longs to see him."

Reflection: Just as the world longs to see a cure to end the pandemic, before Christ came, the world also had a longing. After the fall of Adam and Eve, original sin was like a pandemic that changed humankind's relationship with God by creating an insurmountable distance between us and God. This is similar to how the Coronavirus pandemic changed our relationship with others by creating physical distance. When Christ was born, the world received its cure and our peace became incarnate. All of creation now has a living hope, a living cure to a disease which has separated us from God's friendship, and that cure is Christ. Just as with any cure, the only way it can save us is if we take it into ourselves. We must "come to his manger" as was sang in the opening song. We must let Christ be born anew in our hearts. If we can do this, we will be able to celebrate Christmas more authentically this year than we ever have. The pandemic has uprooted our traditions and changed how we relate to one another, but it has not taken away our joy and cause for celebration, which is Christ.

Discussion: Do we long for Christ like we long for a cure? How can we remember and experience Christ's peace in our everyday lives? What does it mean for Christ to be born in your heart (it may help to consider Mary as our perfect example)?

"He sends forth his Word to the earth, and his command spreads swiftly through the land."

Reflection: God sent forth his Word to earth in Christ being born. God's Word is powerful, so powerful that 2020 years later we still celebrate the birth of the Word incarnate all over the world. Not only was Christ a cure to bring about our peace, but his becoming flesh became our source of strength and power. This is true regardless of our outward circumstances. If we allow Christ, the

Word of God, to command our hearts, we will find that he is the strength and power that sustains us no matter what situation we find ourselves in. We can better dispose our hearts to Christ's command by reflecting on his Word in scripture. We should also give God praise with His Word by praying with scripture, especially in the *Liturgy of the Hours*.

Discussion: What would it look like for my heart to be commanded by Christ? How can I better incorporate God's powerful Word into my daily routine? How do I give God praise throughout the day?

"The eternal Word, born of the Father before time began, today emptied himself for our sake and became man." / "When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption." Galatians 4:4-5

Reflection: Think for a moment about the divinity of God. This is what King David attributes to God's divinity: "Yours, Lord, are greatness and might, majesty, victory, and splendor. For all in heaven and on earth is yours; yours, Lord, is kingship; you are exalted as head over all" (1 Chronicles 29:11, NAB). Now consider that this is the same God who became human for our sake. Can you imagine any ruler of a nation humbling him or herself by giving away all their power to live amongst the poor? God humbled himself inconceivably more than anyone could when he, full of divine glory and power, lowered himself in coming to us as a poor and vulnerable infant in a manger. Christ was emptied by being born under the law, subjecting himself to human authority, and all human experiences except sin. His ultimate self-emptying was his willing sacrifice for our sins by death on the cross. At any moment he could have made his divine authority known to all, to force our obedience to his will, but his love desires our freely given love in return.

Discussion: Out of love, Christ chose a life of poverty and humility when he deserved riches and power. Share a time when someone gave up their rights for your benefit. What are little ways that you can submit yourselves to others for the love of Christ?

RESPONSORY

(Leader or Reader) *Today you will know the Lord is coming.*
(All) **Today you will know the Lord is coming.**

(Leader or Reader) *And in the morning you will see his glory.*
(All) **The Lord is coming.**

(Leader or Reader) *Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.*
(All) **Today you will know the Lord is coming.**

MAGNIFICAT | Canticle of Mary – Luke 1:46-55

(Leader) Antiphon: *When the sun rises in the morning sky, you will see the King of kings coming forth from the Father like a radiant bridegroom from the bridal chamber.*

All make the Sign of the Cross, as is traditionally made at the beginning of the Gospel Canticle.

(All) My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

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

He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.

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

He has come to the help of his servant Israel,
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
The promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children for ever.

bow head Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: ***cease bowing***
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.
Amen. Alleluia.

(All) Antiphon: When the sun rises in the morning sky, you will see the King of kings
coming forth from the Father like a radiant bridegroom from the bridal chamber.

INTERCESSIONS

(Leader) *Christ Jesus emptied himself and took the form of a slave. He was tested like us in all things and did not sin. Now let us worship him and pray to him with deep faith.*

(All) **By the power of your birth, comfort those who are saved.**

(Leader) *You came into the world heralding the new age foretold by the prophets,*
(All) **give your holy people the gift of renewal in every generation.**

(Leader) *You once took on the weakness of our human condition,*
(All) **be light now for those who do not see, strength for the wavering and comfort for the troubled heart.**

(Leader) *You were born into poverty and lowliness,*
(All) **look with favor on the poor and comfort them.**

(Leader) *By your birth bring joy to all peoples with the promise of unending life,*
(All) **give joy to the dying through the hope of heavenly birth.**

(Leader) *You came to earth to lead everyone into the Kingdom,*
(All) **share your life of glory with those who have died.**

Here members of the family may add their own intercessions. After this, conclude together by praying the **Our Father.**

COLLECT (PRAYER)

(Leader) *O God, who gladden us year by year
as we wait in hope for our redemption,
grant that, just as we joyfully welcome
your Only Begotten Son as our Redeemer,
we may also merit to face him confidently
when he comes again as our Judge.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.*

All make the Sign of the Cross while the leader concludes:

(Leader) *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.*
(All) **Amen.**



Diocese of
OWENSBORO

Morning Prayer on Christmas Day—*Liturgy of the Hours*

All make the Sign of the Cross while the leader begins:

(Leader) *God, come to my assistance.*
(All) **Lord, make haste to help me.**

(Leader) *Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:*
(All) **as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.**

HYMN

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THIS SONG](#) PERFORMED AND RECORDED BY LOCAL MUSICIAN MATTHEW GRAY.

WAKE FROM YOUR SLEEP

Dan Schutte

1. Wake from your sleep, a Sav - ior is born. God's ho - ly
2. Come from your fields as shep-herds of old. Wel-come this
3. Stay with us now, O Lord of the earth. Make of our
4. Now shall the earth take joy in her tears. Now shall our

1. child gives light to this morn, all our dark - ness
2. child whom proph - ets fore - told. God has made the
3. hearts a place for your birth. Though our cares be
4. hearts be turned from their fears. All the earth shall

1. to dis - pel. Praise to our God whose glo - ry we tell.
2. earth his home. Praise to our God, the Sav-ior has come.
3. great or small, Je - sus the Lord, be born in us all.
4. sing God's praise. Je - sus the Lord, be born on this day.

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PSALMODY

(Leader) *Antiphon 1: Tell us, shepherds, what have you seen? Who has appeared on earth? We have seen a newborn infant and a choir of angels praising the Lord, alleluia.*

Psalms 63:2-9

O God, you are my God, for you I long;
for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you
like a dry, weary land without water.
So I gaze on you in the sanctuary

to see your strength and your glory.

For your love is better than life,
my lips will speak your praise.
So I will bless you all my life,
in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,
my mouth shall praise you with joy.

On my bed I remember you.
On you I muse through the night
for you have been my help;
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.
My soul clings to you;
your right hand holds me fast.

***bow head* Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, *cease bowing*
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.**

(Leader) Psalm Prayer: *Father, creator of unfailing light, give that same light to those who call to you. May our lips praise you; our lives proclaim your goodness; our work give you honor, and our voices celebrate you for ever.*

(All) Antiphon 1: **Tell us, shepherds, what have you seen? Who has appeared on earth? We have seen a newborn infant and a choir of angels praising the Lord, alleluia.**

Prayerful silent pause...

(Leader) Antiphon 2: *The angel said to the shepherds: I proclaim to you great joy; Today the Savior of the world is born for you, alleluia.*

Canticle | Daniel 3:57-88,56

Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord.
Praise and exalt him above all forever.
Angels of the Lord, bless the Lord.
You heavens, bless the Lord.
All you waters above the heavens, bless the Lord.
All you hosts of the Lord, bless the Lord.
Sun and moon, bless the Lord.
Stars of heaven, bless the Lord.

Every shower and dew, bless the Lord.
All you winds, bless the Lord.
Fire and heat, bless the Lord.
Cold and chill, bless the Lord.
Dew and rain, bless the Lord.
Frost and chill, bless the Lord.
Ice and snow, bless the Lord.

Nights and days, bless the Lord.
Light and darkness, bless the Lord.
Lightnings and clouds, bless the Lord.

Let the earth bless the Lord.
Praise and exalt him above all forever.
Mountains and hills, bless the Lord.
Everything growing from the earth, bless the Lord.
You springs, bless the Lord.

Seas and rivers, bless the Lord.
You dolphins and all water creatures, bless the Lord.
All you birds of the air, bless the Lord.
All you beasts, wild and tame, bless the Lord.
You sons of men, bless the Lord.

O Israel, bless the Lord.
Praise and exalt him above all forever.
Priests of the Lord, bless the Lord.
Servants of the Lord, bless the Lord.
Spirits and souls of the just, bless the Lord.
Holy men of humble heart, bless the Lord.
Hananiah, Azariah, Mishael, bless the Lord.
Praise and exalt him above all forever.

Let us bless the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Let us praise and exalt him above all forever.
Blessed are you, Lord, in the firmament of heaven.
Praiseworthy and glorious and exalted above all forever.

(All) Antiphon 2: **The angel said to the shepherds: I proclaim to you great joy; Today the Savior of the world is born for you, alleluia.**

Prayerful silent pause...

(Leader) Antiphon 3: *A little child is born for us today; little and yet called the mighty God, alleluia.*

Psalm 149

Sing a new song to the Lord,
his praise in the assembly of the faithful.
Let Israel rejoice in its maker,
let Zion's sons exult in their king.
Let them praise his name with dancing
and make music with timbrel and harp.

For the Lord takes delight in his people.
He crowns the poor with salvation.
Let the faithful rejoice in their glory,

shout for joy and take their rest.
Let the praise of God be on their lips
and a two-edged sword in their hand,

to deal out vengeance to the nations
and punishment on all the peoples;
to bind their kings in chains
and their nobles in fetters of iron;
to carry out the sentence pre-ordained;
this honor is for all his faithful.

***bow head* Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, *cease bowing*
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.**

(Leader) Psalm Prayer: *Let Israel rejoice in you, Lord, and acknowledge you as creator and redeemer. We put our trust in your faithfulness and proclaim the wonderful truths of salvation. May your loving kindness embrace us now and for ever.*

(All) Antiphon 3: **A little child is born for us today; little and yet called the mighty God, alleluia.**

Prayerful silent pause...

READING | *Hebrews 1:1-2*

(Leader or appointed reader:)

In times past, God spoke in fragmentary and varied ways to our fathers through the prophets; in this, the final age, he has spoken to us through his Son, whom he has made heir of all things and through whom he first created the universe.

Prayerful silent pause...

REFLECTION

The Gift

“I proclaim to you a great joy! Today the Savior of the world is born for you, alleluia!” (Second antiphon; Luke 2:10-11) Alleluia, indeed! What great joy we have been given when Christ was born on earth. This is a greater joy than any other thing we could hope for because Christ comes as the gift of eternal life in perfect bliss and love. But this is not just a purely spiritual gift that is “unwrappable” only after death—that’s the great news of Christmas!

The great news of Christmas is that God is not in some unknowable spiritual realm, but became incarnate in Christ—remaining fully divine while being fully human. God did this because he wants a real and personal relationship with each one of us, not just in a mediated way through the prophets as of old, but to be as close to us as family. What a gift, that the God who once “spoke in fragmentary and varied ways...through the prophets” (Hebrews 1:1) now, speaks directly to you in the person of his beloved Son. You may not hear his voice audibly, but he wants to speak to your heart.

For most Catholics, this gift of Christ was accepted for us on our behalf by our parents when they brought us to be Baptized. Baptism is when we became a child of God and a part of the Church

family. The Catholic practice of baptizing infants is a perfect reminder that this is a freely given gift. The newborn has done nothing to merit this gift! The fact that this gift is freely given and unmerited by us does not change as we grow older. There is never anything we can do to deserve it. However, this is a living gift. Just as with any living thing, we must nourish it if we want it to grow and bear fruit into everlasting life.

Jesus is a gift that is nourished by being used and given away. We do this by spending time in prayer and scripture every day, frequenting the Sacraments if we are able, and allowing God's grace to transform our daily lives so we begin sharing Christ with others. We know we are taking good care of this living gift because we experience growth and joy.

Growth: Even the infant Jesus did not remain in the manger, but grew in maturity and wisdom. We, too, are called to grow in our spiritual life after the example of Christ. Ultimately, this is a growth of Christ's love in our hearts. This growth of love has no end. It is like being given a full gift box with no bottom—you can never exhaust all of its contents because the deeper you go, the more you find there is to receive. This is not only a growth of love in ourselves, but one that bears the fruit that is multiplied in others.

Joy: The greatest earthly gift we could experience in this life can only show us a fragment of the true joy we were made for. Christ, our living gift, makes us whole again by restoring our relationship with God our Father. We were created to know God and experience his love. When we experience what we were created for, joy is the natural result. Adam and Eve experienced the joy of right relationship with God in the Garden of Eden before sin broke that bond. Perfect union with God is how we were created to live from the beginning. Until Christ came, the whole earth longed for that wholeness to be restored. We are privileged to live in "the final age" where we can accept the living gift of Christ and begin to experience wholeness and true joy on earth.

As Christians, we have reason to celebrate every day because Christ has come to live with us—not by being born on earth 2020 years ago, but today and forever in our hearts! On this Christmas day, let us adopt the Angel's proclamation with a few changes, and joyfully proclaim: "Today and forever the Savior of the world is born and lives in us, alleluia!"

Discussion questions:

- Did you know that there is no end to our growth in prayer and relationship with God?
- We have all failed to nourish the gift we have been given in Baptism. Christmas is the perfect day to dust off that gift and renew your commitment to Christ. In what ways can we do that (e.g., Sacrament of Reconciliation, renewed commitment to daily prayer, spiritual reading, getting an accountability partner)?
- Have you experienced joy in your relationship with Christ?
- Why does Jesus want us to share our gift with others?
- How can we share this gift with others—first in our family, then friends, people we encounter every day, etc.?

RESPONSORY

(Leader or reader) *The Lord has made known, alleluia, alleluia.*

(All) *The Lord has made known, alleluia, alleluia.*

(Leader or reader) *His saving power.*
(All) Alleluia, alleluia.

(Leader or reader) *Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.*
(All) The Lord has made known, alleluia, alleluia.

BENEDICTUS | Canticle of Zechariah - Luke 1:68-79

(Leader) Antiphon: *Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth, alleluia.*

All make the Sign of the Cross, as is traditionally made at the beginning of the Gospel Canticle.

(All) Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
he has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty savior,
born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets he promised of old,
that he would save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all who hate us.

He promised to show mercy to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham,
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,

Free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight
all the days of our life.

You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,

To give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.

(All) Antiphon: *Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth, alleluia.*

INTERCESSIONS

(Leader) *The Word of God existed before the creation of the universe yet was born among us in time. We praise and worship him as we cry out in joy.*

(All) **Let the earth ring out with joy for you have come!**

(Leader) *You are the eternal Word of God who flooded the world with joy at your birth,*

(All) **fill us with joy by the continuous gift of your life.**

(Leader) *You saved us and by your birth revealed to us the covenant faithfulness of the Lord,*

(All) **help us to be faithful to the promises of our baptism.**

(Leader) *You are the King of heaven and earth who sent messengers to announce peace to all,*

(All) **let our lives be filled with your peace.**

(Leader) *You are the true vine that brings forth the fruit of life,*

(All) **make us branches of the vine bearing much fruit.**

Here members of the family may add their own intercessions. After this, conclude together by praying the Our Father.

COLLECT (PRAYER)

(Leader) *Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that, as we are bathed in the new radiance of your incarnate Word,
the light of faith, which illumines our minds,
may also shine through in our deeds.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.*

All make the Sign of the Cross while the leader concludes:

(Leader) *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.*

(All) **Amen.**