

Christmas Eve: Liturgy

Invocation

My beloveds in Christ, as we enter into worship, let us pause for a moment to center ourselves. Let us draw our imaginations upward to the heavens for some stargazing. With eyes opened or closed, what beauty, vastness, possibility, mystery do you see in the night sky? How exquisite the contrast is between light and dark. Perhaps consider what it is like for God to gaze upon you the same way—to witness your beauty, vastness, possibility, and mystery—to feel how exquisite the contrasts are within you, and love you all the more for it. Maybe consider gazing upon the lights of your life—friends, family, beloved creatures and places—and how we have these circuits of loving attention all around us. From this space, O Divine Creator, we awake with eyes wide open to rejoice in this liturgy, this “work of the people,” who are ready to praise you, ready to sense you, ready to welcome you home! Amen.

Litany of the Advent Candle

One: Rejoice! Rejoice! My fellow People of the Way, make haste!

All: For love is born naked and longs for a warm embrace.

One: Come, let us gather round and encircle this moment to enfold it with care.

All: Let us step closer and closer to the babe in the manger.

One: Like the second-shift shepherds tending their sheep that fateful night—guided by the angel saying,

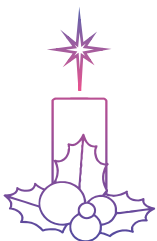
All: “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy for all people!”

One: And when the shepherds arrived, they brought words of consolation to Mary.

All: Which she treasured in her heart.

One: So let us light the final Christ candle, that it may be for us a symbol of comfort.

All: That we have arrived, that what we have longed and hoped for did indeed come. Amen.
(Light the candles)



“...WHEN THEY SAW THE **STAR**, THEY WERE FILLED WITH **JOY**...”

MATTHEW 2:10

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Prayer of Transformation and Grace

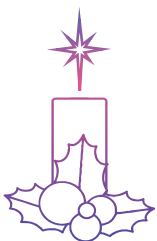
Paul writes, *the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light* (Rom. 13:12). Gracious God, help us to cast aside the burdens that weigh us down and to embrace the way of grace and light that you offer. May the sacredness of this Holy Eve remind us that the world's children are our children, that the invitation to love as widely as we can is what we have been preparing for this Advent season. Grant us the courage we need to be present in the manger moments you are calling us to today. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

Having loved enough and lost enough, I am no longer searching, just opening. No longer trying to make sense of pain, but trying to be a soft and sturdy home in which real things can land. Inspired by these words of the poet Mark Nepo, and practicing the Advent gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love, may we be the generous and sturdy, yet tender, place for one another to land. As we join in this offering, may it be so. Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

O God of the Newborn, Spirit of the Soft Skin swaddled in a humble but sturdy manger, bless our offerings to what is real: our care for one another, our blessed belonging, the grief we feel, the love we hold, the hope we are tending for tomorrow. Amen.



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