



THE CHURCH
OF ST. MICHAEL & ST. GEORGE

The Order for Evening Prayer

The Eve of Christmas

December 24, 2020

Opening Sentences

Officiant Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.
Luke 2:10-11

Confession of Sin

¶ The Officiant says

DEARLY BELOVED, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our heavenly Father, to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his holy Word, and to ask, for ourselves and on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and our salvation. And so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship him, let us kneel in silence, and with penitent and obedient hearts confess our sins, that we may obtain forgiveness by his infinite goodness and mercy.

¶ Officiant and People, all kneeling

Almighty and most merciful Father,
we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep,
we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts,
we have offended against thy holy laws,
we have left undone those things which we ought to have done,
and we have done those things which we ought not to have done;
And there is no health in us.

But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us,
spare thou those who confess their faults,
restore thou those who are penitent,
according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord;
and grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake,
that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life,
to the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.

¶ The Officiant alone stands and says

The Almighty and merciful Lord grant you absolution **†** and remission of all your sins, true repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and consolation of his Holy Spirit.

¶ People Amen.

¶ All stand

The Invitatory and Psalter

Officiant O Lord, open thou our lips.

People And our mouth shall show forth thy praise.

Officiant O God, make speed to save us.

People O Lord, make haste to help us.

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

Phos hilaron

¶ Said by all

O gracious Light,
pure brightness of the everliving Father in heaven,
O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!

Now as we come to the setting of the sun,
and our eyes behold the vesper light,
we sing thy praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Thou art worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices,
O Son of God, O Giver of life,
and to be glorified through all the worlds.

¶ All are then seated for the Psalm appointed for the evening

Psalm 96

Cantate Domino

O sing unto the Lord a new song; *
sing unto the Lord, all the whole earth.

Sing unto the Lord, and praise his Name; *
be telling of his salvation from day to day.

Declare his honour unto the heathen, *
and his wonders unto all peoples.

For the Lord is great, and cannot worthily be praised; *
he is more to be feared than all Gods.

As for all the Gods of the heathen, they are but idols; *
but it is the Lord that made the heavens.

Glory and worship are before him; *
power and honour are in his sanctuary.

Ascribe unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the peoples, *
ascribe unto the Lord worship and power.

Ascribe unto the Lord the honour due unto his Name; *
bring presents, and come into his courts.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; *
let the whole earth stand in awe of him.

Tell it out among the heathen, that the Lord is King,
and that it is he who hath made the round world so fast that it cannot be moved; *
and how that he shall judge the peoples righteously.

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; *
let the sea make a noise, and all that therein is.

Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it; *
then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord.

For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth; *
and with righteousness to judge the world, and the peoples with his truth.

¶ At the conclusion of the Psalmody the Gloria Patri is said by all

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

The Lessons

The First Lesson

ISAIAH 9:2-7

THE PEOPLE THAT WALKED IN DARKNESS have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

¶ Following the Lesson, all stand for the Canticle

Canticle *Magnificat anima mea*

LUKE 1:46-55

† My soul doth magnify the Lord, *
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
For he hath regarded *
the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold from henceforth *
all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath magnified me, *
and holy is his Name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him *
throughout all generations.
He hath showed strength with his arm; *
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat, *
and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things, *
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel, *
as he promised to our forefathers,
Abraham and his seed for ever.

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

¶ All are seated

The Second Lesson

LUKE 2:1-14

AND IT CAME TO PASS IN THOSE DAYS, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

¶ Following the Lesson, all stand for the Canticle

Canticle

Nunc dimittis

LUKE 2:29-32

✠ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,
according to thy word;
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
which thou hast prepared before the face of all people,
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles,
and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

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

¶ All remain standing for the Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed

¶ Said by the Officiant and People together, all standing

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.

He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, **†**
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Prayers

¶ *The Officiant and People say the following*

Officiant The Lord be with you.
People And with thy spirit.
Officiant Let us pray.

¶ *Then the short form of the Lord's Prayer is said by all, kneeling*

Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy Name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
 Amen.

¶ *Then follow these Suffrages, said by the Officiant and People*

Officiant O Lord, show thy mercy upon us.
People And grant us thy salvation.

Officiant Endue thy ministers with righteousness.
People And make thy chosen people joyful.

Officiant Give peace, O Lord, in all the world;
People For only in thee can we live in safety.

Officiant Lord, keep this nation under thy care;
People And guide us in the way of justice and truth.

Officiant Let thy way be known upon earth;
People Thy saving health among all nations.

Officiant Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten;
People Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

Officiant Create in us clean hearts, O God;
People And sustain us with thy Holy Spirit.

The Collects

O GOD, WHO HAST CAUSED this holy night to shine with the illumination of the true Light: Grant us, we beseech thee, that as we have known the mystery of that Light upon earth, so may we also perfectly enjoy him in heaven; where with thee and the Holy Spirit he liveth and reigneth, one God, in glory everlasting.

¶ People Amen.

O GOD, FROM WHOM ALL HOLY DESIRES, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed: Give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, and also that by thee, we, being defended from the fear of all enemies, may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Savior. *¶ People Amen.*

LIIGHTEN OUR DARKNESS, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of thy only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. *¶ People Amen.*

The General Thanksgiving

¶ Said by the Officiant and People together

ALMIGHTY GOD, Father of all mercies,
we thine unworthy servants do give
thee most humble and hearty thanks
for all thy goodness and loving-kindness
to us and to all men.

We bless thee for our creation, preservation,
and all the blessings of this life;
but above all for thine inestimable love
in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ,
for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we beseech thee,
give us that due sense of all thy mercies,
that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful;
and that we show forth thy praise,
not only with our lips, but in our lives,
by giving up our selves to thy service,
and by walking before thee
in holiness and righteousness all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost,
be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

A Prayer of St. Chrysostom

¶ Said by the Officiant

ALMIGHTY GOD, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication unto thee, and hast promised through thy well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name thou wilt be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. *¶ People Amen.*

¶ All stand

Benedicamus Domino

Officiant Let us bless the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Grace

¶ Officiant

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. *¶ People Amen.*

Hymn

The musical score consists of four staves of music, each with a treble clef and a bass clef. The lyrics are written in a five-line format, corresponding to the staves. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and dynamic markings like a half note and a quarter note.

1 O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!
 2 For Christ is born of Ma - ry; and gath - ered all a - bove,
 3 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly, the won - drous gift is given!
 *4 Where child - ren pure and hap - py pray to the bless - ed Child,
 5 O ho - ly Child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;

1 A - bove thy deep and dream - less sleep the si - lent stars go by;
 2 while mor-tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won - dering love.
 3 So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heaven.
 4 where mis - er - y cries out to thee, Son of the mo - ther mild;
 5 cast out our sin and en - ter in, be born in us to - day.

1 yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing Light;
 2 O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth!
 3 No ear may hear his com - ing, but in this world of sin,
 4 where char - i - ty stands watch - ing and faith holds wide the door,
 5 We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;

1 the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
 2 and prais - es sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth.
 3 where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.
 4 the dark night wakes, the glo - ry breaks, and Christ - mas comes once more.
 5 O come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el!

Words: Philips Brooks (1835-1893)
 Music: FOREST GREEN; Traditional English

Carol

What is this lovely fragrance wafting
 Like to the scents of flowers in spring!
 Shepherds, O tell us, whence such beauty,
 Hear you not heavenly caroling?

What is this light so fair, so tender
 Breaking upon our wondering eyes?
 Never the Morning Star so radiant
 Followed his course o'er eastern skies.

Shepherds, O haste with eager footsteps,
 Seek the Saviour, born today.
 Low at his feet we lay our treasure,
 Heart's adoration, love for aye.

Words: French Traditional; tr. Ysobel

Music: French Traditional; arr. Healey Willan (1880–1968)

Closing Prayers

Officiant The Lord be with you.

People And with thy spirit.

Officiant Let us pray.

¶ All kneel

¶ Then Prayers and Intercessions are offered

MOST MERCIFUL GOD, for whose chosen handmaid and her Holy Babe there was no room at the inn at Bethlehem: Help us all by thy Spirit to make room for the Christ in our common days, that his peace and joy may fill our hearts, and his love flow through our lives to the blessing of others; for His name's sake. ¶ *People* Amen

ALMIGHTY GOD, who hast so loved the world as to give thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life: Vouchsafe unto us, we humbly pray thee, the precious gift of faith, whereby we may know that the Son of God is come; and, being rooted and grounded in the mystery of the Word made flesh, may have power to overcome the world, and gain the blessed immortality of heaven; through the merits of the same incarnate Christ. ¶ *People* Amen

GOD OF ALL GRACE, who didst in the fullness of time send Jesus Christ thy Son to be born of a woman, that he might redeem the children born of this world and make them children of God: Accept our endless praise for this thy mercy; and grant that the Spirit of thy Son may so dwell in our hearts that we may evermore serve and worship thee with the freedom of thy children; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

¶ People Amen.

OGOD OUR FATHER, who by the glorious birth of thy Son didst enlighten the darkness of the world: We pray that the light of His presence may shine more and more in the lives of His people; that being filled with his spirit of goodwill, the nations may inherit that gift of peace which He came to bring. We ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. *¶ People* Amen.

The Christmas Blessing

MAY HE WHO BY HIS INCARNATION gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with the sweetness of inward grace and goodwill; And the blessing **†** of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and abide with you for ever. *¶ People* Amen.

Liturgical Music

This evening's liturgy begins with a setting of the French Christmas carol, *Pour l'amour de Marie* (*For the love of Mary*), by Jean-François Dandrieu (1682-1738). Its pastoral nature suggests shepherds on the hillsides playing on their rustic instruments while the Christmas star shines brightly in the night sky above them.

The famous preacher Phillips Brooks (1835-1893) returned home to Philadelphia after a trip to the Holy Land where he found himself at the field of the shepherds on Christmas Eve. He wrote the hymn *O little town of Bethlehem* as a reflection on that experience. We sing his timeless words to the English folk tune, *Forest Green*.

The lovely French carol, *Quelle est cette odeur agréable?* (*What is this lovely fragrance?*) is sung this evening in a setting by Canadian composer Healey Willan (1880-1968). Willan is best known to Americans for his *Missa Sancta Maria Magdalena*, a setting of the music for the Holy Eucharist which appeared in the *Hymnal 1940* and has been sung weekly by congregations far and wide ever since.

Tonight's liturgy closes with another carol (or *Noël*) set by Jean-François Dandrieu. *Puer nobis nascitur* (*Unto us a boy is born*) is also set in a pastorale style employing simple wind, reed, and string instruments such as the shepherds of the Christmas story might have played on the first Christmas night.



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