

Wednesday in Holy Week

This order for worship is based on "Night Prayer" also called "Prayer at the Close of the Day" (or "Compline"). If possible, please light a candle as a symbol of the presence of the Light of Christ.

Opening

Almighty God grant us a quiet night and peace at the last. Amen.

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praise your name, O Most High;
to herald your love in the morning, your truth at the close of the day.

By day, O God, you grant steadfast love
and at night your song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

A Night Song "All Praise to Thee, my God, This Night"

1. All praise to thee, my God, this night for all the blessings of the light.
 Keep me, oh, keep me, King of kings, beneath thine own almighty wings.
2. Forgive me, Lord, for thy dear Son, the ills that I have this day have done,
 that with the world, myself, and thee, I, ere I sleep, at peace may be.
3. Teach me to live, that I may dread the grave as little as m bed.
 Teach me to die, that so I may rise glorious at the awesome day.
4. Oh, may my soul in thee repose, and may sweet sleep mine eyelids close,
 sleep that shall me more vig'rous make to serve my God when I awake.
5. Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below;
 praise God above, ye heavenly hosts; praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Some readings

Do not worry, saying "What will we eat" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?"
Indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the
dominion and the righteousness of God, and all these things will be given to you as well. So do
not worry about tomorrow." (Matthew 6:31-34)

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in hearts, and you will
find rest for our souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to
come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate
us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

Several Brief Stories to Meditate Upon

(From "One Minute Nonsense" by Anthony De Mello, S.J. who died in 1987. He was a Jesuit priest from India who served in India. His insightful (and often humorous) spiritual reflections and stories were influenced profoundly by Hindu and Muslim "Masters" or "Teachers")

1. The Master overheard an actress speaking about horoscopes at dinner time. He leaned over and said, "You don't believe in astrology, do you?" "Well," she replied, "I believe in everything a little bit."

2. The Master loved to show how nature is shot through with holiness. He was once sitting in the garden when he exclaimed: "Look at that bright blue bird sitting on the branch of that tree springing up and down, filling the world with its melody, and abandoning itself to unreserved delight because it has no notion of tomorrow."

3. A despondent disciple complained that, because of his handicaps, he was being cheated by life. "Cheated?" cried the Master. "Cheated? Look around you man! With every moment of consciousness, you are being grossly overpaid."

4. The Master followed up the previous story with the story of the hotel owner who complained bitterly about the effect on his business of a new highway the government had built.

"Look," said a friend. "I just don't understand you. I see a NO VACANCY sign each night in front of your hotel."

"You can't go by that," the hotel owner replied. "Before they built the highway, I used to turn away 30 or 40 people each day. Now I never turn away more than 25."

Added the Master, "When you are determined to feel bad, even non-existent customers are real."

I know the stories above are unusual in tone and substance for the solemnity associated with Holy Week. However, I also think they are provocative (and funny) enough to make us feel a bit uncomfortable when they strike a nerve within us. In so doing, we may understand that old truism about good preaching: "It is meant to comfort the afflicted. . .and afflict the comfortable."

A Song of Hope "Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow"

1. Through the night of doubt and sorrow onward goes the pilgrim band,
singing songs of expectation, marching to the promised land.
Clear before us through the darkness gleams and burns the guiding light,
pilgrim clasps the hand of pilgrim stepping fearless through the night.
2. One the light of God's own presence on the ransomed people shed,
chasing far the gloom and terror, bright'ning all the path we tread.
One the object of our journey, one the faith which never tires,
one the earnest looking forward, one the hope our God inspires.

3. One the strain that lips of thousands lift as from the heart of one;
one the conflict, one the peril, one the march in God begun.
One the gladness of rejoicing on the far eternal shore,
where the one almighty Father reigns in love forevermore.

Prayers of Comfort and Care

O Lord, support us all the day long of this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work or watch or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, comfort the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen.

Gracious God, we give you thanks for the day, especially for the good we were permitted to give and to receive; the day is now past and we commit it to you. We entrust to you the night; we rest securely, for you are our help, and you neither slumber nor sleep; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

The Blessing

Now in peace I will lie down and sleep; you alone, O God, make me secure.
Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God.