

Praying The Hours: A Prayer Vigil for Holy Week

For St. James Episcopal Church (Austin, TX), adapted from *Daily Prayer for All Seasons* (Church Publishing, NY)

Praise

Lauds (Traditional hour: dawn/waking up)

Laudate, omnes gentes, laudate Dominum!

[Sing praises, all people, sing praises to the Lord!]

We greet the new day by praising the Creator (the ancient name for this hour, Lauds, means “praise”).

Opening Come darkness or light
I call on your name, holy Lord.

Scripture I love you, O God, because you have heard the voice of my supplication. Psalm 116:1a

Meditation *What do I offer God at this hour?*

Prayer O Holy One, whatever comes this day, let me seek you with confidence and trust.
Amen.

Going Out Come darkness or light,
I call on your name, holy Lord.

Discernment

Prime (Traditional hour: morning/start of the day)

As we begin the day, we focus on our calling to live faithfully, for who knows what today holds?

Opening You have called us in righteousness.
Let us respond with justice.

Prayer God of steadfast love, light of the blind and liberator of the oppressed, we see your holy purpose in the tender compassion of Jesus, who calls us into new and living friendship with you: May we who take shelter in the shadow of your wings be filled with the grace of his

tender caring; may we who stumble in selfish darkness see your glory in the light of his self-giving; we ask this through him whose suffering is victorious, Jesus Christ our Savior.
Amen.

Scripture Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen,
in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth
justice to the nations.
He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard
in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly
burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice. Isaiah 42:1-4

Meditation We must get ready then. Our journey requires a rejuvenated faith. We must set high standards. We must rely on the gospel to guide us. It will help us to follow Christ and grow better acquainted with him so we are prepared to live with Jesus in his heavenly kingdom. *from The Rule of St. Benedict*

*Where does our faith need rejuvenation today?
How will we let the gospel guide us?*

Lord's Prayer

Prayer Loving God, as we seek to know and follow you more faithfully, we pray you will open and fill our hearts with the love and knowledge of your Son, Jesus. May we see ever more clearly what it is you call us to, and may we respond with lives of joy and justice. Amen.

Going Out You have called us in righteousness.
Let us respond with justice.

Wisdom

Terce (Traditional hour: mid-morning)

Having asked for direction and guidance, we pray now to equip ourselves properly for the journey ahead.

Opening Teach us to seek your wisdom
as we embrace the folly of your love.

Prayer Holy and immortal God, from earliest times you have named us and called us into Discipleship: Teach us to follow the One whose light scatters the darkness of our world, that we may walk as children of the light. Amen.

Meditation To make of his story something that could neither startle, nor shock, nor terrify, nor excite, nor inspire a living soul is to crucify the Son of God afresh. *Dorothy L. Sayers (1893-1957)*
Where do we seek courage and wisdom to proclaim the gospel in its fullness?

Prayers God of mercy,
Make us wise with your foolish love.
God of salvation,
Open our eyes again to see the power of your grace.
God of all who seek to follow,
Guide us in your faithful way.
Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.

Lord's Prayer

Prayer Christ our Lord, you refused the way of domination and died the death of a slave: May we also refuse to lord it over those who are subject to us, but share the weight of authority so that all may be empowered; in your name. Amen.

Going Out Teach us to seek your wisdom.
as we embrace the folly of your love.

Perseverance and Renewal

Sext (Traditional hour: mid-day)

As we pause to feed our bodies in the middle of the day, we pause also to feed our souls by vowing again to live faithfully.

Opening Be pleased, O God, to deliver us.
Make haste, Holy One, to help us. (Psalm 70:1)

Prayer Blessed Savior, at this hour you hung upon the cross, stretching out your loving arms: Grant that all the peoples of the earth may look to you and be saved; for your tender mercies' sake. Amen

Scripture For I [Paul] received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Meditation The soul must live in hope. *Beatrijs of Nazareth (1200-1268), Seven Manners of Living*
Where do we need nourishment and hope this hour? This week?

Lord’s Prayer

Prayer Eternal God, in the sharing of a meal, your Son established a new covenant for all people, and in the washing of feet he showed us the dignity of service: Grant that by the power of the Holy Spirit these signs of our life in faith may speak again in our hearts, feed our spirits, and refresh our bodies. Amen.

Going Out Be pleased, O God, to deliver us.
Make haste, Holy One, to help us.

Love

None (Traditional hour: afternoon)

As shadows lengthen, we are filled by the day’s encounters; now, more than ever, we accept the depth and breadth of God’s grace.

Opening You lavish love upon us.
Make us people of extravagant love.

Prayer Holy God, lover of our souls, we come before you as people created by and for love: Gather us in this time to hear again your word of love, to renew our trust in its breadth and depth. In the sacrifice of your love for us, may we find renewal and be your love in the world. Amen.

Scripture Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made with pure nard, anointed Jesus’ feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. John 12:1-3

Meditation Look
what happens to the scale
when love
holds
it.
It
stops
working. *Kafir (c.1440-1518)*
Where might we “waste” love this week?

Lord’s Prayer

Prayer Holy Spirit, fill us with godly love. Free us from all that resists loving and being loved. Empower us to love as Jesus did. In his gracious name we pray. Amen.

Going Out You lavish love upon us.
Make us people of extravagant love.

Forgiveness

Vespers (Traditional hour: evening/end of day)

As we turn on lamps at dusk, we greet the evening by welcoming God to abide with us anew.

Opening In the fullness of our humanity,
heal us, gracious Savior.

Prayer Troubled God, in every generation you call your people to contend against the brutality of sin and betrayal: **Keep us steadfast even in our fear and uncertainty, so that we may follow where Jesus has led the way.** Amen.

Scripture At that moment, while Peter was still speaking, the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.” And Peter went out and wept bitterly. Luke 22: 60b-62

Meditation [God says]: “No matter what you have done, I love you for your own sake. Come to me with your misery and your sins, with your trouble and your needs, and with all your

longing to be loved. I stand at the door of your heart and knock. Open to me, for I thirst for you.” *Mother Teresa (1910-1997)*

Where do we long to be loved and forgiven at this hour?

Confession We are human: we strive to love, but we often fail.

Jesus, we confess that we do not always answer

when you call us to bear your light in the world.

Although we long for love, too often we fail

to accept it or to offer it.

Help us let go of our failings.

Renew our hearts.

Fill us anew with your love. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

God says to us, “I love you for your own sake.”

Know that you are loved and forgiven.

Jesus invites us to pick up our lives anew

And walk in love.

Prayers

God of extravagant love,

Transform us with the freedom of forgiveness.

God of unbounded, sacrificial love,

Teach us to give ourselves in joyful service.

God whose love persists even in the darkest hour,

Deepen our faith, renew our spirits and strengthen

our confidence in you,

that we may truly learn to walk in self-giving love.

Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.

Lord’s Prayer

Prayer

Christ our victim, whose beauty was disfigured upon the cross: Open wide your arms to embrace our tortured world, that we may not turn away our eyes, but abandon ourselves to your mercy. Amen.

Going Out

In the fullness of our humanity,

heal us, gracious Savior.

Trust

Compline (Traditional hour: night/bedtime)

We sum up this day with a bedtime prayer to examine our conscience and offer our actions to God.

Opening Into your hands we entrust our souls,
for you have redeemed us, O God of truth.

Prayer Christ our God, your love is poured out in death for our sakes: Hold us in your embrace as we wait for Easter's dawn. Comfort us with the promise that no power on earth, not even death itself, can separate us from your love; and strengthen us to wait until you are revealed to us in all your risen glory. Amen.

Scripture Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Luke 23:46a

Meditation Little by little, God grows us ever more in grace because God wants to be seen and sought. God wants to be awaited and trusted. *Julian of Norwich (1342-1420), Revelations*

Jesus entrusted his soul to God's care. What should we entrust to God this hour?

Lord's Prayer

Prayer Eternal God, rock and refuge, with roots grown old in the earth, riverbeds run dry, and flowers withered in the field, we wait for revival and release: Abide with us until we come alive in the sunrise of your glory. Amen.

Closing Into your hands we entrust our souls,
for you have redeemed us, O God of truth.