Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places that long for God's presence.

A brief silence.

God our uniter, increase communication and cooperation in our relationships with those of other traditions and religions. Root your church in the radical message of your incarnation, and enable us to pursue your justice in the world. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God our creator, we praise you for the beauty that surrounds us. Awaken in us a renewed sense of care for the wildlife in our communities (*local preserves, parks, or sanctuaries may be named*). Form us into faithful stewards of what you have made. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God our sovereign, Mary proclaims a new way of life that lifts up the lowly and fills the hungry with good things. Nurture in local governments and municipalities a desire to care for all who are overlooked and ignored. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God our beacon, as the northern hemisphere begins its slow turn toward more daylight, remind us that even in the deepest nights, you are there. Comfort the lonely and bereaved. Hold closely the frightened, anxious, depressed, and ill (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God our guide, shepherd the leadership of this congregation. Bless the council and staff in discerning future ministry and open their hearts to the voices of the community. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God our life, you remember the promises you have made to your people. In gratitude for those who have died (*especially*), we praise you for your faithfulness throughout history. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Savior of the nations, come, and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 113. **Tuesday** (Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Eve) Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]. **Wednesday** (Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Day) John 1:1-14. **Thursday** (Stephen, Deacon and Martyr) Matthew 23:34-39. **Friday** (John, Apostle and Evangelist) John 21:20-25. **Saturday** (The Holy Innocents, Martyrs) Matthew 2:13-18. **First Sunday of Christmas** 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52.

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ITEM013288 Tracks 1 and 2

Celebrate

Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 22, 2024

Cradle and cross are inextricably connected on the fourth Sunday of Advent. Between a lovely tribute to the little town of Bethlehem and Mary's magnificent song of praise, the letter to the Hebrews reminds us in no uncertain terms that Christ's advent is for "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." It is the kind of tension in which the church always lives as when in holy communion—with high delight—"we proclaim the Lord's death."

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that binds us, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading

Micah 5:2-5a

The prophet Micah, having pronounced judgment upon Judah, speaks of a future shepherd-king who, like David, will come from the small town of Bethlehem. (Ephrathah refers to the area around Bethlehem.) This king will restore Israel and bring peace. New Testament writers understood this passage to be referring to Jesus.

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.
[3]Therefore he shall give them up
until the time
when she who is in labor has
brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.
[4]And he shall stand and feed his flock
in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the
LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;
[5a]and he shall be the one of peace.

Psalmody

Luke 1:46b-55; refrain, Luke 1:52

My soul proclaims the greatness | of the Lord,
[47]my spirit rejoices in | God my Savior,
[48]for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your | lowly servant.
From this day all generations will | call me blessed:
[49]you, the Almighty, have done great | things for me
and holy | is your name.
[50]You have mercy on | those who fear you,
from generation to | generation. R
[51]You have shown strength | with your arm
and scattered the proud in | their conceit,
[52]casting down the mighty | from their thrones
and lifting | up the lowly.
[53]You have filled the hungry | with good things
and sent the rich | away empty.
[54]You have come to the aid of your | servant Israel,
to remember the prom- | ise of mercy,
[55]the promise made | to our forebears,
to Abraham and his chil- | dren forever. **R**

or **Psalm 80:1-7; refrain, Ps. 80:7** [not printed]

Second Reading

Hebrews 10:5-10

The author of Hebrews uses the image of religious sacrifice to convey the significance of Christ's coming. Through obedient acceptance of God's will, Christ allows his own body to become the greatest sacrifice of all, one through which we are made a holy people.

Consequently, when Christ came into
the world, he said,
"Sacrifices and offerings you have
not desired,
but a body you have prepared
for me;
[6]in burnt offerings and sin
offerings
you have taken no pleasure.
[7]Then I said, 'See, God, I have
come to do your will, O God'
(in the scroll of the book it is
written of me)."

[8]When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), [9]then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. [10]And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Gospel

Luke 1:39-45 [46-55]

Elizabeth, John's mother, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, are two women filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith. In Elizabeth's inspired greeting and Mary's song of praise we hear of a saving God who remembers, scatters, lifts up, and fulfills all things.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, [40]where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. [41]When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit [42]and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. [43]And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? [44]For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. [45]And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."
[[46]And Mary said,
"My soul magnifies the Lord,
[47]and my spirit rejoices in God
my Savior,
[48]for he has looked with favor on
the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all
generations will call me
blessed;
[49]for the Mighty One has done
great things for me,
and holy is his name.
[50]His mercy is for those who fear
him
from generation to generation.
[51]He has shown strength with his
arm;
he has scattered the proud in
the thoughts of their hearts.
[52]He has brought down the
powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
[53]he has filled the hungry with
good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
[54]He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
[55]according to the promise he
made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his
descendants forever."]