

# The Essential Advent and Christmas Handbook

**A DAILY COMPANION  
WITH A GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS**

**A REDEMPTORIST PASTORAL PUBLICATION**



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## SECTION ONE

# Getting Started



Although a regular practice of morning and evening prayer is suggested as an appropriate spiritual discipline and exercise each day of the year, it is a highly recommended practice during special liturgical seasons in the Church's year. The practice of beginning and ending each day with prayer is essential for the spiritual journey.

Included in this presentation is a traditional example of morning and evening prayer that was quite popular before the beginning of the Second Vatican Council. Many of the prayers suggested would be well known by most Catholics. The contemporary example of morning and evening prayer is rooted in Scripture and is a well-known form of prayer that has become popular after Vatican II.

The choice of the traditional or contemporary model is a simple preference for one model instead of the other. Both models assume a respectful prayer posture, an experience of quiet and reflection, and appropriate opportunities for personal prayer and reflection.

## **1. Traditional Morning Prayer**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

*Quietly place yourself in the presence of God and adore God's Holy Name.*

Most holy and adorable Trinity, one God in three Persons. I believe that you are present here in this place. I adore you with the deepest humility and freely give to you, with my whole heart and soul, worship, praise, and thanksgiving.

*Thank God for the gift of life, the gift of breath, and the gift of God's redeeming and everlasting love.*

O my God, I humbly thank you for all that you have given to me. I realize that all that I am, all that I hope to be, and all that I ever will be comes to me as a gift from you. I realize that this gift of life and

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of breath is completely unearned and unmerited. I give thanks and praise to you that you have created me in your image and likeness, that you have redeemed me by the precious blood of your Son, and that you have preserved me safe from all harm to the beginning of another day. I offer to you all my thoughts, words, and actions this day, and I consecrate them to the glory of your name. I ask that you accept my praise and worship, offered in the name of your Son, Jesus, for the greater glory of your name and for the salvation of all your people. Amen.

*Resolve to avoid sin and to practice virtue.*

Jesus, my Redeemer and my Lord, model of humanity, I resolve this day to imitate your example and to live the Gospel that you preached. With the help of your grace and the guidance of your Holy Spirit, I resolve to be mild, humble, charitable, loving, chaste, and zealous this day. I pray that I will not sin this day in any way but especially in those sins that I have often committed (*here name any sin with which you struggle*) and which I firmly resolve to avoid this day, with the help of your grace.

*Petition God for the necessary grace to witness to the kingdom.*

My Lord and my God, you know my poverty and my weakness. You know that I am unable to do anything good without you. Grant me the necessary grace and the strength to do good this day and to avoid evil. Enable me to patiently witness to your kingdom and to live in your love.

*Ask for the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, your guardian angel, and your patron saint.*

Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of my Lord, I place myself under your protection this day. I throw myself with confidence into your loving

arms. Be this day for me, O Mother of Mercy, my refuge in distress, my consolation in suffering, and my advocate with your Son.

Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day be at my side, to light, to guard, to rule, and to guide.

O great saint whose name I bear, protect me, pray for me, that like you I may serve God faithfully on earth and one day glorify God forever in heaven.

*Read and quietly reflect on the assigned readings from the Word of God and the appropriate reflection provided for this day. Reflections for the season of Advent by Saint Alphonsus Liguori may be found in Section Six, number 2. Reflections for the season of Christmas, also by Saint Alphonsus, may be found in Section Eleven, number 2.*

## **2. Traditional Evening Prayer**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

*Place yourself in the presence of God and humbly adore God.*

O my God, I present myself to you at the conclusion of another day, to renew the homage of my heart. I praise and worship you, my Creator, my Redeemer, and my Judge. I believe in you because you are the fullness of truth. I hope in you because you are faithful to your promises. I love you with my whole heart because you are infinitely worthy of being loved, and for your sake I love my neighbor as myself.

*Give thanks to God for all that God has gifted you with this day.*

Enable me, O God, to thank you and praise you for all that you have given me, especially those gifts that I take so often for granted. You have thought of me and have loved me from all eternity; you

have formed me out of nothing; you have redeemed me through the Passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus; you have made me a member of your Holy Church; you have preserved me from falling into sin. What return, O God, can I make for all of your blessings? O saints and angels, unite with me in praising the God of mercies.

*Ask for the necessary grace to recognize any sins that may have been committed this day and for the grace of forgiveness.*

O my God, you do not desire the death of the sinner, but rather the conversion of mind and heart. Enlighten my mind so that I may know the sins that I may have committed this day in thought, word, or action. Grant me also the necessary grace of contrition.

*At this time, you may find it helpful to examine your conscience. As an aid to this examination, you may choose to use the examination provided in Section Three, number 3, "Advent Reconciliation Service." If you prefer, a more traditional and substantial examination may be found in Section Five, number 9, "Traditional Examination of Conscience." After your examination is complete, you may wish to pray the following prayer or some other expression of sorrow and contrition.*

O my God, I heartily repent and am grieved that I have offended you, because you are infinitely good and sin is displeasing to you. I humbly ask you to gift me with your mercy and pardon, through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. I resolve, with the help of your grace, to do penance for my sins and I will endeavor never more to offend you.

#### CLOSING PRAYER

O Jesus my savior, grant me your blessing, deliver me from everlasting death, assist your Holy Church, grant peace to all nations, and deliver the holy souls in purgatory. Amen. May the Lord grant me a restful night and a peaceful death.

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### 3. Contemporary Morning Prayer

#### LITURGY OF THE HOURS

**V.** O Lord, open my lips.

**R.** And with my mouth I will proclaim your praise.

**V.** Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

**R.** Both now and forever. Amen.

**Antiphon:** *I will praise your name forever, Lord* (Ps 145:1–7).

I will extol you, my God and King,  
and bless your name forever and ever.  
Every day I will bless you,  
and praise your name forever and ever.

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;  
his greatness is unsearchable.

One generation shall laud your  
works to another,  
and shall declare your mighty acts.  
On the glorious splendor of your majesty,  
and on your wondrous works,  
I will meditate.

The might of your awesome deeds  
shall be proclaimed,  
and I will declare your greatness.  
They shall celebrate the fame of  
your abundant goodness,  
and shall sing aloud of  
your righteousness.

Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
both now and forever. Amen.

**Antiphon:** *I will praise your name forever, Lord.*

### **Breath of the Gospel**

The breath of the Gospel is a simple form of praying with Scripture. Choose a short passage of Scripture from among those given on page 15, or use a personal favorite from your own copy of Scripture. Read the passage slowly and silently, pausing after phrases and words, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead you in prayer.

### **Silent Reflection**

#### **Canticle of Zechariah** (Lk 1:68–79)

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
for he has looked favorably on  
his people and redeemed them.  
He has raised up almighty savior for us  
in the house of his servant David,  
as he spoke through the mouth of  
his holy prophets from of old,  
that we would be saved from our enemies  
and from the hand of all that hate us.

Thus he has shown the mercy  
promised to our ancestors,  
and has remembered his holy covenant,  
the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,  
to grant us that we, being rescued  
from the hands of our enemies,  
might serve him without fear,  
in holiness and righteousness  
before him all our days.

## *Getting Started*

And you, child, will be called  
the prophet of the Most High;  
for you will go before the Lord  
to prepare his ways,  
to give knowledge of salvation to his people  
by the forgiveness of their sins.  
By the tender mercy of our God,  
the dawn from on high will break upon us,  
to give light to those who sit in darkness  
and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, both now and forever. Amen.

### ***Prayers of Intercession***

*For Advent, use the following response for each prayer of intercession: O Come, O Come Emmanuel, and hear the prayer I offer for those who are in need.*

*For Christmas, use the following response for each prayer of intercession: Glory to God in the Highest, and peace to men and women of good will!*

Lord, I pray for the Church. May it always be faithful to the Gospel.

Lord, remember those who are without shelter, food, and meaningful employment.

Lord, keep all those I love in your loving care this day.

*At this time, please add your own prayers of intercession.*

### ***Our Father***

Our Father, who art in heaven, holy be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory, now and forever. Amen.

### ***Closing Prayer***

Almighty God, you have brought us to another day. We give you praise and glory. Fill our hearts with love for you, increase our faith, and in your mercy protect us through this day. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

## **4. Contemporary Evening Prayer**

LITURGY OF THE HOURS

**V.** O Lord, open my lips.

**R.** And with my mouth I will proclaim your praise.

**V.** Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

**R.** Both now and forever. Amen.

### ***Antiphon for Advent***

*In the presence of the angels I will sing to you my God (Ps 138:1).*

### ***Antiphon for Christmas***

*Hark! The Herald Angels sing, glory to our newborn King.*

I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart;  
before the gods I sing your praise.

I bow down toward your holy temple

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and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love  
and your faithfulness;  
for you have exalted your name and your word  
above everything.

On the day I called, you answered me,  
you increased my strength of soul.

Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
both now and forever. Amen.

### ***Antiphon***

*Repeat the appropriate seasonal antiphon.*

### ***Breath of the Gospel***

The breath of the Gospel is a simple form of praying with Scripture. Choose a short passage of Scripture from among those given on page 15, or use a personal favorite from your own copy of Scripture. Read the passage slowly and silently, pausing after phrases and words, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead you in prayer.

### ***Silent Reflection***

#### ***Canticle of Mary (Lk 1:46–55)***

My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in  
God my Savior,  
for he has looked with favor on the  
lowliness of his servant.  
Surely, from now on  
all generations will call me blessed;  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.  
His mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

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He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud  
in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful  
from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry  
with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
according to the promise he made  
to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to  
his descendants forever.

Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
both now and forever. Amen.

### ***Prayers of Intercession***

Lord, I thank you for all the blessings of this day.

Lord, grant your blessings this evening to all those who are in need.

Lord, surround me with your protection this evening and grant  
that I may have a peaceful night.

*At this time, please add your own prayers of intercession.*

### ***Our Father***

Our Father, who art in heaven, holy be your name. Your kingdom  
come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day  
our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin  
against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil  
one. For yours is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory, now and  
forever, Amen.

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***Closing Prayer***

Lord, may our evening prayers find favor in your sight. Help us to live our lives according to the teachings of the Gospel. May we follow in the footsteps of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

***Breath of the Gospel***

*Use any of the following passages where noted in preceding prayer liturgies.*

***John 7:37–38***

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’”

***Philippians 2:10–11***

At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

***John 10:14***

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.

***Matthew 25:34***

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

***Matthew 11:28–30***

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 heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.