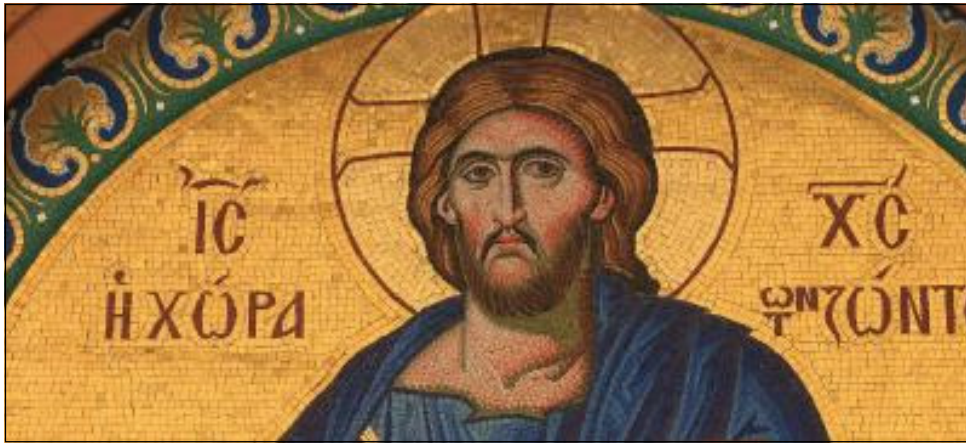




THE DAILY OFFICE A SIMPLE CELEBRATION





INTRODUCTION

This simple celebration of daily prayer is intended as something for the whole community to do. It provides a form that can be used at home and in the family, or in groups, while it is celebrated at the same time in church. It depends on care being taken to make it true community worship, even when it is used alone. The following pages provide a simple guide; but show the kind of approach which is needed.

The Place. Care should be taken that the place where the office is celebrated is appropriate to the numbers involved, with adequate heating when necessary. Seating and lighting should enable those present to be at ease as a group, and some kind of visual focus is desirable.

Style. The pace should be slow and without rushing, with times of silence after each psalm, reading or canticle. Attention should not be on the words to be got through but on the presence of God in the community (even when we are praying alone). We look to God in word, prayer, music, actions and silence.

The Opening Section. Anyone present may officiate. Care should be taken not to attract attention from God to themselves through announcements.

At the beginning of the day, before Morning Prayer, there is an ancient tradition of singing the Venite, Psalm 95, as an invitatory = invitation to pray. At the beginning of Evening Prayer, a lighted candle may be brought in, or the candle may simply be lit. This ancient practice goes back to very early times and symbolises the light of Christ at the passing of the day. Its traditional place is in the home and some families or individuals also may like to include it in their evening prayers.

The Psalms. A copy of the Lectionary should be obtained and readings used for appropriate days. Everyone sits to listen as one person reads out the psalm, not proclaiming it like a lesson but reading it slowly and sensitively, with a short pause at the asterisk (*). After the *Glory be* and a silence, the same person says the psalm prayer (with or without *through Jesus Christ our Lord*) to which all respond: **Amen**.

READING

One of the following or another reading may be used.

You, Lord, are in the midst of us and we are called by your name; leave us not, O Lord our God. *Jeremiah 14:9*

Or:

Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil is prowling round like a roaring lion, seeking for someone to devour. Resist him, strong in faith. *1 Peter 5: 8,9*

SHORT RESPONSORY

Into your hands Lord,
I commend my spirit. (Alleluia, alleluia)

You have redeemed us,
Lord God of Truth.

Into your hands Lord,
I commend my spirit. (Alleluia, alleluia)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Into your hands Lord,
I commend my spirit. (Alleluia, alleluia)

NUNC DIMITTIS

*Refrain Save us,
O Lord, while waking,
and guard us while sleeping,
that awake we may watch with Christ,
and asleep may rest in peace.*

1. Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace. *
your word has been fulfilled.

2. My own eyes have seen the salvation *
which you have prepared in the sight of every people;

3. A light to reveal you to the nations *
and the glory of your people Israel.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be for ever. Amen

Refrain Save us,
O Lord, while waking,
and guard us while sleeping,
that awake we may watch with Christ,
and asleep may rest in peace.*

COLLECT

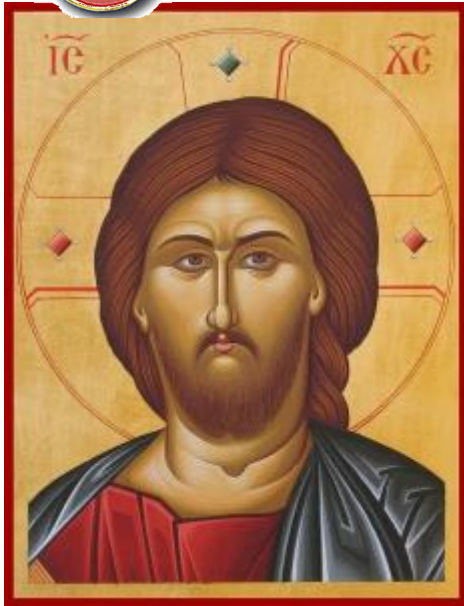
Keep watch, dear Lord,
with those who wake,
or watch or weep this night,
and give your angels charge
over those who sleep.
Tend the sick,
give rest to the weary,
sustain the dying, calm the suffering,
and pity the distressed;
all for your love's sake,
O Christ our Redeemer. **Amen.**

Leader: Let us bless the Lord.
All: **Thanks be to God.**





NIGHT PRAYER



Leader: O God, make speed to save us.
All: **O Lord, make haste to help us.**

PSALM Psalms 91

Psalm 4 or 134, or another psalm, may be used.

1. You who live in the shelter of the Most High, *
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
2. will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress; *
my God, in whom I trust."
3. For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler *
and from the deadly pestilence;
4. he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; *
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

5. You will not fear the terror of the night, *
or the arrow that flies by day,
6. or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.
7. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, *
but it will not come near you.
8. You will only look with your eyes *
and see the punishment of the wicked.
9. Because you have made the LORD your refuge, * t
he Most High your dwelling place,
10. no evil shall befall you, *
no scourge come near your tent.
11. For he will command his angels concerning you *
to guard you in all your ways.
12. On their hands they will bear you up, *
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.
13. You will tread on the lion and the adder, *
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.
14. Those who love me, I will deliver; *
I will protect those who know my name.
15. When they call to me, I will answer them; *
I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honour them.
16. With long life I will satisfy them, *
and show them my salvation.

The Scripture Reading. One of those present finds the reading before the Office and prepares it so that it can be read with care and without haste. As heavenly food, scripture is to be taken in slowly and savoured, almost "chewed over".

The lectionary should be used, or a familiar bible-reading scheme. Even when alone, it helps greatly to read the scriptures aloud. Some silence ought to be kept after the reading, to let it move through the participants like the ripples of a pool.

The Cantic. This may be sung or said by all or by one person, with a sung refrain after each verse. Here the scriptures are *prayed*, which is as important as hearing and studying them. There is a very ancient tradition of singing the gospel cantic here (*Benedictus and Magnificat*). The *Ninc Dimittis* is similarly the invariable form of Night Prayers.

The Prayers. A basic framework is provided here, to which may be added other forms of prayer, free or structured, at the point that seems most appropriate. It can be very helpful to use a sung refrain.

The Conclusion. The Lord's Prayer may be introduced with an appropriate bidding.

Penitence. In Christian daily prayer, the themes of praise, penitence, thanksgiving and so on weave amongst each other all the time, and there is no need to highlight any one in a section of its own. Penitence in particular appears in the psalms, canticles, readings, hymns and prayers and over-emphasis of it will direct the attention too much to self and away from God. For those who wish, the following form may be used privately before Evening Prayer begins:

Reflect on the day past with both thanksgiving and praise before saying:

**Father, I confess that I have sinned,
against you and against my brothers and sisters.
I pray you, Lord, to have mercy on me and on us all,
and to lead us into the life of your kingdom,
where you call us to praise you for ever. Amen.**

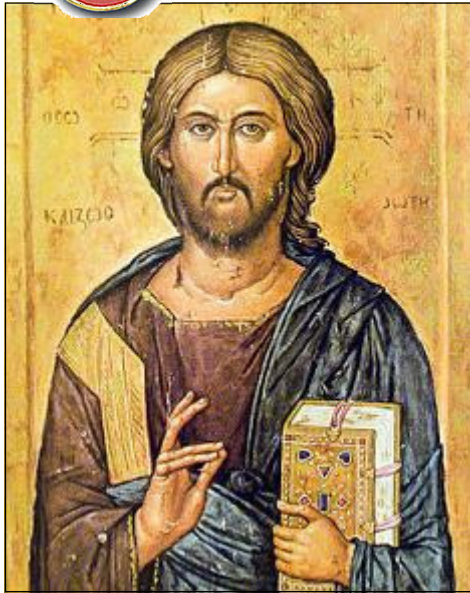
Family Prayers. Families and households often find it difficult to pray and worship together. The simple form and pattern in the following pages, used sensitively and adapted appropriately, can be of great help. This service provides a small core of words which can soon be learnt by heart, even by very young children, and gives plenty of scope for involvement and things to do. The various tasks, such as preparing the place used for prayer, choosing a reading or lighting a candle can be shared. Children could write their own prayers.

If they are to enjoy worshipping God, then experiment with singing, symbolism and pictures, and actions such as bowing, kneeling, making the sign of the cross amongst members, sharing the peace, and so on, will enable children (and adults) to do the kind of thing with God which they are used to doing with others. In this way, a form of prayer can develop which is truly rooted in the life and needs of the particular family or household, but which is also related to the life of the whole Church.





MORNING PRAYER



Leader: O Lord, open our lips;
All: **And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

This canticle may be used: Psalms 95:1-7.

1. Come, let us sing to the Lord;* let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.
2. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,* and raise a loud shout to him with psalms.
3. For the Lord is a great God,* and a great King above all gods.
4. In his hands are the depths of the earth,* and the heights of the hills are his also.
5. The sea is his, for he made it;* his hands have moulded the dry land.

6. Come, let us bow down and bend the knee,* and kneel before the Lord our Maker.
7. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*
O that today you would hearken to his voice!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit *
As it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be for ever. Amen

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; Let us pray with one heart and mind..
(pause for silence)
As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever.
All: **Amen**

PSALM

Psalms from lectionary or Psalm 63:

1. O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you; *
my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a barren and dry land where there is no water;
2. Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place,*
that I might behold your power and your glory.
3. For your loving-kindness is better than life itself; *
For my lips shall give you praise.
4. So will I bless you as long as I live *
and lift up my hands in your name.

Lighten our darkness,
Lord, we pray;
and in your mercy defend us
from all perils and dangers of this night;
for the love of your only Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

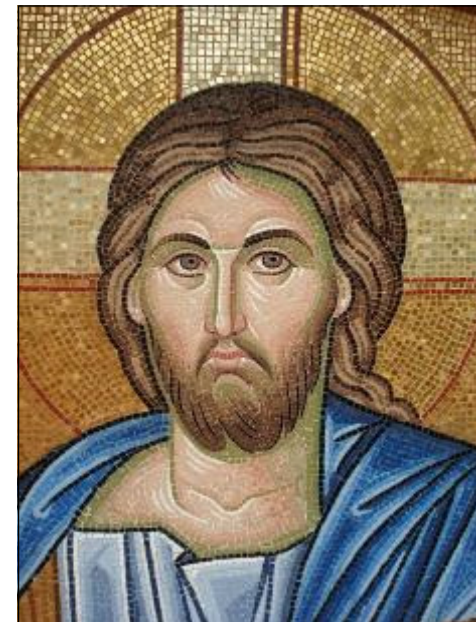
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.

Leader: Let us bless the Lord.
All: **Thanks be to God.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Jesus taught us to call God our Father,
and so in faith and trust we pray...

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins



10. Let the wicked fall into their own nets,* while I myself escape.

After each Psalm

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be for ever. Amen

READING FROM SCRIPTURE

Reading from lectionary

SILENCE for reflection on the readings

CANTICLE

*MAGNIFICAT - The song of Mary
Luke 1: 46-55*

1. My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; *
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.
2. For he has looked with favour on his lowly servant, *
from this day all generations will call me blessed.
3. The Almighty has done great things for me, *
and holy is his name.
4. He has mercy on those who fear him *
in every generation.
5. He has shown the strength of his arm; *
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
6. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones *
and has lifted up the lowly.
7. He has filled the hungry with good things *
and the rich he has sent away empty.

8. He has come to the help of his servant, Israel, *
for he has remembered his promise of mercy.

9. The promise he made to our forebears: *
to Abraham and his children for ever.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be for ever. Amen

THE PRAYERS

This or other forms may be used

In the love of God, let us complete our evening sacrifice of praise.

For the unity and peace of the holy Church of God throughout the world:
Lord, have mercy.

For the peace and stability of all peoples and for those in authority:
Lord, have mercy.

For our own country and its national life and for all who dwell among us:
Lord, have mercy.

For a blessing on our homes, for our relations and friends and all whom we love:
Lord, have mercy.

For the sick and the suffering and for all who minister to their needs:
Lord, have mercy.
For all who sleep in Christ, that Christ will remember them in his heavenly kingdom:
Lord, have mercy.

Rejoicing in the fellowship of the blessed Virgin Mary, (Saint N.) and all the saints, let us commend ourselves into the mighty hands of God.

Free Prayer

5. My soul is content, as with marrow and fatness, *
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips,
6. When I remember you upon my bed, *
and meditate on you in the night watches.
7. For you have been my helper,*
and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.
8. My soul clings to you; *
your right hand holds me fast.
9. May those who seek my life to destroy it *
go down into the depths of the Earth;
10. Let them fall upon the edge of the sword, *
and let them be food for jackals.
11. But the king will rejoice in God;
all those who swear by him will be glad, *
for the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped.

After each Psalm:

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be for ever. Amen

READING FROM SCRIPTURE

Readings from lectionary

SILENCE for reflection on the readings

CANTICLE

*BENEDICTUS - The Song of Zechariah
Luke 7: 68-79*

1. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,*
for he has come to his people and set them free.

2. He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, *
born of the house of his servant, David.
3. Through his holy prophets he promised of old, *
that he would save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us,
4. He promised to show mercy to our forebears *
and to remember his holy covenant.
5. This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham: *
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
6. Free to worship him without fear, *
holy and righteous in his sight,
all the days of our life.
7. You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, *
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
8. To give his people knowledge of salvation, *
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
9. In the tender compassion of our God, *
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
10. To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, *
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be for ever. Amen

THE PRAYERS

This or other forms may be used

Teach us, O Lord, the way of your statutes:
And lead us in the path of your commandments.

Keep our nation under your care:
And guide us in justice and truth.

O Lord, deal graciously with your servants;
Teach us discernment and knowledge.

Let not the needy be forgotten:
Not the hope of the poor be taken away.

Guide the meek in judgement:
And teach your ways to the gentle.

Lord, remember your people:
Whom you have purchased and redeemed of old.

Free Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God,
we thank you that you have brought us
safely to the beginning of this day.
Keep us from falling into sin
or running into danger,
order us in all our doings
and guide us to do always
what is righteous in your sight;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Jesus taught us to call God our Father,
and so in faith and trust we pray...

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as 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 power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.

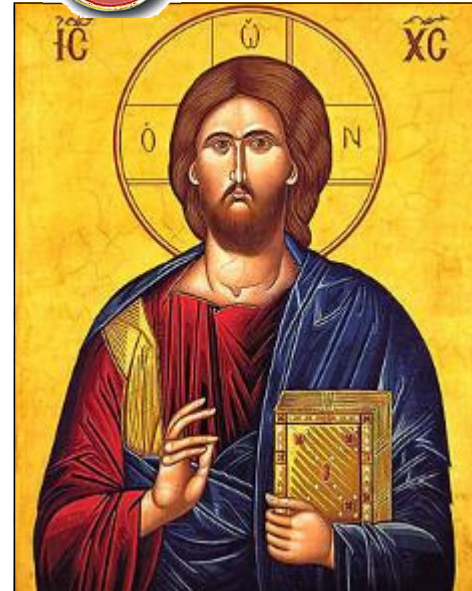
Leader: Let us bless the Lord.
All: **Thanks be to God.**

This version of Lord's Prayer may also be used.

**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.
For thine is the kingdom, the power,
and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.**



EVENING PRAYER



OPENING PRAYER

Leader: That this evening may be holy,
good and peaceful, let us pray with one
heart and mind.

(pause for silence)

As our evening prayer rises before you, O
God, so may your mercy come down
upon us to cleanse our hearts and set us
free to sing your praise now and for ever.

All: **Amen**

PSALM

*Psalms from lectionary or Psalm 141:1-5,
8-10:*

1. O Lord, I call to you; come to me
quickly; *
hear my voice when I cry to you.
2. Let my prayer be set forth in your sight
as incense, *
the lifting up of my hands as the
evening sacrifice.
3. Set a watch before my mouth, O Lord,
and guard the door of my lips; *
let not my heart incline to any evil
thing.
4. Let me not be occupied in wickedness
with evildoers, *
nor eat of their choice foods.
5. Let the righteous smite me in friendly
rebuke; let not the oil of the
unrighteous anoint my head; *
for my prayer is continually against
their wicked deeds.
8. But my eyes are turned to you, Lord
God, *
In you I take refuge, do not strip me of
my life.
9. Protect me from the snare which they
have laid for me *
and from the traps of the evildoers.

Leader: The light and peace of Jesus
Christ be with you all

All: **And also with you.**

Leader: O God, make speed to save us

All: **O Lord, make haste to help us**

*A lamp or candle may be lit and this or
another blessing may be said:*

Leader: Blessed are you, Sovereign God,
our light and our salvation;
to you be glory and praise for ever !
May we who walk in the light of
your presence
acclaim your Christ, rising
victorious,
as he banishes all darkness from
our hearts and minds,
and praise you,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All: **Blessed be God for ever !**