



SANCTUARY
CHURCH

ADVENT

DAILY DEVOTIONAL

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Part One: Restoring Hope

Day 1 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;
Lord, hear my voice.
Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.
If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.
I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.
I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.

Psalms 130:1–6

Devotional: It is Advent again. We call this time Advent because it reminds us of what comes from God for the creation of his kingdom on earth. “Hoping does not mean doing nothing. It is the opposite of desperate and panicky manipulations, of scurrying and worrying. And hoping is not dreaming. It is not spinning an illusion or fantasy to protect us from our boredom or our pain. It means a confident, alert expectation that God will do what He said He will do. It is imagination put in the harness of faith. It is a willingness to let God do it His way and in His time.”

Eugene Peterson

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 1 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.”

Habakkuk 2:3–4

Devotional: “A waiting person is a patient person. The word “patience” means the willingness to stay where we are and live the situation out to the full in the belief that something hidden there will manifest itself to us. Impatient people are always expecting the real thing to happen somewhere else and therefore want to go elsewhere. The moment is empty. But patient people dare to stay where they are. Patient living means to live actively in the present and wait there. Waiting, then, is not passive. It involves nurturing the moment, as a mother nurtures the child that is growing in her womb.”

Henri Nouwen

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 2 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

Praise be to the LORD,
for he showed me the wonders of his love
when I was in a city under siege.
In my alarm I said,
“I am cut off from your sight!”
Yet you heard my cry for mercy
when I called to you for help.
Love the LORD, all his faithful people!
The Lord preserves those who are true to him,
but the proud he pays back in full.
Be strong and take heart,
all you who hope in the LORD.

Psalms 31:21–24

Devotional: “Advent is about learning to wait. It is about not having to know exactly what is coming tomorrow, only that whatever it is, it is of the essence of sanctification for us. Every piece of it, some hard, some uplifting, is sign of the work of God alive in us. We are becoming as we go. We learn in Advent to stay in the present, knowing that only the present well-lived can possibly lead us to the fullness of life. “Advent relieves us of our commitment to the frenetic in a fast-paced world. It slows us down. It makes us think. It makes us look beyond today to the “great tomorrow” of life. Without Advent, moved only by the race to nowhere that exhausts the world around us, we could be so frantic with trying to consume and control this life that we fail to develop within ourselves a taste for the spirit that does not die and will not slip through our fingers like melted snow.”

Joan Chittister

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 2 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

We wait in hope for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.
In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.
May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,
even as we put our hope in you.

Psalm 33:20–22

Devotional: “In our secret yearnings we wait for your coming, and in our grinding despair we doubt that you will. And in this privileged place we are surrounded by witnesses who yearn more than we do and by those who despair more deeply than do we. Look upon your church and its pastors in this season of hope which runs so quickly to fatigue and this season of yearning which becomes so easily quarrelsome. Give us the grace and the impatience to wait for your coming to the bottom of our toes, to the edges of our finger tips. We do not want our several worlds to end. Come in your power and come in your weakness in any case and make all things new. Amen.”

Walter Brueggemann

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 3 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

In you, O LORD, do I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame!
In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
incline your ear to me, and save me!
Be to me a rock of refuge,
to which I may continually come;
you have given the command to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked,
from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man.
For you, O Lord, are my hope,
my trust, O LORD, from my youth.

Psalm 71:1–5

Devotional: “Lord grant me the grace to do one thing at a time today, without rushing or hurrying. Help me to savor the sacred in all I do, be it large or small. By the power of the Holy Spirit, empower me to pause today as I move from one activity to the next. Unclutter my heart, O God, until I am quiet enough to hear you speak out of the silence. Forgive me for running my life without you sometimes. Help me to be still, to surrender to your will, and to rest in your loving arms. Amen.”

Pete Scazzero

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 3 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40:28–31

Devotional: “Advent, in particular, is a season that teaches us to do something that is very hard for us to do: wait. It teaches us how to wait for the Advent or arrival of Christ into our world, not just way back then in Biblical times, but now—in those places where we long for his presence and need his intervention. Waiting for Christ’s coming into the places of our lives where we need him most right now ushers us into a special kind of waiting that is alert and watchful, full of anticipation and yet patient. The prophetic witness of John the Baptist calls us to become intentional about creating the conditions that ease Christ’s coming into our lives—alone and together. To remove whatever hindrances and obstacles there might be to Christ’s presence. To make straight whatever is crooked in us. To smooth out the rough places so that the salvation of God can become evident in our own lives.”

Ruth Haley Barton

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 4 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

O LORD, make me know my end
and what is the measure of my days;
let me know how fleeting I am!
Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths,
and my lifetime is as nothing before you.
Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath! Selah.
Surely a man goes about as a shadow!
Surely for nothing they are in turmoil;
man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather!
And now, O Lord, for what do I wait?
My hope is in you.

Psalms 39:4–7

Devotional: “Waiting is an art that our impatient age has forgotten. It wants to break open the ripe fruit when it has hardly finished planting the shoot. But all too often the greedy eyes are only deceived; the fruit that seemed so precious is still green on the inside, and disrespected hands ungratefully toss aside what has so disappointed them.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 4 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

Hear my voice when I call, LORD; be merciful to me and answer me.

My heart says of you, “Seek his face!” Your face, LORD, I will seek. Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, God my Savior. Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.

Teach me your way, LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors. Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes, for false witnesses rise up against me, spouting malicious accusations.

I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

Psalms 27:7–14

Devotional: “Maybe it is not ripe yet, a fig that is still a hard green knot no bigger than a gumball. Or maybe it is not even real yet, a dream of the future that is still a long ways off. Waiting, we have to admit that we are not in charge here. There are things we think we cannot live without that we are denied, and there are things we had given up wanting for ourselves that are suddenly dropped in our laps. We can say yes and we can say no to these things, but we do not seem able to control them. Our lives are formed in the hands of a great mystery that does not ask us for our advice.

“So if waiting is an aggravation, it is at least partly because we do not like being reminded of our limits. We like doing—earning, buying, selling, building, planting, driving, baking—making things happen, whereas waiting is essentially a matter of being—stopping, sitting, listening, looking, breathing, wondering, praying. It can feel pretty helpless to wait for someone or something that is not here yet and that will or will not arrive in its own good time, which is not the same thing as our own good time.

“And yet waiting is an essential part of the Christian life. Listen to what we say every time we break bread together: ‘Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.’ This is the mystery of our faith, that we are always waiting for Christ to come to us even though we believe that he has already come and that he is coming to us right now in word and sacrament.”

Ruth Haley Barton

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 5 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame; they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long. Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!

Psalms 25:1–7

Devotional: “‘Come, Lord Jesus’, the Advent mantra, means that all of Christian history has to live out of a kind of deliberate emptiness, a kind of chosen non-fulfillment. Perfect fullness is always to come, and we do not need to demand it now. This keeps the field of life wide open and especially open to grace and to a future created by God rather than by ourselves. This is exactly what it means to be “awake,” as the Gospel urges us! We can also use other ‘a’ words for Advent: aware, alive, attentive, alert, awake are all appropriate! Advent is above all else a call to full consciousness and a forewarning about the high price of consciousness... “‘Come, Lord Jesus’ is a leap into the kind of freedom and surrender that is rightly called the virtue of hope. The theological virtue of hope is the patient and trustful willingness to live without closure, without resolution, and still be content and even happy because our Satisfaction is now at another level, and our Source is beyond ourselves. We are able to trust that he will come again, just as Jesus has come into our past, into our private dilemmas and into our suffering world. Our Christian past then becomes our Christian prologue, and ‘Come, Lord Jesus’ is not a cry of desperation but an assured shout of cosmic hope.”

Richard Rohr

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 5 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

Romans 5:2–5

Devotional: “Advent is about waiting. In a sense, it is a four-week course on patience. That’s a good thing, in that patience means having endurance under difficult circumstances. And, if being patient is about persevering in the face of delay, well, who wouldn’t be in favor of and want it? Even more importantly, patience often means having the capacity—when provoked—not to act simply out of annoyance or anger.

“With patience we can awaken, becoming ‘obedient,’ which in the biblical sense means believing that God will do for us more than we can ask for or imagine. To follow God obediently requires believing that what is in store for all of us is bigger and better than our illusions of control and power—as individuals or as individual nations. Advent waiting is the time of relinquishing our desire to have outcomes our way and on our schedule.”

James A. Kowalski

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 6 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

1 Peter 1:3–7

Devotional: “Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because he cannot be at home in it, because he is out of place in it, and yet he must be in it, his place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is with those who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, tortured, exterminated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in this world.”

Thomas Merton

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 6 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.’ Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

John 14:1-6

Devotional: “He will come like last leaf’s fall. One night when the November wind has played the trees to the bone, and earth wakes choking on the mould, the soft shroud’s folding. He will come like frost. One morning when the shrinking earth opens on mist, to find itself arrested in the net of alien, sword-set beauty. He will come like dark. One evening when the bursting red December sun draws up the sheet and penny-masks its eye to yield the star-snowed fields of sky. He will come, will come, will come like crying in the night, like blood, like breaking, as the earth writhes to toss him free. He will come like a child.”

Rowan Williams

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 7 – Sabbath Prayer

Lord of Creation,
create in us a new rhythm of life
composed of hours that sustain rather than stress,
of days that deliver rather than destroy,
of time that trickles rather than tackles.

Lord of Liberation,
by the rhythm of your truth, set us free
from the bondage and baggage that break us,
from the Pharaohs and fellows who fail us,
from the plans and pursuits that prey upon us.

Lord of Resurrection,
may we be raised into the rhythm of your new life,
dead to deceitful calendars,
dead to fleeting friend requests,
dead to the empty peace of our accomplishments.

To our packed-full planners, we bid, “Peace!”
To our over-caffeinated consciences, we say, “Cease!”
To our suffocating selves, Lord grant release.

Drowning in a sea of deadlines and death chimes,
we rest in you our lifeline.

By your ever-restful grace,
allow us to enter your Sabbath rest
as your Sabbath rest enters into us.

In the name of our Creator,
our Liberator,
our Resurrection and Life,
we pray.

Amen.

**Shane Claiborne,
Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove,
and Enuma Okoro**

Part Two: Restoring Peace

Day 8 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Matthew 5:3–12

Devotional: “‘Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the Children of God.’ The followers of Jesus have been called to peace. When he called them they found their peace, for he is their peace. But now they are told that they must not only have peace but make it. And to that end they renounce all violence and tumult. In the cause of Christ nothing is to be gained by such methods. His kingdom is one of peace, and the mutual greeting of his flock is a greeting of peace. His disciples keep the peace by choosing to endure suffering themselves rather than inflict it on others. They maintain fellowship where others would break it off. They renounce all self-assertion, and quietly suffer in the face of hatred and wrong. In so doing they overcome evil with good, and establish the peace of God in the midst of a world of war and hate. But nowhere will that peace be more manifest than where they meet the wicked in peace and are ready to suffer at their hands. The peacemakers will carry the cross with their Lord, for it was on the cross that peace was made. Now that they are partners in Christ’s work of reconciliation, they are called the sons of God as he is the Son of God.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Day 8 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian’s defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. Every warrior’s boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.”

Isaiah 9:2–7

Devotional: “Keep your eyes on the Prince of Peace, the one who doesn’t cling to his divine power; the one who refuses to turn stones into bread, jump from great heights and rule with great power; the one who says, ‘Blessed are the poor, the gentle, those who mourn, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; blessed are the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness’ (see Matt. 5:3–11); the one who touches the lame, the crippled, and the blind; the one who speaks words of forgiveness and encouragement; the one who dies alone, rejected and despised. Keep your eyes on him who becomes poor with the poor, weak with the weak, and who is rejected with the rejected. He is the source of all peace.”

Henri Nouwen

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 9 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Come and see what the LORD has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth.

He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

Psalms 46:1–10

Devotional: "Christians are called to nonviolence not because we believe that nonviolence is a strategy to rid the world of war. But, in a world of war as faithful followers of Christ we cannot imagine being anything other than nonviolent. And that will make the world possibly more violent because the world does not want the order it calls peace exposed as the violence it so often times is. Now, learning how to wait as a people of nonviolence in a world of war, you'll know what Advent is. Advent is patience. It is how God has made us the people of promise in a world of impatience. And, Christ has made that possible for us to live patiently in a world of impatience."

Stanley Hauerwas

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 9 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’”

Matthew 25:31–45

Devotional: “Time is not given to us to keep a faith we once had but to acquire a faith we need now. Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because he cannot be at home in it, because he is out of place in it, and yet he must be in it, his place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is with those who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, tortured, excommunicated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in this world.”

Thomas Merton

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Day 10 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

“My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your ancestors lived. They and their children and their children’s children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the LORD make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever.”

Ezekiel 37:24–28

Devotional: “One kind of peace is a state of life that is free from chaos and turbulence, from violence and institutionally legitimated death. That kind of peace happens often enough in history to show us that such a thing is possible. But don’t be fooled: that kind of peace can be achieved as easily through force as well as through justice. In the latter, little is gained by it.

“But there is another kind of peace. This kind of peace does not come either from the denial of evil or the acceptance of oppression. This kind comes from the center of us and flows through us like a conduit to the world around us. This kind of peace is the peace of those who know truth and proclaim it, who recognize oppression and refuse to accept it, who understand God’s will for the world and pursue it. This kind of peace comes with the realization that it is our obligation to birth it for the rest of the world so that what the mangers and crèches and crib sets of the world point to can become real in us—and because of us—in our own time. “That is the kind of peace—disarmed, foreign to hate, and receiving of the other—that was born in the manger we remember at Christmas time. That is the kind of Christmas peace we must ourselves seek to be. Then ‘Merry Christmas’ will really mean something.”

Thomas Merton

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Day 10 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it. Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’ ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘I am he,’ Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, ‘I am he,’ they drew back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’ ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ they said. Jesus answered, ‘I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go.’ This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: ‘I have not lost one of those you gave me.’ Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.) Jesus commanded Peter, ‘Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?’”

John 18:1–11

Devotional: “Do we understand God’s vision for humanity or are we just closed up in our own little worlds? Can peace come? Is there hope for Kosovo, Israel, Palestine, Iraq, or Northern Ireland? Is there hope in this world where the gap between the rich and the poor is growing daily? Is there hope? Yes, there is hope! There is hope because God is. God is! And though there is the silence of God, there is also the mystery of God working in the hearts of people doing beautiful things. They don’t hit the headlines. The headlines are frequently things of pain— catastrophes, death. We don’t see all the peace-loving people breaking down the barriers to work together and to love each other. All of us can understand the reaction of Peter. Maybe if we found Jesus kneeling at our feet we would react in the same way. We want a big God who fixes our problems. We don’t want a little God saying, ‘I need you and I’ll come and live in you. I’ll give you a new strength, a new spirit and you shall work so people become free and loving and peace-making: We always want a God who is going to fix our problems, but God is saying, ‘I’ll give you the strength so you become one of those who work with others to bring peace to our world.’”

Jean Vanier

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Day 11 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

2 Corinthians 1:3–7

Devotional: Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

St. Francis of Assisi

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 11 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Matthew 6:25–32

Devotional: “Soberly, when our trust is in things that are absolutely beyond any risk or threat, and we have learned from good sources, including our own experience, that those things are there, anxiety is just groundless and pointless. It occurs only as a hangover of bad habits established when we were trusting things—like human approval and wealth—that were certain to let us down. Now our strategy should be one of resolute rejection of worry, while we concentrate on the future in hope and with prayer and on the past with thanksgiving.”

Dallas Willard

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 12 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, ‘Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!’; ‘Martha, Martha,’ the Lord answered, ‘you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.’”

Luke 10:38–42

Devotional: “The opposite of faith is not intellectual doubt, because faith is not localized primarily in the mind. The opposite of faith, according to a number of Jesus’ statements is anxiety. If you are fearbased and ‘worried about many things,’ as he says in Luke 10:41, you don’t have faith in a Biblical sense. Faith is to be able to trust that God is good, involved, and on your side. So you see why it takes some years of inner experience to have faith. It is not just that somewhat easy intellectual assent to doctrines or an agreement with a moral position. This has passed as the counterfeit of faith for far too long. When you cannot rely upon an Infinite Source, you yourself become your primary reference point in terms of all preferences, needs, results, and controls. That would make anybody both anxious and insecure.”

Richard Rohr

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 12 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.’ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.”

Matthew 2:7–12

Devotional:

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.

Howard Thurman

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 13 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:5–11

Devotional: “Father, I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will. Whatever you may do, I thank you; I am ready for all, I accept all. Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures—I wish no more than this, O Lord. Into your hands I commend my soul: I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands without reserve and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father. Amen.”

Charles de Foucauld

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 13 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.’”

Luke 2:8–14

Devotional: “First keep peace with yourself, then you will be able to bring peace to others. The peaceful do more good than the learned. While the passionate turn even good to evil and are quick to believe evil, the peaceful, being good themselves, turn all thing to good.

“The man who is at perfect ease is never suspicious, but the disturbed and discontented spirit is upset by many suspicions. He neither rests himself nor permits others to do so. He often says what ought not to be said and leaves undone what ought to be done. He is concerned with the duties of others but neglects his own.

“Now, all our peace in this life is found in humbly enduring suffering, rather than in being free from it. He who knows best how to suffer will enjoy the greater peace, because he is the conqueror of himself, the master of the world, a friend of Christ, and an heir of heaven.”

Thomas A Kempis

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 14 – Sabbath Prayer

Lord of Creation,
create in us a new rhythm of life
composed of hours that sustain rather than stress,
of days that deliver rather than destroy,
of time that trickles rather than tackles.

Lord of Liberation,
by the rhythm of your truth, set us free
from the bondage and baggage that break us,
from the Pharaohs and fellows who fail us,
from the plans and pursuits that prey upon us.

Lord of Resurrection,
may we be raised into the rhythm of your new life,
dead to deceitful calendars,
dead to fleeting friend requests,
dead to the empty peace of our accomplishments.

To our packed-full planners, we bid, “Peace!”
To our over-caffeinated consciences, we say, “Cease!”
To our suffocating selves, Lord grant release.

Drowning in a sea of deadlines and death chimes,
we rest in you our lifeline.

By your ever-restful grace,
allow us to enter your Sabbath rest
as your Sabbath rest enters into us.

In the name of our Creator,
our Liberator,
our Resurrection and Life,
we pray.

Amen.

**Shane Claiborne,
Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove,
and Enuma Okoro**

Part Three: Restoring Joy

Day 15 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed.
Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy.
Then it was said among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them.”
The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.
Restore our fortunes, LORD, like streams in the Negev.
Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.
Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.

Psalms 126

Devotional: “Joy is not a requirement of Christian discipleship, it is a consequence. It is not what we have to acquire in order to experience life in Christ; it is what comes to us when we are walking in the way of faith and obedience. “We try to get it [joy] through entertainment. We pay someone to make jokes, tell stories, perform dramatic actions, sing songs. We buy the vitality of another’s imagination to divert and enliven our own poor lives. The enormous entertainment industry in America is a sign of the depletion of joy in our culture. Society is a bored, gluttonous king employing a court jester to divert it after an overindulgent meal. But that kind of joy never penetrates our lives, never changes our basic constitution. The effects are extremely temporary; a few quiet minutes, a few hours, a few days at most. When we run out of money, the joy trickles away. We cannot make ourselves joyful. Joy cannot be commanded, purchased, or arranged. “But there is something we can do. We can decide to live in response to the abundance of God and not under the dictatorship of our own poor needs. We can decide to live in the environment of a living God and not our own dying selves. We can decide to center ourselves in the God who generously gives and not in our own egos which greedily grab. One of the certain consequences of such a life is joy, the kind expressed in Psalm 126.”

Eugene Peterson

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Day 15 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”

John 15:9–12

Devotional: “What is joy? Joy can never be induced, cranked up, or made to happen. It’s something that has to find us precisely within our ordinary, duty-bound, burdened, full-of-worries, and pressured lives. This is joy: Imagine walking to your car or to the bus after a day’s work, tired, needing some rest. But, just as you reach your car or the bus-stop, you fill with a sense of life and health; in some inchoate way, all jumbled together, you feel your body, mind, soul, gender, sexuality, history, place within a family, network of friends, city, and country, and this feeling makes you spontaneously exclaim: ‘God, it’s good to be alive!’ That’s joy.

“And as C.S. Lewis puts it, it has to surprise you. You can’t find joy, it has to find you. That’s its real quality. You can go to a party and say, ‘Tonight I’m going to have a good time, if it kills me!’ It might! Indeed parties and letting off steam have their place. You might even find good cheer at a party or find a good distraction and these can be needed therapy and a good respite from hard work. But neither is joy.

“Joy is always the by-product of something else. As the various versions of The Prayer of St. Francis put it, we can never attain joy, consolation, peace, forgiveness, love, and understanding by actively pursuing them. We attain them by giving them out. That’s the great paradox at the center of all spirituality and one of the great foundational truths within the universe itself: The air that we breathe out is the air we will eventually breathe back in. Joy will come to us if we set about actively trying to create it for others.”

Ronald Rolheiser

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 16 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

“Jesus went on to say, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.’ At this, some of his disciples said to one another, ‘What does he mean by saying, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,” and “Because I am going to the Father?”’ They kept asking, ‘What does he mean by “a little while”? We don’t understand what he is saying.’

“Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, ‘Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me”? Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.’”

Philippians 2:5–11

Devotional: “Joy is the rarest and most infrequent thing in the world. We already have enough fanatical seriousness, enthusiasm, and humorless zeal in the world. But joy? This shows us that the perception of the living God is rare. When we have found God our Saviour—or when he has found us—we will rejoice in him. Joy is the simplest form of gratitude.”

Karl Barth

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 16 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound;
decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled.
Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.
Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

Habakkuk 3:16–18

Devotional: “Joy is what makes life worth living, but for many joy seems hard to find. They complain that their lives are sorrowful and depressing. What then brings the joy we so much desire? Are some people just lucky, while others have run out of luck? Strange as it may sound, we can choose joy. Two people can be part of the same event, but one may choose to live it quite differently than the other. One may choose to trust that what happened, painful as it may be, holds a promise. The other may choose despair and be destroyed by it. What makes us human is precisely this freedom of choice.”

Henri Nouwen

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 17 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

1 Peter 1:3–9

Devotional: “A Christian is a man and a woman of joy. Jesus teaches us this, the Church teaches us this, in a special way in this time. What is this joy? Is it having fun? No: it is not the same. Fun is good, eh? Having fun is good. But joy is more, it is something else. It is something that does not come from short term economic reasons, from momentary reasons: it is something deeper. It is a gift. Fun, if we want to have fun all the time, in the end becomes shallow, superficial, and also leads us to that state where we lack Christian wisdom, it makes us a little bit stupid, naive, no? Everything is fun...no. Joy is another thing. Joy is a gift from God. It fills us from within. It is like an anointing of the Spirit. And this joy is the certainty that Jesus is with us and with the Father.”

Pope Francis

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 17 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:4–7

Devotional: “Joy is a characteristic mark of the Kingdom of God. Starting with the coming of Jesus Christ; who brings joy into the world. At Bethlehem the angel announces to the shepherds a great joy for the whole people. Christ proclaims in the Sermon on the Mount ‘Happy are you...’ (Matthew 5:2–12). At the Last Supper, Jesus’ bequest to his intimate is ‘that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete’ (John 15:11).

“The Risen Christ shares his peace and his joy with his disciples ‘who were happy to see the Lord.’ At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit brings ‘a plenitude of joys,’ as a choice gift of the Spirit who is divine fulfilment, happiness, supreme bliss.

“St. Paul time and again advises joy. The first generations of Christians were conspicuous by their love and their happiness. St. Athanasius says of them, ‘The saints rejoiced all their lives long, like men at a feast.’ Each time we witness a return to the original spirit of the Gospel, to pure, unadulterated, courageous following of Jesus in poverty, humility, simplicity and trust, happiness and the joy of the children of God are seen to come to life again.”

Mother Teresa

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 18 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

I will exalt you, LORD,
for you lifted me out of the depths
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
LORD my God, I called to you for help,
and you healed me.
You, LORD, brought me up from the realm of the dead;
you spared me from going down to the pit.
Sing the praises of the LORD, you his faithful people;
praise his holy name.
For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime;
weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.

Psalm 30:1–5

Devotional: “A sort of joy exists that knows nothing at all of the heart’s pain, anguish, and dread; it does not last; it can only numb a person for the moment. The joy of God has gone through the poverty of the manger and the agony of the cross; that is why it is invincible, irrefutable. It does not deny the anguish, when it is there, but finds God in the midst of it, in fact precisely there; it does not deny grave sin but finds forgiveness precisely in this way; it looks death straight in the eye, but it finds life precisely within it.

“Full of joy, we are enabled to believe that there was and is One to whom no human suffering or sin is foreign and who in deepest love accomplished our redemption. Only in such joy in Christ the Redeemer shall we be preserved from hardening ourselves where human suffering encounters us.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 18 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

Luke 2:8–14

Devotional: “If we think we will have joy only by praying and singing psalms, we will be disillusioned. But if we fill our lives with simple good things and constantly thank God for them, we will be joyful, that is, full of joy. And what about our problems? When we determine to dwell on the good and excellent things in life, we will be so full of those things that they will tend to swallow our problems.”

Richard Foster

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 19 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

May the LORD answer you when you are in distress;
may the name of the God of Jacob protect you.
May he send you help from the sanctuary
and grant you support from Zion.
May he remember all your sacrifices
and accept your burnt offerings.
May he give you the desire of your heart
and make all your plans succeed.
May we shout for joy over your victory
and lift up our banners in the name of our God.
May the LORD grant all your requests.

Psalm 20:1–5

Devotional: “Great are you, O Lord, and exceedingly worthy of praise; your power is immense, and your wisdom beyond reckoning. And so we men, who are a due part of your creation, long to praise you—we also carry our mortality about with us, carry the evidence of our sin and with it the proof that you thwart the proud. You arouse us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”

St. Augustine

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 19 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.
Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.
Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts. They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty— and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They tell of the power of your awesome works— and I will proclaim your great deeds.

They celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness. The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.

Psalms 145:1–8

Devotional: “There is not one of us whose life has not already been touched somewhere with joy, so that in order to make it real to us, to show it forth, it should be enough for Jesus simply to remind us of it, to make us remember the joyous moments of our own lives. Yet this is not easy because, ironically enough, these are likely to be precisely the moments that we do not associate with religion. We tend to think that joy is not only not properly religious but that it is even the opposite of religion. We tend to think that religion is sitting stiff and antiseptic and a little bored and that joy is laughter and freedom and reaching out our arms to embrace the whole wide and preposterous earth which is so beautiful that sometimes it nearly breaks our hearts. We need to be reminded that at its heart Christianity is joy and that laughter and freedom and the reaching out of arms are the essence of it. We need to be reminded too that joy is not the same as happiness. Happiness is man-made—a happy home, a happy marriage, a happy relationship with our friends and with in our jobs. We work for these things, and if we are careful and wise and lucky, we can usually achieve them. But joy is a mystery because it can happen anywhere, anytime, even under the most unpromising circumstances, even in the midst of suffering, with tears in its eyes. Even nailed to a tree. What Jesus is saying is that men are made for joy and that anyone who is truly joyous has a right to say that he is doing God’s will on this earth. Where you have known joy, you have known him.”

Frederick Buechner

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Day 20 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and selfcontrol. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

Galatians 5:22–26

Devotional: “Don’t be satisfied with a joyless life. There ought to be in every Christian a deep, settled fullness of the joy of Christ that no circumstance of life can dispel. This comes as you allow the Holy Spirit to express Himself in your life. One of the fruits of the Spirit is joy (Gal. 5:22). This joy is unlike any happiness that is produced by the world. It fills you and permeates everything you do. Jesus did not pray that you would merely be happy or even that you would escape grief. He prayed that you would have the same joy that the Father had given Him: a divine joy, a joy that comes from a deep and unwavering relationship with the Father. It is a joy that is grounded so firmly in a relationship with God that no change in circumstances could ever shake it. This is the kind of joy that Christ is praying will be in you.”

Henry Blackaby

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 20 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.”

John 17: 6–13

Devotional: “Joy is a deep-seated sense of well-being, of safety in God’s universe. Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit, growing as a natural product of the transformation of one’s inner self to be like that of Christ, which itself is full of joy. We should, to begin with, think that God leads a very interesting life, and that he is full of joy. Undoubtedly he is the most joyous being in the universe. The abundance of his love and generosity is inseparable from his infinite joy. All of the good and beautiful things from which we occasionally drink tiny droplets of soul-exhilarating joy, God continuously experiences in all their breadth and depth and richness.”

Dallas Willard

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 21 – Sabbath Prayer

Lord of Creation,
create in us a new rhythm of life
composed of hours that sustain rather than stress,
of days that deliver rather than destroy,
of time that trickles rather than tackles.

Lord of Liberation,
by the rhythm of your truth, set us free
from the bondage and baggage that break us,
from the Pharaohs and fellows who fail us,
from the plans and pursuits that prey upon us.

Lord of Resurrection,
may we be raised into the rhythm of your new life,
dead to deceitful calendars,
dead to fleeting friend requests,
dead to the empty peace of our accomplishments.

To our packed-full planners, we bid, “Peace!”
To our over-caffeinated consciences, we say, “Cease!”
To our suffocating selves, Lord grant release.

Drowning in a sea of deadlines and death chimes,
we rest in you our lifeline.

By your ever-restful grace,
allow us to enter your Sabbath rest
as your Sabbath rest enters into us.

In the name of our Creator,
our Liberator,
our Resurrection and Life,
we pray.

Amen.

**Shane Claiborne,
Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove,
and Enuma Okoro**

Part Four: Restoring Love

Day 22 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

“So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.”

Luke 2:1–7

Devotional: “When God becomes man in Jesus of Nazareth, he not only enters into the finitude of man, but in his death on the cross also enters into the situation of man’s godforsakenness. In Jesus he does not die the natural death of a finite being, but the violent death of the criminal on the cross, the death of complete abandonment by God. The suffering in the passion of Jesus is abandonment, rejection by God, his Father. God does not become a religion, so that man participates in him by corresponding religious thoughts and feelings. God does not become a law, so that man participates in him through obedience to a law. God does not become an ideal, so that man achieves community with him through constant striving. He humbles himself and takes upon himself the eternal death of the godless and the godforsaken, so that all the godless and the godforsaken can experience communion with him.”

Jürgen Moltmann

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 22 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’”

Matthew 21:18–21

Devotional: “The word sin occurs forty-one times in the Gospels, and it is not accidental that in the opening chapter of the opening gospel we have an opening statement about who Jesus is. Matthew 1:21 says it this way: ‘She [Mary] will give birth to a son, and you [Joseph] are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’ ‘Jesus’ translates the Hebrew Yeshua, which means ‘Yahweh is salvation.’ By naming Mary’s son ‘Jesus,’ Joseph named him ‘Savior.’ From what was he saving people? ‘From their sins.’ “The profundity of this cannot be missed: ‘Yahweh is salvation’ has just become ‘God-in-flesh-salvation’ and ‘Jesus-is-salvation.’ Israel—having failed to live up to a covenant calling and wrecked by disobedience, nor mired in subjugation to Rome, blanketed with petty wars and ripping at the seams with religious and political infighting—would be rescued and the kingdom would come, and the this would all occur through Mary’s son. He would rescue Israel by saving Israel from the burden of its sin.”

Scot McKnight

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 23 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

“And Mary said: ‘My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.’ Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.”

Luke 1:46–56

Devotional: “No one can celebrate a genuine Christmas without being truly poor. The self-sufficient, the proud, those who, because they have everything, look down on others, those who have no need even of God—for them there will be no Christmas. Only the poor, the hungry, those who need someone to come on their behalf, will have that someone. That someone is God. Emmanuel. God-with-us. Without poverty of spirit there can be no abundance of God.”

Oscar Romero

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 23 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.’ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.’ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.”

Luke 2:13–21

Devotional: “God entered into our world not with the crushing impact of unbearable glory, but in the way of weakness, vulnerability and need. The world does not understand vulnerability. Neediness is rejected as incompetence and compassion is dismissed as unprofitable. But in this weakness and poverty the shipwrecked at the stable would come to know the love of God.”

Brennan Manning

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 24 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 14:1–4, 14

Devotional: “Our spiritual life depends on his perpetual coming to us, far more than on our going to him. Every time a channel is made for him he comes; every time our hearts are open to him he enters, bringing a fresh gift of his very life, and on that life we depend. We should think of the whole power and splendor of God as always pressing in upon our small souls.”

Evelyn Underhill

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 24 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

“But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’ “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ (which means ‘God with us’).

“When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.”

Matthew 1:18–25

Devotional: “The incarnation means that for whatever reason God chose to let us fall into a condition of being limited, to suffer, to be subject to sorrows and death—he has nonetheless had the honesty and the courage to take his own medicine.... He himself has gone through the whole of human experience—from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair, and death.... He was born in poverty and suffered infinite pain—all for us—and thought it well worth his while.”

Dorothy Sayers

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 25 – Morning Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture Reading:

“The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one. Everything was created through him; nothing—not one thing!—came into being without him. What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by. The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn’t put it out.

“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.”

John 1:1–5, 14 (The Message)

Devotional: “So how did it happen that this birth, this Jesus birth managed to set so many of us back on our heels in astonishment and gratitude and wonder? And continues to do so century after century, at least at this time of year? The brief answer is that this wasn’t just any birth. The baby’s parents and first witnesses were convinced that God was entering human history in human form. Their conviction was confirmed in angel and Magi and shepherds visitations; eventually an extraordinary life came into being before their eyes, right in their neighborhood. More and more people became convinced. Men, women, and children from all over the world continue to be convinced right up to the present moment. “Birth, every human birth, is an occasion for local wonder. In Jesus’ birth the wonder is extrapolated across the screen of all creation and all history as a God-birth. ‘The Word became flesh and dwelt among us’— moved into the neighborhood, so to speak. “Incarnation, in-flesh-ment, God in human form in Jesus entering our history: this is what started Christmas. This is what keeps Christmas going.”

Eugene Peterson

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord’s Prayer: 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 25 – Midday/Evening Office

Silence, Stillness, and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Prayer for Presence: Lord Jesus, I believe you want to speak to me in deep and profound ways this moment. May I be attentive to your loving and merciful voice.

Scripture Reading:

“This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn’t go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person’s failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him.”

John 3:16–18 (The Message)

Devotional: “If you took the love of all the best mothers and fathers who ever lived (think about that for a moment)—all the goodness, kindness, patience, fidelity, wisdom, tenderness, strength and love— and united all those virtues in one person, that person would only be a faint shadow of the love and mercy in the heart of God for you and me.”

Brennan Manning

Space for Reflection: In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

Closing Prayer: May the Lord bless us and keep us and cause His face to shine upon us from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

