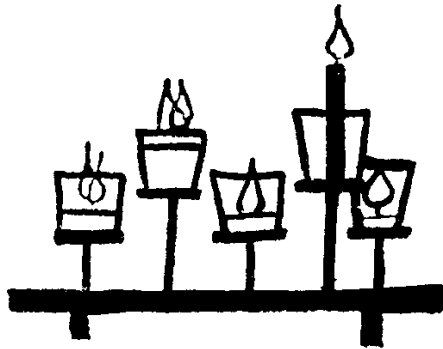


Guide *for* *the* Daily Office

*For the Week of the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany
February 2-February 8, 2025*



Private Prayers *for Before & After the Office*

Below are adaptations of the traditional prayers that were prayed before praying the Divine Office. If desired, they may be privately used before and after prayer.

Before the Office

Open, O Lord, my mouth to bless your holy Name; cleanse also my heart from all vain and wandering thoughts; enlighten my understanding; kindle my affections; that I may say this Office worthily, with attention and devotion, and so be fit to be heard in the presence of your divine Majesty. Through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

The Prayer of St. Gertrude

O Lord, in union with that divine intention by which you yourself on earth did render your praises to God, I desire to offer this my Office of prayer unto you.

The Our Father & the Apostles' Creed may then be prayed silently

After the Office

To God Most Holy, in his divine Majesty of Trinity in Unity; To Jesus Christ, our Lord and God made man and crucified for us; To blessed Mary Ever-Virgin, from whose glorious purity he took flesh; And to the entire Company of the Saints of God in heaven; Be praise, honour, power, and glory, from every creature on earth: And likewise to us may there be full remission of all our sins: throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

The Our Father may be prayed silently

O most gracious Jesus, I give thanks unto you with my whole heart. Be merciful to me. I offer this act of worship to your Divine Heart, that you would correct whatsoever is amiss, and supply whatever is lacking, to the praise and glory of your most holy Name, and to that of your most blessed Mother; for the salvation of my soul and for that of all your Church. Amen.

How-to use *this* Guide

This Guide is meant to help those who would like to pray the daily office. With this guide, all that you need to pray the Daily Office is a 1979 Book of Common Prayer! If you don't have one, they are available for purchase online, or for free as a PDF by searching "1979 Book of Common Prayer PDF."

There are two sections to this guide:

1. The Ordinary
2. The Propers

The Ordinary is at the beginning, and tells you the order of the typical prayers and readings for Morning and Evening Prayer every day. Page numbers are provided for convenience. Follow this for the structure of Morning & Evening Prayer.

The Propers are the readings and prayers appointed for each individual day, along with any saints being celebrated that day. This section will give you all the readings and prayers needed to pray the office.

The **Ordinary** *for* **Morning Prayer**

Introduction *Read the introduction found in the Ordinary*

Opening Sentence *Choose one of the acclamations for “At any time”* pg. 78

Invitatory *“Lord, open our lips, etc.”* pg. 80

Antiphon *use the antiphon under “On other Sundays and weekdays”* pg. 81

Venite or Jubilate pg. 82

Antiphon *repeat the antiphon*

Psalter *Read the Psalms appointed for Morning Prayer responsively by verse, pausing at the asterisk and ending with “Glory to the Father . . .”*

First Lesson *Read the first reading appointed*

First Canticle

Mondays 9: The First Song of Isaiah pg. 86

Tuesdays 13: A Song of Praise pg. 90

Wednesdays 11: The Third Song of Isaiah pg. 87

Thursday 8: The Song of Moses pg. 85

Friday 10: The Second Song of Isaiah pg. 86

Saturday 12: A Song of Creation pg. 88

Sundays & Major Feasts 16: The Song of Zechariah pg. 92

Second Lesson *Read the first reading appointed*

Second Canticle

Mondays 19: The Song of the Redeemed pg. 94

Tuesdays 18: A Song to the Lamb pg. 93

Wednesdays 16: The Song of Zechariah pg. 92

Thursday 20: Glory to God pg. 94

Friday 18: A Song to the Lamb pg. 93

Saturday 19: The Song of the Redeemed pg. 94

<i>Sundays & Major Feasts</i>	21: You are God	pg. 95
[Third Lesson <i>if there is a third lesson appointed, read it here</i>]		
Apostles' Creed		pg. 96
Lord's Prayer		pg. 97
Suffrages	<i>Ordinarily, use Suffrage A. On Sundays & Major feast days, use Suffrage B.</i>	pg..97-8
Collect(s) of the Day	<i>Read the appointed collects</i>	
Collect of the Week		
<i>Mondays</i>	A Collect for the Renewal of Life	pg. 99
<i>Tuesdays</i>	A Collect for Peace	pg. 99
<i>Wednesdays</i>	A Collect for Grace	pg. 100
<i>Thursday</i>	A Collect for Guidance	pg. 100
<i>Friday</i>	A Collect for Fridays	pg. 99
<i>Saturday</i>	A Collect for Saturdays	pg. 99
<i>Sundays</i>	A Collect for Sundays	pg. 98
Prayer for Mission	<i>Choose one of the three prayers for mission</i>	pg. 100-1
Intercessions & Thanksgivings	<i>Add as appointed</i>	
Silence	<i>Intercessions/thanksgivings may be added, silently or aloud</i>	
[The General Thanksgiving <i>may be added here</i>]		pg. 101
A Prayer of St. Chrysostom		pg. 102
Concluding Versicle and Sentence		pg. 102

The Ordinary for Evening Prayer

Introduction *Read the introduction found in the Ordinary*

Opening Sentence *Choose one of the opening sentences* pg. 115-16

Confession of Sin *The confession of sin is said together in unison* pg. 116

Prayer for Forgiveness *all but priests say “us” instead of “you”* pg. 117

Invitatory *“O God, make speed to save us, etc.”* pg. 117

Phos Hilaron *Say together the “O Gracious Light”* pg. 118

Psalter *Read the Psalms appointed for Evening Prayer responsively by verse, pausing at the asterisk and ending with the “Glory to the Father . . .”*

The First Lesson *Read the first reading appointed*

The First Canticle

Mondays 8: The Song of Moses pg. 85

Tuesdays 10: The Second Song of Isaiah pg. 86

Wednesdays 12: A Song of Creation pg. 88

Thursday 11: The Third Song of Isaiah pg. 87

Friday 13: A Song of Praise pg. 90

Saturday 9: The First Song of Isaiah pg. 86

Sundays & Major Feasts The Song of Mary (*Magnificat*) pg. 119

The Second Lesson *Read the first reading appointed*

Second Canticle

Mondays-Saturdays The Song of Mary *Magnificat* pg. 119

Sundays & Major Feasts The Song of Simeon *Nunc dimittis* pg. 120

[**The Third Lesson** *if there is a third lesson appointed, read it here*]

Apostles’ Creed pg. 120

Lord’s Prayer pg. 121

Suffrages *If there is a celebration of a saint, use Suffrage B, inserting “[their name] & the Blessed Virgin Mary” in the last petition before “and all your saints”. If not, Suffrage A.* pg.121-2

The Collect(s) of the Day *Read the appointed collects*

The Collect of the Week

Mondays A Collect for Peace pg. 123

Tuesdays A Collect for Aid against Perils pg. 123

Wednesdays A Collect for Protection pg. 124

Thursday A Collect for the Presence of Christ pg. 124

Friday A Collect for Fridays pg. 123

Saturday A Collect for Saturdays pg. 123

Sundays A Collect for Sundays pg. 123

Prayer for Mission *Choose one of the three prayers for mission* pg. 100-1

Intercessions & Thanksgivings *Add as appointed*

Silence *Personal intercessions/thanksgivings may be added*

The General Thanksgiving pg. 125

A Prayer of St. Chrysostom pg. 126

Concluding Versicle and Sentence pg. 126

The Angelus

Traditionally, the Angelus is prayed once in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. For those who are comfortable, it may be prayed on its own or before or after the office.

V. The Angel of the Lord announced unto Mary.

R. And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners; Now and at the hour of our death. *Amen.*

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it unto me according to thy Word.

Hail Mary . . .

V. And the Word was made flesh.

R. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary . . .

V. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray.

Pour thy grace into our hearts, O Lord, that we who have known the incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ, announced by an angel to the Virgin Mary, may by his † cross and passion be brought to the glory of his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

1 Vir - gin - born, we bow be - fore thee: bless - ed was the
 2 Bless - ed she by all cre - a - tion, who brought forth the

womb that bore thee; — Ma - ry, Mo - ther meek and mild, —
 world's sal - va - tion, and bless - ed they, for ev - er blest, who

bless - ed was she in her Child. Bless - ed was the breast that fed thee;
 love thee most and serve thee best. Vir - gin - born, we bow be - fore thee;

bless - ed was the hand that led thee; bless - ed was the
 bless - ed was the womb that bore thee; Ma - ry, Mo - ther

par - ent's eye that watched thy slum-bering in - fan - cy.
 meek and mild, — bless - ed was she in her Child.

The Presentation (February 2); The Annunciation (March 25).

Words: Reginald Heber (1783-1826)

Music: *Psalm 86*, Claude Goudimel (1514-1572), alt.

88. 77. D



Sunday, February 2

THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

Introduction

Today's feast is sometimes known as the Purification of Saint Mary the Virgin, and also as Candlemas. In the Orthodox Church it has also been called the Meeting of Christ with Simeon. Such a variety of names is ample testimony to the wealth of spiritual meaning that generations of Christians have discovered in this small incident. The title "The Presentation" reminds us of the Jewish law (Exodus 13:2; 22:29) that every firstborn son had to be dedicated to God in memory of the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt, when the firstborn sons of the Egyptians died and those of Israel were spared. When Mary placed her infant son into the arms of Simeon, it was the meeting of the Old and New Dispensations. The old sacrifices, the burnt offerings and oblations, were done away; a new and perfect offering had come into the temple. God had provided himself a lamb for the burnt offering (Genesis 22:8), his only Son. The offering was to be made once for all on the cross. At every Eucharist, those who are in Christ recall that sinless offering and unite "themselves, their souls and bodies" with the self-oblation of their

Lord and Savior. It is traditional that candles are blessed on this day, for use throughout the rest of the year, which is why the feast is also sometimes known as “Candlemas.”

Opening & Invitatory

In Morning Prayer, Use an Epiphany Opening Sentence (pg. 76) & the Jubilate (pg. 82) as the Invitatory, with the Antiphon for Feasts of the Incarnation (pg. 82). The hymn on page 8 may be sung after the collects and prayers, before the General Thanksgiving/ Prayer of St. Chrysostom (the hymn is #258 in the 1982 Hymnal)

In Evening Prayer, sing or read the hymn on the page 8 in place of the Phos Hilaron.

The Psalter

In Morning Prayer, Psalm 42, 43 (BCP page 643)

In Evening Prayer, Psalm 48, 87 (BCP page 651, 711)

The First Reading for Morning Prayer *(1 Samuel 2:1-10)*

Reader A reading from the first book of the prophet Samuel

Hannah prayed and said, “My heart exults in the Lord; my strength is exalted in my God. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in my victory. “There is no Holy One like the Lord, no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, and on them he has set the world. “He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness; for not by might does one prevail. The Lord! His adversaries shall be shattered; the Most High will thunder in

heaven. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king, and exalt the power of his anointed."

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People *Thanks be to God.*

The Second Reading for Morning Prayer (*John 8:31-36*)

Reader A reading from the Gospel according to St. John

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?" Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People *Thanks be to God.*

The First Reading for Evening Prayer (*Haggai 2:1-9*)

Reader A reading from the book of the prophet Haggai

on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month. In the second year of King Darius, in the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai, saying: Speak now to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, and say, Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing? Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the Lord; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord; work, for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts, according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My spirit abides among you; do not fear. For thus says the Lord of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and

the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts. The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the Lord of hosts.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People *Thanks be to God.*

The Second Reading for Evening Prayer (*1 John 3:1-8*)

Reader A reading from the first letter of St. John

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People *Thanks be to God.*

The Third Reading for Evening Prayer

A Reading from a sermon of Gueric of Igny

Today as we bear in our hands lighted candles, how can we not fail to remember that venerable old man Simeon who on this day held the child Jesus in his arms – the Word who was latent in a body, as light is latent in a wax candle – and declared him to be ‘the light to enlighten the nations’? Indeed,

Simeon was himself a bright and shining lamp bearing witness to the Light. Under the guidance of the Spirit which filled him, he came into the temple precisely in order that, 'receiving your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of your temple', he might proclaim Jesus to be that loving kindness and the light of your people. Behold then, the candle alight in Simeon's hands. You must light your own candles by enkindling them at his, those lamps which the Lord commanded you to bear in your hands. So come to him and be enlightened that you do not so much bear lamps as become them, shining within yourselves and radiating light to your neighbours. May there be a lamp in your heart, in your hand and in your mouth: let the lamp in your heart shine for yourself, the lamp in your hand and mouth shine for your neighbours. The lamp in your heart is a reverence for God inspired by faith; the lamp in your hand is the example of a good life; and the lamp in your mouth are the words of consolation you speak. We have to shine not only before others by our good works and by what we say, but also before the angels in our prayer, and before God by the intentions of our hearts. In the presence of the angels our lamps will shine with unsullied reverence when we sing the psalms attentively in their sight or pray fervently; before God our lamp is single-minded resolve to please him alone to whom we have entrusted ourselves. My friends, in order to light all these lamps for yourselves, I beg you to approach the source of light and become enlightened – I mean Jesus himself who shines in Simeon's hands to enlighten your faith, who shines on your works, who inspires your speech, who makes your prayer fervent and purifies the intentions of your heart. Then, when the lamp of this mortal life is extinguished, there will appear for you who had so many lamps shining within you the light of unquenchable life, and it will shine for you at the evening of your life like the brightness of the noonday sun. And though you may think your light is quenched in death, you will rise like the daystar and your darkness be made bright as noon. As Scripture says, 'No longer will you need the light of sun to shine upon you by day, or the light of the moon by night; but the Lord will be an everlasting light for you.' For the light of the new Jerusalem is the Lamb. To him be glory and praise for ever.

Reader Here ends the lesson.

The Collect

The Presentation (*from the Book of Common Prayer, pg. 239*)

Almighty and everliving God, we humbly pray that, as your only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple, so we may be presented to you with pure and clean hearts by Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*



Monday, Feb 3 | Anskar, Bishop and Missionary, 865

Monday of the Fourth Week after Epiphany

Introduction

Anskar was one of those valiant Christians of whom it might be said, "These shall plant the seed, but others shall reap the harvest." As Archbishop of Hamburg, he was papal legate for missionary work among the Scandinavians. The immediate result of his devoted and perilous labors was minimal: two churches established on the border of Denmark and one priest settled in Sweden. He also participated in the consecration of Gotbert, first bishop in Sweden. Nevertheless, it was the seed from which a fruitful mission would later grow. Anskar was born in the Somme region of France in 801, and educated in the outstanding monastic school in nearby Corbie Abbey. His teaching skill led him to be chosen to be sent out by Corbie as master of a new monastery school in Saxon Germany. His strongest call, however, was to be a missionary. He was stirred, his biographer Rimbert says, by a prolonged vision, in which a voice said, "Go and return to me crowned with martyrdom." When King Harald of Denmark sought missionaries for that country in 826, Anskar was one of those selected. Rimbert notes that Anskar's missionary purpose caused astonishment. Why should he wish to leave his brothers to deal with "unknown and barbarous folk?" Some of the brethren tried to deter him; others mocked him. Steadfast in his resolve, Anskar established a school and mission in Denmark, working conscientiously but unsuccessfully to convert and evangelize. He was not totally discouraged. Another vision appeared, with a voice saying, "Go and declare the work of God to the nations." Shortly afterward, about 829, he was called to Sweden and eagerly accepted the invitation. Yet meager aid both from the monastery and the emperor frustrated his efforts. While still a young man, Anskar was consecrated as Archbishop of Hamburg in 831. He continued his work among the Scandinavians until 848, when he retired to the See of Bremen and died in 865. The seeds of his efforts were not to bear fruit until over one hundred years later, when Viking devastation, weakness in the Frankish Church, and the lowest ebb of missionary enthusiasm came to an end. The rich harvest of conversion was three generations away. Nevertheless, Anskar is now looked upon by Scandinavians as their apostle.

The Psalter

In Morning Prayer, Psalm 56, 57, 58 (*BCP pg. 662*)

In Evening Prayer, Psalm 64, 65 (*BCP pg. 671*)

The First Reading for Morning Prayer (*Isaiah 51:17–23*)

Reader A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah:

Rouse yourself, rouse yourself! Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl of staggering. There is no one to guide her among all the children she has borne; there is no one to take her by the hand among all the children she has brought up. These two things have befallen you—who will grieve with you?—devastation and destruction, famine and sword— who will comfort you? Your children have fainted, they lie at the head of every street like an antelope in a net; they are full of the wrath of the Lord, the rebuke of your God. Therefore hear this, you who are wounded, who are drunk, but not with wine: Thus says your Sovereign, the Lord, your God who pleads the cause of his people: See, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; you shall drink no more from the bowl of my wrath. And I will put it into the hand of your tormentors, who have said to you, “Bow down, that we may walk on you”; and you have made your back like the ground and like the street for them to walk on.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Second Reading for Morning Prayer (*Galatians 4:1–11*)

Reader A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Galatians

My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; but they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might

receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God. Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods. Now, however, that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits? How can you want to be enslaved to them again? You are observing special days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People *Thanks be to God.*

The Third Reading for Morning Prayer

A Reading from The Life of Saint Anskar by his disciple Rimbart

When the emperor wanted to send back Harold to his native land and regain the crown with his help, he looked for a holy and pious man who would accompany the king, and teach both him and his people the doctrine of salvation in order to be converted and made steadfast in faith. The Abbot of Corbie informed him that he knew of a monk in his monastery who was ablaze for the holy faith and wanted to suffer much for the name of God. Later, a delegation from Sweden arrived with a message for the emperor Louis. They said that among their people there were many who wanted to embrace the Christian faith; even the king himself was favourable to the thought of receiving Christian priests if the emperor would most graciously send some wise preachers. Again the name of Anskar was mentioned. The man of God clearly understood the task entrusted to him. He became ablaze with the love of God, and saw it as a great joy to be allowed to work for the salvation of souls. How blessed, how worthy of all praise and commendation, was Anskar! He imitated the greatest of the saints and was endowed with unnumbered virtues. He was holy in thought and chaste in body and, like the virgins, followed the Lamb wherever he went. As a confessor of Christ he remains for ever, and shall occupy a glorious place among those who have confessed Christ. In the new creation he will sit with the apostles on their lofty seat of judgement,

judging the world which he had turned his back on. He will receive with the martyrs the crown of justice and the divinely promised palm of martyrdom. For it is clear that there are two kinds of martyrdom: one occurs when the Church is at peace and is hidden from sight; the other occurs during times of persecution and is visible to all. Anskar desired both kinds of martyrdom, but in the end only attained one. For day after day, with tears, vigils, fasts, disciplining the flesh and mortifying his bodily desires, he offered up to God a sacrifice on the altar of his heart, and in so doing attained a martyrdom as far as is possible in a time of peace. He was indeed a martyr because, as the apostle Paul says, the world was crucified to him and he to the world. He was a martyr because, amid the temptations of the evil one, the enticements of the flesh, the persecutions of the heathen, and the opposition of Christians, he persevered to the end of his life unperturbed, immovable, and unconquerable as a confessor of Christ. He was indeed a martyr because the word ‘martyr’ means ‘witness’, and he was a witness of God’s word and of the name of Christ. Therefore, just as Anskar was in all things an imitator of Christ, so we should strive to be imitators of him. In so doing Anskar will live with us on earth to the end of the world, and we will be worthy to live with him in heaven when our present life is over. He will live with us on earth if the holiness of his life and the remembrance of his teaching recall him to us. We too shall live with him in heaven if we follow his example, if with all our strength and desire we long for him to whom Anskar has gone before us, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Reader Here ends the lesson.

The First Reading for Evening Prayer *(Mark 7:24–37)*

Reader A reading from the Gospel according to St. Mark

From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophoenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” But she answered him, “Sir, even

the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter." So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People *Thanks be to God.*

The Second Reading for Evening Prayer

A Reading from The Revelations of Mechtild of Magdeburg also known as The Flowing Light of the Godhead

GOD

You are hunting desperately for your love.

What do you bring me, O my Queen?

SOUL

Lord, I bring you my treasure;
It is greater than the mountains,
Wider than the world,
Deeper than the ocean,
Higher than the clouds,
More glorious than the sun,
More numerous than the stars,
And it outweighs the entire earth!

GOD

O image of my Godhead,

19 *Monday*

Ennobled by my own humanity,
Adorned by my Holy Spirit,
What is your treasure called?

SOUL

I have withdrawn it from the world,
Denied it to myself or any creature.
Now I can bear it no longer,
Where, O Lord, shall I lay it?

GOD

Your heart's desire shall you lay nowhere
But in my own Sacred Heart
And on my human breast.
There alone will you find comfort
And be embraced by my Spirit.
Lord, it is called my heart's desire.

Reader Here ends the lesson.

The Collect

Anskar (*from Lesser Feasts and Fasts*)

Keep your church from discouragement in the day of small things, O God, in the knowledge that when you have begun a good work, you will bring it to a fruitful conclusion, just as you did for your servant Anskar; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*



Tuesday, Feb 4 | Manche Masemola, Martyr, 1928

Tuesday of the Fourth Week after Epiphany

Introduction

It is believed that Manche Masemola was born around 1913, in Marishane, South Africa. She grew up with her parents, two older brothers, a younger sister named Mabule, and a cousin named Lucia. She was not sent to school, but worked with her family on their farm. Her family was not Christian, but rather followed traditional local religious practices. The Christian community in their region was very small, and was looked upon by most people with much suspicion. In 1919 Fr. Augustine Moeka of the Anglican Community of the Resurrection established a mission at Marishane. Manche Masemola and her cousin Lucia first heard Moeka preach as a result. She was eager to learn more, and began to attend worship services and classes at the mission twice a week. Soon she expressed a desire to be baptized, but her parents tried to forbid her. When their prohibitions failed to dissuade her, she was beaten. On a number of occasions, Manche Masemola remarked to Lucia and Moeka that she would die at her parents' hands and be baptized in her own blood. Then, on or near February 4, 1928, her mother and father took her away to an isolated place and killed her, and buried her by a granite rock on a remote hillside. She was about fifteen years old. Although she was not yet baptized, the church has historically recognized catechumens who died before they could be baptized as being baptized by their desire for baptism. In 1935 a small group of Christians first made a pilgrimage to her grave. Larger groups followed in 1941 and 1949. Now, hundreds visit the site every August. In 1975 her name was added to the calendar of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa. Manche Masemola is one of the twentieth-century martyrs whose statues are displayed at Westminster Abbey. More than 40 years after her daughter's murder, her mother was also baptized into the church in 1969.

The Psalter

In Morning Prayer, Psalm 61, 62 (BCP pg. 668)

In Evening Prayer, Psalm 68 (BCP pg. 676)

(Hymn #329 from the Hymnal 1982, provided on pg. 20, may be added after the collects)

The First Reading for Morning Prayer *(Isaiah 52:1-12)*

Reader A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah:

Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion! Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for the uncircumcised and the unclean shall enter you no more. Shake yourself from the dust, rise up, O captive Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter Zion! For thus says the Lord: You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money. For thus says the Lord God: Long ago, my people went down into Egypt to reside there as aliens; the Assyrian, too, has oppressed them without cause. Now therefore what am I doing here, says the Lord, seeing that my people are taken away without cause? Their rulers howl, says the Lord, and continually, all day long, my name is despised. Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of it, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the Lord. For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight; for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Second Reading for Morning Prayer *(Galatians 4:12-20)*

Reader A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians

Friends, I beg you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong. You know that it was because of a physical infirmity that I

first announced the gospel to you; though my condition put you to the test, you did not scorn or despise me, but welcomed me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. What has become of the goodwill you felt? For I testify that, had it been possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? They make much of you, but for no good purpose; they want to exclude you, so that you may make much of them. It is good to be made much of for a good purpose at all times, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, I wish I were present with you now and could change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Third Reading for Morning Prayer

A Reading from *Imperialism, mission and conversion: Manche Masemola of Sekhukhuneland* by Mandy Goedhals

Manche Masemola spent her short life in Sekhukhuneland. She died as a martyr in 1928, fifty years after the British defeat of the Pedi paramount Sekhukhune swung the balance of power in the Transvaal decisively in favour of colonial society. But the Pedi did not easily submit to the colonial order, and any understanding of Manche's life and death is rooted in the struggle for political, economic and cultural autonomy in the northern Transvaal. Manche Masemola is perhaps appropriately representative of the great masses of South Africa and even the numberless people of Africa itself because like them, she has been hidden from history. It is difficult to imagine a more marginalized person. A member of an oppressed race, as a young woman within her own society, she owed respect and obedience to all except younger children. Living out her life in a poverty-stricken reserve, she knew only a rural existence and a domestic economy dependent on subsistence agriculture. Her labour was controlled by her parents, and she could not read or write. To this day Sekhukhuneland falls into one of the most impoverished regions in South Africa, with low levels of literacy, income and life expectancy and where about three-quarters of the children live in poverty. On some grounds, there may

be questions about whether Manche is an appropriate figure to commemorate as a Christian martyr, particularly in her attitude to the standards imposed by mission Christianity with regard to Pedi custom and contemporary gender roles, but it is possible to argue that she pointed beyond the conventions of her own time in both areas. In entering the initiation school, in her attitude to the wearing of traditional dress, even to her desire to be a good daughter, Manche accepted the vales and customs of the Pedi, but she was resolved to be a Christian. Her recorded words tend to universalise and stereotype her life and death, but in the very confined sphere in which she lived she submitted to both Christian and Pedi expectations that women's work should be confined to domestic duties and performed with unquestioning obedience. At the same time, to confess Christ in her own time and place was an act of rebellion, a serious challenge to constituted authority. Manche Masemola lived her life in the context of the Pedi struggle to restrict the intrusion of colonial power, represented by white officials, farmers and missionaries, and enforced through the imposition of taxes, individual tenure and migrant labour. The effort to preserve their rural existence and autonomy meant the assertion of other power relations within Sekhukhuneland, including emphasis on chiefly rule, traditional family and gender relationships and maintenance of the initiation school. It is important to understand these social, political and economic processes. Manche Masemola's life was deeply rooted in Pedi society, yet the good news for which she is a witness is not only for Sekhukhuneland, nor is she simply a representative of an oppressed and needy people: she offers the world her hope, perseverance and fortitude.

Reader Here ends the lesson.

The First Reading for Evening Prayer (*Mark 8:1-10*)

Reader A reading from the Gospel according to St. Mark

In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, he called his disciples and said to them, "I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way—and some of them have come from a great distance." His disciples replied, "How can one

feed these people with bread here in the desert?" He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven." Then he ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd. They had also a few small fish; and after blessing them, he ordered that these too should be distributed. They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. Now there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Second Reading for Evening Prayer

A Reading from *Abandonment to Divine Providence* by Jean-Pierre de Caussade

‘Jesus Christ,’ says the Apostle, ‘is the same yesterday, today and for ever.’ From the origins of the world he was, as God, the principle of the life of the righteous; from the first instant of his incarnation his humanity participated in this prerogative of his divinity. He works in us all through our life; the time which will elapse before the end of the world is but a day, and this day is filled with him. Jesus Christ has lived in the past and still lives in the present; he began in himself and continues in his saints a life that will never finish. If the world is so incapable of understanding all that could be written of the individual life of Jesus, of his words and actions when he was on earth, if the gospel gives us only the rough sketch of a few little details of it, if that first hour of his life is so unknown and so fertile, how many gospels would have to be written to recount the history of all the moments of this mystical life of Jesus Christ which multiplies wonder infinitely and eternally, since all the aeons of time are, properly speaking, but the history of the divine action? The Holy Spirit has set out for us in infallible and incontestable characters certain moments of this vast space of time. He has collected in the Scriptures certain drops, as it were, of this ocean. We see there the secret and unknown ways by which he caused Jesus Christ to appear in the world. We can follow the channels and veins of communication which in the midst of our

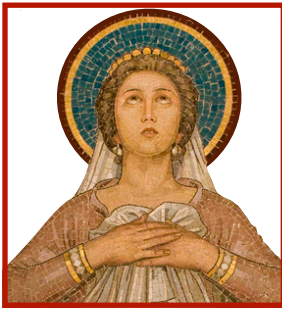
confusion distinguishes the origin, the race, the genealogy of this first-born child. Of all this ocean of divine action he reveals to us but a tiny stream of water which, having reached Jesus, loses itself in the apostles and disappears in the Apocalypse, so that the history of the divine operations, in which consists the life of Jesus in holy souls until the consummation of the ages, can only be divined by our faith. To the manifestation of the truth of God by word has succeeded the manifestation of his charity by action. The Holy Spirit carries on the work of the Saviour. While he assists the Church in the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, he writes his own gospel, and he writes it in the hearts of the faithful. All the actions, all the moments of the saints make up the gospel of the Holy Spirit. Their holy souls are the paper, their sufferings and their actions are the ink. The Holy Spirit, with his own action for pen, writes a living gospel, but it will not be readable until the day of glory when it will be taken out of the printing press of this life and published.

Reader Here ends the lesson.

The Collect

Manche Masemola (*from Lesser Feasts and Fasts*)

Almighty and Everlasting God, who kindled the flame of your love in the heart of your faithful martyr Manche Masemola: Grant to us your servants, a like faith and power of love, that we who rejoice in her triumph may profit by her example; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*



Wednesday, Feb 5 | Agatha of Sicily, *Martyr, c. 251*

Wednesday of the Fourth Week after Epiphany

Introduction

Agatha of Sicily was one of the most highly venerated virgin martyrs from the early church. It is believed that she was born around 231 to a rich and noble family. From a very young age, she chose to dedicate her life to God as a consecrated virgin, but this did not stop men from making unwanted advances toward her. One of those men was Quitianus, the local Roman prefect, who thought that he could use his status and power to compel her to give up her vow. He tried to blackmail her by threatening to expose her as a Christian, but she would not yield to him. Because she consistently spurned his advances, he denounced her as a Christian during the Decian persecution. When she came to the trial, she learned that he was both her accuser and her judge. In spite of this, Agatha refused to change her mind, and so Quitianus sentenced her to be imprisoned in a brothel. While she remained confined there for a month, she never wavered in her resolve that she would never willingly give herself to him or to any other man. Eventually Quitianus grew impatient with her fortitude and sentenced her to be tortured to death. She was killed in the year 251. Counted as a virgin martyr because of her refusal to consent, she is regarded as the patron of all those who are subjected to sexual harassment or assault. Because of her popularity, she was one of the very few saints who were retained on the calendar of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer after the Reformation.

The Psalter

In Morning Prayer, Psalm 72 (BCP pg. 685)

In Evening Prayer, Psalm 119:73–96 (BCP pg. 769)

The First Reading for Morning Prayer (*Isaiah 54:1–17*)

Reader A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah

Sing, O barren one who did not bear; burst into song and shout, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate woman will be more than the children of her that is married, says the Lord. Enlarge the site of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left, and your descendants will possess the nations and will settle the desolate towns. Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; do not be discouraged, for you will not suffer disgrace; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the disgrace of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like the wife of a man's youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer. This is like the days of Noah to me: Just as I swore that the waters of Noah would never again go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you and will not rebuke you. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you. O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, I am about to set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of jewels, and all your wall of precious stones. All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the prosperity of your children. In righteousness you shall be established; you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you. If anyone stirs up strife, it is not from me; whoever stirs up strife with you shall fall because of you. See it is I who have created the smith who blows the fire of coals, and produces a weapon fit for its purpose; I have also created the ravager to destroy. No weapon that is fashioned against you shall prosper, and you shall confute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their vindication from me, says the Lord.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People *Thanks be to God.*

The Second Reading for Morning Prayer (*Galatians 4:21-31*)

Reader A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Galatians

Tell me, you who desire to be subject to the law, will you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and the other by a free woman. One, the child of the slave, was born according to the flesh; the other, the child of the free woman, was born through the promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One woman, in fact, is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free, and she is our mother. For it is written, “Rejoice, you childless one, you who bear no children, burst into song and shout, you who endure no birth pangs; for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than the children of the one who is married.” Now you, my friends, are children of the promise, like Isaac. But just as at that time the child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. But what does the scripture say? “Drive out the slave and her child; for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free woman.” So then, friends, we are children, not of the slave but of the free woman.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People *Thanks be to God.*

The Third Reading for Morning Prayer

From a homily on Saint Agatha by Saint Methodius of Sicily, bishop

My fellow Christians, our annual celebration of a martyr's feast has brought us together. She achieved renown in the early Church for her noble victory; she is well known now as well, for she continues to triumph through her divine miracles, which occur daily and continue to bring glory to her name. She is indeed a virgin, for she was born of the divine Word, God's only Son, who also experienced death for our sake. John, a master of God's word, speaks of this:

He gave the power to become children of God to everyone who received him. The woman who invites us to this banquet is both a wife and virgin. To use the analogy of Paul, she is the bride who has been betrothed to one husband, Christ. A true virgin, she wore the glow of pure conscience and the crimson of the Lamb's blood for her cosmetics. Again and again she meditated on the death of her eager lover. For her, Christ's death was recent, his blood was still moist. Her robe is the mark of her faithful witness to Christ. It bears the indelible marks of his crimson blood and the shining threads of her eloquence. She offers to all who come after her these treasures of her eloquent confession. Agatha, the name of our saint, means "good." She was truly good, for she lived as a child of God. She was also given as the gift of God, the source of all goodness to her bridegroom, Christ, and to us. For she grants us a share in her goodness. What can give greater good than the Sovereign Good? Whom could anyone find more worthy of celebration with hymns of praise than Agatha? Agatha, her goodness coincides with her name and way of life. She won a good name by her noble deeds, and by her name she points to the nobility of those deeds. Agatha, her mere name wins all men over to her company. She teaches them by her example to hasten with her to the true Good, God alone.

Reader Here ends the lesson.

The First Reading for Evening Prayer (*Mark 8:II-26*)

Reader A reading from the Gospel according to St. Mark

The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, asking him for a sign from heaven, to test him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation." And he left them, and getting into the boat again, he went across to the other side. Now the disciples had forgotten to bring any bread; and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out—beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod." They said to one another, "It is because we have no bread." And becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them, "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not

remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" They said to him, "Twelve." "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" And they said to him, "Seven." Then he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?" They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Can you see anything?" And the man looked up and said, "I can see people, but they look like trees, walking." Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Then he sent him away to his home, saying, "Do not even go into the village."

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Second Reading for Evening Prayer

A Reading from *The Mirror of Charity* by Aelred of Rievaulx

It was pride that distorted the image of God in us and led us away from God, not by means of our feet but by the desires of our hearts. Thus we return to God by following the same path, but in the opposite direction, by the exercise of these same desires; and humility renews us in the same image in which God created us. This is why St Paul calls on us to be mentally and spiritually remade, and to be clothed in the new self made in God's image. This renewal can only come about by fulfilling the new commandment of charity given us by our Saviour, and if the mind clothes itself in charity, our distorted memory and knowledge will be given new life and new form. How simple it is to state the new commandment, but how much it implies – the stopping of our old habits, the renewal of our inner life, the reshaping of the divine image within us. Our power to love was poisoned by the selfishness of our desires, and stifled by lust, so that it has tended always to seek the very depths of deviousness. But when charity floods the soul and warms away the numbness, love strives towards higher and more worthy objects. It puts aside the old ways and takes up a new life, and on flashing wings it dies to the highest and purest Goodness

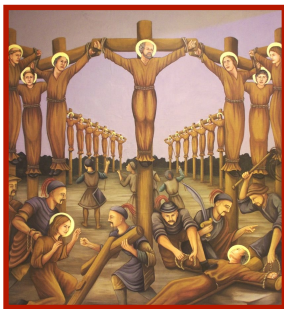
which is the source of its being. This is what St Paul was trying to show the Athenians when he established from the books of their philosophers the existence of one God, in whom we live and move and have our being. Paul then quoted one of their own poets who said that we are God's offspring, and in the next sentence went on to enlarge on this saying. The Apostle was not using this quotation to prove that we are of the same nature or substance as God, and therefore unchangeable, incorruptible and eternally blessed like God the Son who was born of the Father from all eternity and is equal to the Father in all things. No, St Paul uses this passage from the poet Aratus to assert that we are the offspring of God because the human soul, created in the image of God, can share in his wisdom and blessedness. It is charity which raises our soul towards its destiny, but it is self-centred desire which drags it down to the things towards which, without God's help, it would not certainly be drawn.

Reader Here ends the lesson.

The Collects

Agatha of Sicily (*from Lesser Feasts and Fasts*)

Almighty and everlasting God, who strengthened your martyr Agatha with constancy and courage: Grant us for the love of you to make no peace with oppression, to fear no adversity, and to have no tolerance for those who would use their power to abuse or exploit; Through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*



Thursday, Feb 6 | The Martyrs of Japan, 1597 (transferred from Feb 5)

Thursday of the Fourth Week after Epiphany

Introduction

*The introduction of Christianity into Japan in the sixteenth century, first by the Jesuits under Francis Xavier, and then by the Franciscans, has left records of heroism and self-sacrifice in the annals of Christian witness. It has been estimated that by the end of that century there were about 300,000 baptized believers in Japan. Unfortunately, these initial successes were compromised by rivalries among the religious orders, and the interplay of colonial politics, both within Japan and between Japan and the Spanish and Portuguese, aroused suspicion about Western intentions of conquest. After a period of ambiguous support by shoguns Nobunaga and Hideyoshi in the last half of the century, the Christian enterprise began to suffer cruel persecution and suppression, culminating in nationwide edicts banning Christianity under the Tokugawa shogunate at the beginning of the Edo era in 1603. The first victims were six Franciscan friars and twenty of their converts, who were crucified at Nagasaki, February 5, 1597. In his powerful novel *Silence*, based on the event, Shusaku Endo writes: They were martyred. But what a martyrdom! I had long read about martyrdom in the lives of the saints—how the souls of the martyrs had gone home to Heaven, how they had been filled with glory in Paradise, how the angels had blown trumpets. This was the splendid martyrdom I had often seen in my dreams. But the martyrdom of the Japanese Christians I now describe to you was no such glorious thing. What a miserable and painful business it was! The rain falls unceasingly on the sea. And the sea which killed them surges on uncannily—in silence. By 1630, what was left of Christianity in Japan was driven underground. Yet it is remarkable that two hundred and fifty years later there were found many men and women, without priests or sacraments, who had preserved through the generations a vestige of Christian faith.*

The Psalter

In Morning Prayer, Psalm 70, 71 (BCP pg. 682)

In Evening Prayer, Psalm 74 (BCP pg. 689)

The First Reading for Morning Prayer (*Isaiah 55:1-13*)

Reader A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Second Reading for Morning Prayer (*Galatians 5:1-15*)

Reader A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Galatians

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love. You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth? Such persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. I am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. But my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves! For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Third Reading for Morning Prayer

A Reading from a contemporary account of the martyrdom of Paul Miki and his companions in Japan during February 1597

The crosses were set in place. Father Pasio and Father Rodriguez took turns encouraging the victims. Their steadfast behaviour was wonderful to see. The Father Bursar stood motionless, his eyes turned heavenward. Brother Martin gave thanks to God's goodness by singing psalms. Again and again he repeated, 'Into your hands, Lord, I entrust my life.' Brother Francisco Blanco also thanked God in a loud voice. Brother Gonsalvo in a very loud voice kept saying the Our Father and the Hail Mary. Our brother Paul Miki saw himself

standing now in the noblest pulpit he had ever filled. To this congregation he began by proclaiming that he was a Japanese and a Jesuit, and that he was dying for preaching the gospel. He gave thanks to God for this wonderful blessing, and he ended with these words: As I come to this supreme moment of my life, I am sure none of you would suppose I want to deceive you. And so I tell you plainly: there is no route to salvation except the one that Christians follow. My religion teaches me to pardon my enemies and all who have offended me. I do gladly pardon the emperor and all who have brought about my death, and I beg them to seek Christian baptism. Then he looked at his comrades and began to encourage them in their final struggle. Joy glowed in all their faces, and in that of Luis most of all. When a Christian in the crowd called out to him that he would soon be in heaven, his hands and his whole body strained upward with such joy that every eye was fixed upon him. Antonio, hanging at Luis' side, looked toward heaven and called upon the holy names of Jesus and Mary. He began to sing a psalm, 'O Praise the Lord, all you children!' He had learned this at the catechetical school in Nagasaki, for among the tasks given to the children there had been included the learning of some psalms such as these. The others kept repeating, 'Jesus, Mary!' Their faces were serene. Some of them even took to urging the people standing by to live worthy Christian lives. In these and other ways they showed their readiness to die. Then, according to Japanese custom, four executioners began to unsheathe their spears. At this dreadful sight, all the Christians cried out, 'Jesus, Mary!' And a storm of anguished weeping then arose to batter the very skies. The executioners killed them one by one – one thrust of the spear, then a second blow. It was over in a very short time.

Reader Here ends the lesson.

The First Reading for Evening Prayer (*Mark 8:27–9:1*)

Reader A reading from the Gospel according to St. Mark

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are

the Messiah.” And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him. Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.”

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Second Reading for Evening Prayer

A reading from *The Power and Meaning of Love* by Thomas Merton

Those of us today who seek to be Christians, and who have not yet risen to the level of full maturity in Christ, tend unfortunately to take one or other of the debased forms of love for the action of the Spirit of God and the love of Christ. It is this failure to attain to full maturity in love which keeps divisions alive in the world. There is a ‘romantic’ tendency in some Christians – a tendency which seeks Christ not in love of those flesh-and-blood brothers and sisters with whom we live and work, but in some as yet unrealised ideal of ‘brotherhood’. It is always a romantic evasion to turn from the love of people to the love of love itself: to love people in general more than individual persons, to love ‘brotherhood’ and ‘unity’ more than one’s brothers, sisters, neighbours, and associates. This corruption of love can be romantic also in its love of God.

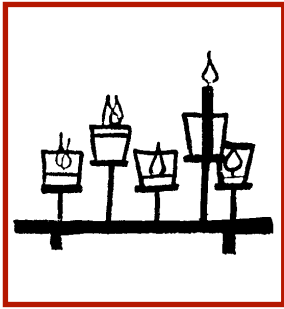
It is no longer Christ himself that is loved and sought, but perhaps an objectivised 'experience' of Christ, a degree of prayer, a mystical state. What is loved then ceases to be Christ, but the subjective reactions which are aroused in me by the supposed presence of Christ in thought or love or prayer. The romantic tendency leads to a substitution of aestheticism, or false mysticism, or quietism, for genuine faith and love, and what it seeks in the Church is not so much reality as a protection against responsibility. Failing to establish a true dialogue with our brother or sister in Christ, this fallacy thwarts all efforts at real unity and cooperation among Christians.

Reader Here ends the lesson.

The Collects

The Martyrs of Japan (*from Lesser Feasts and Fasts*)

O God our Father, who brought the holy martyrs of Japan through the suffering of the cross to the joys of eternal life: Grant that we, encouraged by their example, may hold fast to the faith we profess, even unto death itself; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*



Friday, Feb 7 | Friday of the Fourth Week after Epiphany

The Psalter

In Morning Prayer, Psalm 69 (*BCP* pg. 679)

In Evening Prayer, Psalm 73 (*BCP* pg. 687)

The First Reading for Morning Prayer (*Isaiah* 56:1–8)

Reader A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah

Thus says the Lord: Maintain justice, and do what is right, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed. Happy is the mortal who does this, the one who holds it fast, who keeps the sabbath, not profaning it, and refrains from doing any evil. Do not let the foreigner joined to the Lord say, “The Lord will surely separate me from his people”; and do not let the eunuch say, “I am just a dry tree.” For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant— these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Second Reading for Morning Prayer (*Galatians* 5:16–24)

Reader A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Galatians

Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Third Reading for Morning Prayer

A Reading from a sermon of Leo the Great

Our Lord Jesus Christ, born truly human without ever ceasing to be true God, was in his own person the prelude of a new creation, and by the manner of his birth he gave humanity a spiritual origin. What mind can grasp this? What tongue can do justice to this gift of love? Guilt becomes innocence, what was old becomes new, strangers are adopted into the family and outsiders are made heirs. Rouse yourself, therefore, and recognise the dignity of your nature. Remember that you were made in God's image; and though defaced in Adam, that image has now been restored in Christ. Use this visible creation as it should be used: the earth, the sea, the sky, the air, the springs and rivers. Give praise and glory to their Creator for all that you find beautiful and wonderful in them. See with your bodily eyes the sunlight shining upon the earth, but embrace with your whole soul and all your affections 'the true light which enlightens everyone who comes into this world'. Speaking of this light the prophet David in the psalms says: 'Look on him and be radiant; and your face shall never be ashamed.' If we are indeed the temple of God and if the Spirit of God lives in us, then what every believer has within is of greater worth than

what we can admire in the skies. My friends, in saying this it is not my intention to make you undervalue God's works or think there is anything contrary to your faith in creation, for the good God has himself made all things good. What I do mean is that you use reasonably and in a balanced way the rich variety of creation which makes this world beautiful; for as the Apostle says: 'the things that are seen are transient but the things that are unseen are eternal.' For we are born in the present only to be reborn in the future. Our attachment, therefore, should not be to the transitory; instead, we must be intent upon the eternal. Let us constantly reflect on how divine grace has transformed our earthly natures so that we may contemplate more closely our heavenly hope. And let us attend to the words of the apostle Paul: 'You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. But when Christ your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.'

Reader Here ends the lesson.

The First Reading for Evening Prayer (*Mark 9:2-13*)

Reader A reading from the Gospel according to St. Mark

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean. Then they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" He said to them, "Elijah is indeed coming first to restore all things. How then is it written about the Son of Man, that he is to go through many sufferings and be treated with contempt? But I tell you that

Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written about him.”

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People *Thanks be to God.*

The Second Reading for Evening Prayer

A Reading from a homily of Gregory the Great

Let us attend to what our Lord requires of his preachers in the gospel, when he sends them out: ‘Go and preach,’ he says, ‘and say that the kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Even if the gospel were silent, the world itself would proclaim it. Its chaotic state has become a statement. On all sides we are seeing the disintegration of our society: glory has come to an end. The state of the world is revealing to us the proximity of another kingdom, another kingdom which will overtake it; and the very people who once loved the world are now revolted by it. The world’s chaos proclaims that we should not love it. If someone’s house became unstable and threatened to collapse, would they not flee? Surely, those who cherished it when it stood would be the first to run away if it began to collapse. If the world is collapsing, and yet we persist in loving it, then we are effectively preferring to be overwhelmed by it than to live in it. When love blinds us to our bondage, the ruin of the world will become inseparable from our own self-destruction. It is easier for us to distance ourselves from the world around us when we see everything in such chaos. But in our Lord’s day, the situation was very different. The disciples were sent to preach the reality of an unseen kingdom at a time when everybody could see the kingdoms of this world flourishing. It was for this reason that the preachers of his word were given the gift of performing miracles. The power they displayed lent credence to their words. Those who preached something new were performing something new, as the gospel records, when the disciples were told to ‘cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons.’ With the world flourishing and progressing, people living longer and longer, wealth multiplying, who was going to believe in another reality? Who would ever prefer an unseen world to the tangible things in front of them? But as soon as the sick recovered their health, the dead were raised, lepers cleansed, the demoniacs

cured of their demonic possession, then who would not believe in the reality of the unseen world? Such amazing miracles were performed in order to draw the human heart to believe in what it cannot see, and to explore that far greater world within us.

Reader Here ends the lesson.

The Collects

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany (*from the Book of Common Prayer, pg. 164*)

Almighty and everlasting God, who dost govern all things in heaven and earth: Mercifully hear the supplications of thy people, and in our time grant us thy peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*



Saturday, Feb 8 | Bakhita (Josephine Margaret Bakhita), *Monastic*, 1947

Saturday of the Fourth Week after Epiphany

Introduction

Josephine Margaret Bakhita was born in Olgossa in the Darfur region of southern Sudan. At the age of seven, she was kidnapped and sold into slavery. The girl was so traumatized by the experience that she was unable to remember her name. Bakhita means “fortunate one”—a name given to her by the same slave raiders who forcefully removed her from her family and village. Even as a child, she said that she experienced God in her heart without ever having been evangelized. She said, “Seeing the sun, the moon and the stars, I said to myself: Who could be the Master of these beautiful things? And I felt a great desire to see him, to know him and to pay him homage.” Although technically illegal, the entire Sudan region in the late nineteenth century was a raiding ground for various groups of armed slave traders. Enslaved for twelve years, she endured untold hardship and suffering. She was resold several times, finally in 1883 to the Italian consul in Khartoum, Sudan. After he gave her to his friend Augusto Michieli, she went with him and his family to Italy, where she worked as a nanny for their young daughter, Mimmina. Accompanying the girl to Venice’s Institute of the Catechumens, Josephine found herself drawn to Christianity. She was baptized as Josephine in 1890. The hardships in her life meant that Josephine did not easily express her joy. But she often expressed the joy she experienced through Christ at the font where she was baptized, kissing it and saying: “Here I became one of the daughters of God!” Josephine entered religious life in 1896 as a Canossian Daughter of Charity. In 1902, she went to the city of Schio (northeast of Verona), where she served her religious community. She soon became well loved by the children attending the sisters’ school and by the local citizens. By the end of her life, Josephine was renowned across Italy for her loving, spiritual wisdom. Josephine knew the reality of being a slave, an immigrant, and a spiritual seeker. Even today, countless children, women, and men continue to be victimized and trafficked into slavery. Josephine serves as an inspiration to those who work to free girls and women from oppression and violence, and to return them to their dignity in the full exercise of their rights. Not only is she a model of

resistance, Josephine also reminds us of our obligation to strive against the evil and injustice of human trafficking and uphold the dignity of every human person.

The Psalter

In Morning Prayer, Psalm 75, 76 (*BCP pg. 691*)

In Evening Prayer, Psalm 23, 27 (*BCP pg. 612, 617*)

The First Reading for Morning Prayer (*Isaiah 57:3–13*)

Reader A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah

But as for you, come here, you children of a sorceress, you offspring of an adulterer and a whore. Whom are you mocking? Against whom do you open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue? Are you not children of transgression, the offspring of deceit— you that burn with lust among the oaks, under every green tree; you that slaughter your children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks? Among the smooth stones of the valley is your portion; they, they, are your lot; to them you have poured out a drink offering, you have brought a grain offering. Shall I be appeased for these things? Upon a high and lofty mountain you have set your bed, and there you went up to offer sacrifice. Behind the door and the doorpost you have set up your symbol; for, in deserting me, you have uncovered your bed, you have gone up to it, you have made it wide; and you have made a bargain for yourself with them, you have loved their bed, you have gazed on their nakedness. You journeyed to Molech with oil, and multiplied your perfumes; you sent your envoys far away, and sent down even to Sheol. You grew weary from your many wanderings, but you did not say, “It is useless.” You found your desire rekindled, and so you did not weaken. Whom did you dread and fear so that you lied, and did not remember me or give me a thought? Have I not kept silent and closed my eyes, and so you do not fear me? I will concede your righteousness and your works, but they will not help you. When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you! The wind will carry them off, a breath will take them away. But whoever takes refuge in me shall possess the land and inherit my holy mountain.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Second Reading for Morning Prayer *(Galatians 5:25–6:10)*

Reader A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Galatians

If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another. My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads. Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher. Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Third Reading for Morning Prayer

A reading from a sermon of St. Augustine appointed for the feast day of Josephine Margaret Bakhita

Do not be shy of the contest, if you truly love the prize. Let knowledge of the reward set the mind on fire to accomplish the work. What we desire, and wish for, and seek, will be hereafter; but what we are ordered to do, for the sake of that which will be hereafter, must be now. Begin now, therefore, to recall to mind the divine sayings, and the precepts and rewards of the Gospel. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven will be yours hereafter; so be poor in spirit now. Do you want the kingdom of heaven to be yours hereafter? Then look to yourself. Be poor in spirit. You ask me, perhaps, "What is it to be poor in spirit?" No-one who is

puffed up is poor in spirit; therefore the one that is lowly is poor in spirit. The kingdom of heaven is exalted; and “he who humbles himself shall be exalted.” Next, “Blessed are the meek,” he says, “for they shall inherit the earth.” If you wish to possess the earth now, take care, or it will possess you. If you are meek, you will possess it; if you are not, you will be possessed by it. And when you hear what a great reward is offered, do not give way to a desire to possess it right away, by any means, even at your neighbour’s expense. Reject all such deceptions. You will truly possess the earth when you unite yourself with him who made both heaven and earth. Meekness means not resisting God. That means that if things go well for you, you are happy with him rather than with yourself; and on the other hand, if things go badly, you are unhappy not with him, but with yourself. It is an important thing that you should be pleasing to God, even if you are not pleasing to yourself; whereas if you are pleasing to yourself, you are not pleasing to God. Let us come then to the next saying and the next reward. “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Do you desire to be filled? Filled with what? If it is the flesh that longs for fullness, then after you have eaten and the food has been digested you will be hungry once more. As he says, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again.” When we treat a wound and it is healed, there is an end to the pain; but when we treat hunger with food, the relief lasts only a little while. Once we are no longer full, the hunger returns. The treatment may be repeated daily but the wound is still not healed. Let us therefore “hunger and thirst after righteousness, that we may be filled” with that righteousness, for then we can be truly filled with that for which we hunger and thirst. Let our inner man hunger and thirst, for it has its own particular kind of food and drink. “I,” says he, “am the Bread which came down from heaven.” Here is the bread of the hungry. In the same way, let your longing be also for the drink of the thirsty, “For with you is the well of life.” Consider what comes next: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” This is the end and purpose of our love; an end which perfects us rather than consuming us. Food comes to an end; garments attain their end. But the end of food comes when it is consumed by the eating, while the end of a garment comes when it is perfected in the weaving. Both these things have an end, but for one, it is to be consumed while for the other, it is to be perfected. Whatever we now do, whatever we now do

well, whatever we now strive for, or are rightly and properly eager for, or blamelessly desire, when we come to the vision of God, we shall be in need no longer. For what does anyone need to seek for, once God is present? On the other hand, if God is not enough for someone, what could ever be enough? We wish to see God, we seek him, we are aflame with desire to see him. Who is not? But consider again what is said: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” So provide yourself with what is needed to be able to see him. To use a bodily metaphor, how, if your eyes are weak, can you long for the rising of the sun? If your eyes are sound then that light will be a delight, but if they are unsound, it will be a torment. So, you see, it is not permitted for impure hearts to see sights that are meant only for pure ones. You will be repelled, driven back from such a sight. You will not see it.

Reader Here ends the lesson.

The First Reading for Evening Prayer (*Mark 9:14–29*)

Reader A reading from the Gospel according to St. Mark

When they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. When the whole crowd saw him, they were immediately overcome with awe, and they ran forward to greet him. He asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?” Someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so.” He answered them, “You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me.” And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us.” Jesus said to him, “If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out, “I believe; help my unbelief!” When Jesus saw that a crowd came running

together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!” After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand. When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” He said to them, “This kind can come out only through prayer.”

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Second Reading for Evening Prayer

A Reading from *The Longer Rules for Monks* by Basil the Great

What words can adequately describe the gifts of God? They are so many as to be innumerable, and so wonderful that any one of them demands our total gratitude of praise. I have no time to speak of the richness and diversity of God’s gifts. We will have to pass over in silence the rising of the sun, the circuits of the moon, the variation in air temperature, the patterns of the seasons, the descent of the rain, the gushing of springs, the sea itself, the whole earth and its flora, the life of the oceans, the creatures of the air, the animals in their various species – in fact everything that exists for the service of our life. But there is one gift which no thoughtful person can pass over in silence; and yet to speak of it worthily is impossible. God made us in his image and likeness; he deemed us worthy of knowledge of himself, equipped us with reason beyond the capacity of other creatures, allowed us to revel in the unimaginable beauty of paradise, and gave us dominion over creation. When we were deceived by the serpent and fell into sin, and through sin into death and all that followed in its wake, God did not abandon us. In the first place, God gave us a law to help us; he ordained angels to guard and care for us. He sent prophets to rebuke vice and to teach us virtue. He frustrated the impact of vice by dire warnings. He stirred up in us a zeal for goodness by his promises, and confronted us with examples of the end result of both virtue and vice in the lives of various individuals. To crown these and his other mercies, God was not estranged from the human race by our continuing disobedience. Indeed, in the goodness of

our Master, we have never been neglected: our callous indifference towards our Benefactor for his gifts has never diminished his love for us. On the contrary, our Lord Jesus Christ recalled us from death and restored us to life. In Christ the generosity of God is resplendent; for as Scripture says: ‘being in the form of God, he did not cling to equality with God, but emptied himself, assuming the form of a servant.’ What is more, he assumed our frailty and bore our infirmities; he was wounded on our behalf that ‘by his wounds we might be healed’. He set us free from the curse, having become a curse on our behalf himself, and underwent the most ignominious death that he might lead us to the life of glory. Not content with restoring us to life when we were dead, he has graced us with the dignity of divinity and prepared for us eternal mansions, the delight of which exceeds all that we can conceive. ‘What then shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits to us?’ God is so good that he asks of us nothing, he is content merely with being loved in return for his gifts. When I consider this I am overcome with awe and fear lest through carelessness or preoccupation with trivia, I should fall away from the love of God and become a reproach to Christ.

Reader Here ends the lesson.

The Collects

Josephine Margaret Bakhita (*from Lesser Feasts and Fasts*)

O God of Love, who delivered your servant Josephine Margaret Bakhita from the bondage of slavery to the true freedom of your service; Grant to the wounded your healing grace in mind, body, and spirit and to your church the zeal to combat exploitation and slavery in all its forms; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

