

KEEPING THE LORD'S DAY HOLY WHEN WE CANNOT GATHER FOR MASS



For Christians, Sunday is unlike any other day of the week. We believe that Sunday is the original feast day; the day of the Creator's work; the weekly Easter; the first day; the eighth day; the day of the gift of the Spirit, of Christ-Light, of faith; an indispensable day. This is why Sunday is the principle day Christians gather to pray and celebrate the Eucharist.

However, when that Sunday gathering is not possible in our usual ways, we can still honor the Lord's Day and mark it as a reminder that, in Christ, we have eternal life. By keeping this day holy, even when circumstances prevent us from being together as a parish, we can still be spiritually united in prayer and serve as a sign to the world that Christ has conquered death.

One significant way that Christians have prayed each day, whether alone or with a community, is through the Liturgy of the Hours. This ancient practice, with origins in the Old Testament, continues to be a daily prayer discipline for religious communities today.

Even if we are not part of a religious community, praying the Liturgy of the Hours, especially on Sunday, can be a way for us to sustain ourselves and one another in common prayer during these unusual times. You can pray the Liturgy of the Hours anywhere, on your own or with a group. The leader for the prayer can be any Christian; it does not need to be a priest or a deacon. You will need a Bible or Internet access to find the Scripture passages.

The Liturgy of the Hours has two parts. First is a section giving praise to the Father through Christ that consists of prayerful reading or singing of the psalms and canticles (poetic passages from the Bible) and a Scripture passage. Having remembered God's blessings, the second part invites us to offer prayers for ourselves and the world.

There are two specific times when we pray the Liturgy of the Hours. As the sun rises on our day, we pray Morning Prayer to honor the risen Christ. As the sun sets, we pray Evening Prayer to recall Christ's love for us in his dying on the Cross. There are no exact times for praying these two "hours," as long as you do them around their related time of day. You can pray both hours on Sunday or just one of them as your schedule allows. The attached resource is an adapted version of the Liturgy of the Hours used by the Catholic Church.

In addition to prayer, we can keep holy the Lord's Day by doing works of mercy. Some things you can do even when you cannot gather with others: write a note or call a friend or family member who might feel lonely this day; donate money to organizations assisting those in need; make mealtimes this day more special; read or create something beautiful.

During this unusual time of crisis, we grieve that so many are unable to gather together for the Sunday Eucharist. Let us offer our hunger and sorrow in solidarity with those around the world who regularly go without the Sunday Eucharist because of illness, lack of ministers, or isolation. May Christ, who is present wherever two or three are gathered in his name, bring us all healing and peace and unite us together in his Spirit of love.

ADAPTED MORNING PRAYER: FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT, YEAR A



Preparation page

Items you need:

- A copy of this script
- A Bible or online access to the Bible
- If praying with a group, copies of this script for each person

Optional items that might enhance your prayer:

- A table with a purple cloth
- On the table, a lit candle, a cross, other items, such as artwork, images, or statues
- A quiet, prayerful space
- A journal for writing down reflections

If you are praying with a group, you can share various roles:

- Leader (does not need to be a priest or a deacon)
- Scripture reader
- Petitions reader

Optional music:

Several publishers provide recordings of liturgical music online free of charge. These links can be helpful to enhance your prayer at home during Lent:

- [GIA and World Library Publications piano-based playlist for the Fourth Sunday of Lent \(free Spotify account needed\)](#)
- [GIA and World Library Publications organ-based playlist for the Fourth Sunday of Lent \(free Spotify account needed\)](#)
- [Oregon Catholic Press Lent playlist \(YouTube\)](#)

Prepare before you begin:

- Mark the passages needed in your Bible* or have them ready online
- Silence cell phones and other things that might interrupt your prayer time
- Optional: Light a candle and arrange a cross and other items on a table
- If praying with a group, assign parts if desired, and distribute copies of this script

*How to find passages in the Bible: The Bible is divided into several books. Each book has chapters, and short sections of each chapter are numbered as verses. References to a Bible passage are listed in this way:

Name of the book in the Bible, then chapter: verses

For example, Ezekiel 34:12-14 indicates that the passage is in the book of Ezekiel, chapter 34, verses 12-14. Use the table of contents at the front of your Bible to find the book of Ezekiel. (If there is a number in front of the book title, such as “1 Peter,” that just means there is more than one book with the title, “Peter.” Just look for “1 Peter.”) Then turn to chapter 34 of that book. Next, look for the small numbers at the beginning of each sentence or section and find number 12. Read starting at the sentence immediately following that number 12 all the way to the end of the sentence or section marked number 14.

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✠ GATHERING ✠

Play music to quiet your hearts (see playlist links); or spend a few moments in silence.

(all stand)

INTRODUCTORY DIALOGUE

All make the Sign of the Cross as the leader begins.

LEADER: God, ✠ come to my assistance.

ALL: Lord, make haste to help me.

As the leader says, "Glory to the Father," all bow as they are able. Then rise as all say, "As it was..."

LEADER: *(bow)* **Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.**

ALL: *(rise)* As it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be forever. Amen.

✠ PRAISE ✠

(all sit)

PSALM

[Click here for Psalm 118 online](#)

Using your Bible or the online link above, prayerfully read the passage out loud. If in a group, the leader can alternate reading each verse with the rest of the group.

SILENCE

Spend a few moments in silence. Sacred silence gives us the opportunity to open our hearts to the voice of the Spirit and to join our individual prayers to the public voice of the Church. Listen to what the Spirit is saying to you in your heart.

CANTICLE

[Click here for Daniel 3:52-56 online](#)

If praying in a group, the leader reads the first line of each verse, then everyone responds, "Praiseworthy and exalted above all forever." For example:

LEADER: **Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our ancestors:**

ALL: Praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.

ADAPTED MORNING PRAYER: FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT, YEAR A



SILENCE

Spend a few moments in silence. Give praise to God in your heart.

SCRIPTURE

Choose one of the readings below and proclaim it out loud.

- [1 Samuel 16:1, 6-7, 10-13 \(first reading at this link\)](#)
- [Ephesians 5:8-14 \(second reading at this link\)](#)
- [Nehemiah 8:9-10 \(click this link\)](#)

REFLECTION

Spend a few moments in silence. Reflect on one of these questions quietly, journal about it, or share together as a group:

- How has God anointed you with blessings in your life?
- Where can you bring the light of Christ into the world today?
- What are you sad about today? Lift up your sorrow to God, and ask the Spirit to transform it into joy this day.

(all stand)

GOSPEL CANTICLE

All make the Sign of the Cross as everyone prays the *Benedictus* out loud.

ALL: Blessed ✠ be the Lord, the God of Israel;
he has come to his people and set them free.
He has raised up for us a mighty savior,
born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets he promised of old
that he would save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all who hate us.
He promised to show mercy to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.

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ALL: You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
to give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

✠ PETITION ✠

PETITIONS

READER: Gracious God, you see into our hearts; look now upon our
sorrow in this time of separation and transform our
sadness into joy. We pray:

ALL: Kindle in our hearts the fire of your love.

READER: Merciful God, you have made this day your own, filling it
with the light of your Son; help us bring that light to those
who are alone today. We pray:

ALL: Kindle in our hearts the fire of your love.

READER: Healing God, you see and care for those who are
forgotten; strengthen doctors, nurses, service workers,
and all who minister to us in our need. We pray:

ALL: Kindle in our hearts the fire of your love.

READER: Loving God, you bind us together in the Spirit's love; heal
our divisions and ease our anxious hearts that we may be
a sign of your peace for the world. We pray:

ALL: Kindle in our hearts the fire of your love.

Add your own petitions, if desired.

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LORD'S PRAYER

All pray together the Lord's Prayer out loud.

CLOSING PRAYER

LEADER: God of peace,
our hearts are restless and distressed
by all that has disrupted our lives.
Yet we know that in you is true peace and joy;
in you is healing and grace.
May we live this holy day with faith in your Son,
Jesus, who shows us the path to peace.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

CLOSING BLESSING

All make the Sign of the Cross as the leader says:

LEADER: May the Lord bless us, ✠ protect us from all evil,
and bring us to everlasting life.

ALL: Amen.