



THE
Advent
DAILY OFFICE

PREPARED BY RICH VILLODAS

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The season of Advent opens us up to the surprising ways of God. In Advent, we are invited to wrestle with our longings, desires, and hopes for a world marked by grace, goodness, and peace. It is a time to recall the biblical truth that the renewal of our lives and of our world is found in God's coming among us in Jesus Christ. Advent is a season to reignite a spirit of prayer.

In this devotional, you will find 25 days of morning and evening "daily offices." The daily office refers to an ancient practice of prayers that mark various points of the day. In Latin, the word office means "work" signifying that prayer is the work of God.

My hope is that you will find here truth and encouragement to cultivate a life of communion with God. This devotional is built on four movements of prayer:

Silence.

Scripture.

Selected quotes.

Self-reflection.

Prayer is first and foremost a gift from God. We are able to pray because God has called us to Himself. Yet, at the same time, prayer is, in the words of Thomas Merton, "the long labor back to the center."

By God's grace, this daily office, with its selected scriptures and quotes, will ground you this Advent season, in the midst of a distracted world.

Advent blessings,

Pastor Rich Villodas

HOPE

Week One

Morning Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | Psalm 130:1-6

Devotional “We call this time *Advent* because it reminds us of what comes from God for the creation of his kingdom on earth.

Hoping does not mean doing nothing. It is the opposite of desperate and panicky manipulations, of scurrying and worrying. And hoping is not dreaming. It is not spinning an illusion or fantasy to protect us from our boredom or our pain. It means a confident, alert expectation that God will do what He said He will do. It is imagination put in the harness of faith. It is a willingness to let God do it His way and in His time.”¹ **Eugene Peterson**

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

The Lord's Prayer Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

2 min Conclude with silence.



Midday/Evening Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | Habakkuk 2:3-4

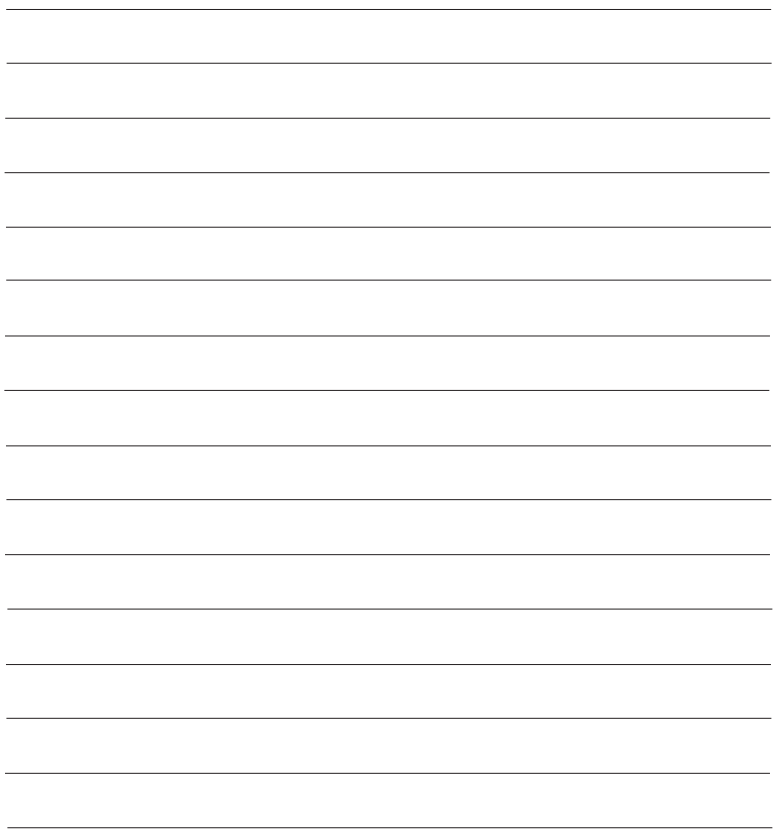
Devotional “A waiting person is a patient person. The word ‘patience’ means the willingness to stay where we are and live the situation out to the full in the belief that something hidden there will manifest itself to us. Impatient people are always expecting the real thing to happen somewhere else and therefore want to go elsewhere. The moment is empty. But patient people dare to stay where they are. Patient living means to live actively in the present and wait there. Waiting, then, is not passive. It involves nurturing the moment, as a mother nurtures the child that is growing in her womb.”²

Henri Nouwen

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

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Scripture | Psalm 31:21-24

Devotional “Advent is about learning to wait. It is about not having to know exactly what is coming tomorrow, only that whatever it is, it is of the essence of sanctification for us. Every piece of it, some hard, some uplifting, is sign of the work of God alive in us. We are becoming as we go. We learn in Advent to stay in the present, knowing that only the present well-lived can possibly lead us to the fullness of life.”

“Advent relieves us of our commitment to the frenetic in a fast-paced world. It slows us down. It makes us think. It makes us look beyond today to the “great tomorrow” of life. Without Advent, moved only by the race to nowhere that exhausts the world around us, we could be so frantic with trying to consume and control this life that we fail to develop within ourselves a taste for the spirit that does not die and will not slip through our fingers like melted snow.”
Joan Chittister

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Scripture | Psalm 33:20-22

Devotional

Advent Prayer,
In our secret yearnings
we wait for your coming,
and in our grinding despair
we doubt that you will.
And in this privileged place
we are surrounded by witnesses who yearn more than we do
and by those who despair more deeply than do we.
Look upon your church and its pastors
in this season of hope
which runs so quickly to fatigue
and in this season of yearning
which becomes so easily quarrelsome.
Give us the grace and the impatience
to wait for your coming to the bottom of our toes,
to the edges of our finger tips.
We do not want our several worlds to end.
Come in your power
and come in your weakness
in any case
and make all things new.
Amen.⁴

Walter Brueggemann

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Scripture | Psalm 71:1-5

Devotional “Men and women are called to enduring hope. True hope is not based on the ebb and flow of our feelings. Nor does it come from success in life. True hope—which means the hope that endures and sustains us—is based on God’s call and command. We are called to hope. It is a command: a command to resist death. It is a call: the call to divine life. Enduring hope is not something innate, something we possess from birth. Nor do we acquire it from experience. We have to learn it. We learn to hope if we obey the call. We learn to hope in the experiences life brings us. We come to know its truth if we are forced to stand our ground against despair. We come to know its power when we realize that it keeps us alive in the midst of death.”⁵ **Jürgen Moltmann**

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Scripture | Isaiah 40:28-31

Devotional “Advent, in particular, is a season that teaches us to do something that is very hard for us to do: wait. It teaches us how to wait for the *Advent* or arrival of Christ into our world, not just way back then in Biblical times, but now—in those places where we long for his presence and need his intervention. Waiting for Christ’s coming into the places of our lives where we need him most right now ushers us into a special kind of waiting that is alert and watchful, full of anticipation and yet patient. The prophetic witness of John the Baptist calls us to become intentional about creating the conditions that ease Christ’s coming into our lives—alone and together. To remove whatever hindrances and obstacles there might be to Christ’s presence. To make straight whatever is crooked in us. To smooth out the rough places so that the salvation of God can become evident in our own lives.”⁶

Ruth Haley Barton

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Scripture | Psalm 39:4-7

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

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Scripture | Psalm 27:7-14

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

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

“And yet waiting is an essential part of the Christian life. Listen to what we say every time we break bread together: ‘Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.’ This is the mystery of our faith, that we are always waiting for Christ to come to us even though we believe that he has already come and that he is coming to us right now in word and sacrament.”⁸

Barbara Brown Taylor

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Scripture | Psalm 25:1-7

Devotional “‘Come, Lord Jesus’, the Advent mantra, means that all of Christian history has to live out of a kind of deliberate emptiness, a kind of chosen non-fulfillment. Perfect fullness is always to come, and we do not need to demand it now. This keeps the field of life wide open and especially open to grace and to a future created by God rather than by ourselves. This is exactly what it means to be ‘awake’, as the Gospel urges us! We can also use other ‘a’ words for Advent: aware, alive, attentive, alert, awake are all appropriate! Advent is above all else a call to full consciousness and a forewarning about the high price of consciousness...”

“‘Come, Lord Jesus’ is a leap into the kind of freedom and surrender that is rightly called the virtue of hope. The theological virtue of hope is the patient and trustful willingness to live without closure, without resolution, and still be content and even happy because our Satisfaction is now at another level, and our Source is beyond ourselves. We are able to trust that he will come again, just as Jesus has come into our past, into our private dilemmas and into our suffering world. Our Christian past then becomes our Christian prologue, and ‘Come, Lord Jesus’ is not a cry of desperation but an assured shout of cosmic hope.”⁹ **Richard Rohr**

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Midday/Evening Office

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Scripture | Romans 5:2-5

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

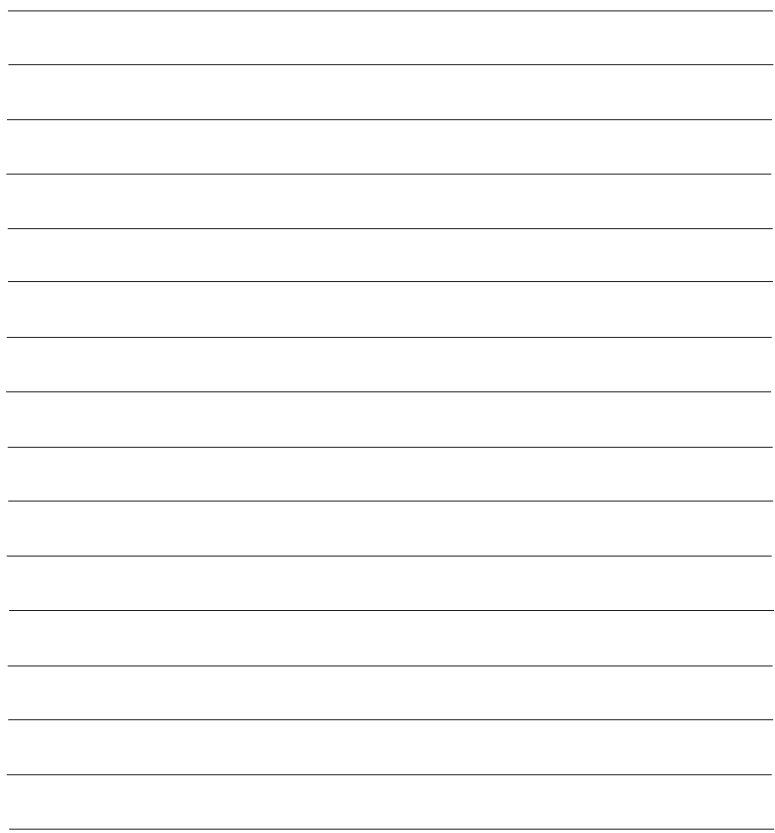
“With patience we can awaken, becoming ‘obedient,’ which in the biblical sense means believing that God will do for us more than we can ask for or imagine. To follow God obediently requires believing that what is in store for all of us is bigger and better than our illusions of control and power—as individuals or as individual nations. Advent waiting is the time of relinquishing our desire to have outcomes our way and on our schedule.”¹⁰

James A. Kowalski

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Scripture | 1 Peter 1:3-7

Devotional “Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because he cannot be at home in it, because he is out of place in it, and yet he must be in it, his place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is with those who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, tortured, exterminated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in this world.”¹¹

Thomas Merton

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Scripture | John 14:1-6

Devotional “He will come like last leaf’s fall. One night when the November wind has flayed the trees to the bone, and earth wakes choking on the mould, the soft shroud’s folding. He will come like frost. One morning when the shrinking earth opens on mist, to find itself arrested in the net of alien, sword-set beauty. He will come like dark. One evening when the bursting red December sun draws up the sheet and penny-masks its eye to yield the star-snowed fields of sky. He will come, will come, will come like crying in the night, like blood, like breaking, as the earth writhes to toss him free. He will come like a child.”¹²

Rowan Williams

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2 min Conclude with silence.



Prayer to Welcome the Sabbath

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the name of our Creator,
our Liberator,
our Resurrection and Life,
we pray.
Amen. ¹³

From *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* by Shane Claiborne,
Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and Enuma Okoro, 2010.



PEACE

Week Two

Morning Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | **Matthew 5:3-12**

Devotional “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the Children of God.’ The followers of Jesus have been called to peace. When he called them they found their peace, for he is their peace. But now they are told that they must not only have peace but make it. And to that end they renounce all violence and tumult. In the cause of Christ nothing is to be gained by such methods. His kingdom is one of peace, and the mutual greeting of his flock is a greeting of peace. His disciples keep the peace by choosing to endure suffering themselves rather than inflict it on others. They maintain fellowship where others would break it off. They renounce all self-assertion, and quietly suffer in the face of hatred and wrong. In so doing they overcome evil with good, and establish the peace of God in the midst of a world of war and hate. But nowhere will that peace be more manifest than where they meet the wicked in peace and are ready to suffer at their hands. The peacemakers will carry the cross with their Lord, for it was on the cross that peace was made. Now that they are partners in Christ’s work of reconciliation, they are called the sons of God as he is the Son of God.”¹⁴ **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

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Scripture | Isaiah 9:2-7

Devotional “Keep your eyes on the Prince of Peace, the one who doesn’t cling to his divine power; the one who refuses to turn stones into bread, jump from great heights and rule with great power; the one who says, ‘Blessed are the poor, the gentle, those who mourn, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; blessed are the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness’ (see Matt. 5:3–11); the one who touches the lame, the crippled, and the blind; the one who speaks words of forgiveness and encouragement; the one who dies alone, rejected and despised. Keep your eyes on him who becomes poor with the poor, weak with the weak, and who is rejected with the rejected. He is the source of all peace.”¹⁵

Henri Nouwen

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Scripture | Psalm 46:1-10

Devotional “Christians are called to nonviolence not because we believe that nonviolence is a strategy to rid the world of war. But, in a world of war as faithful followers of Christ we cannot imagine being anything other than nonviolent. And that will make the world possibly more violent because the world does not want the order it calls peace exposed as the violence it so often times is. Now, learning how to wait as a people of nonviolence in a world of war, you’ll know what Advent is. Advent is patience. It is how God has made us the people of promise in a world of impatience. And, Christ has made that possible for us to live patiently in a world of impatience.”¹⁶ **Stanley Hauerwas**

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Scripture | Matthew 25:31-45

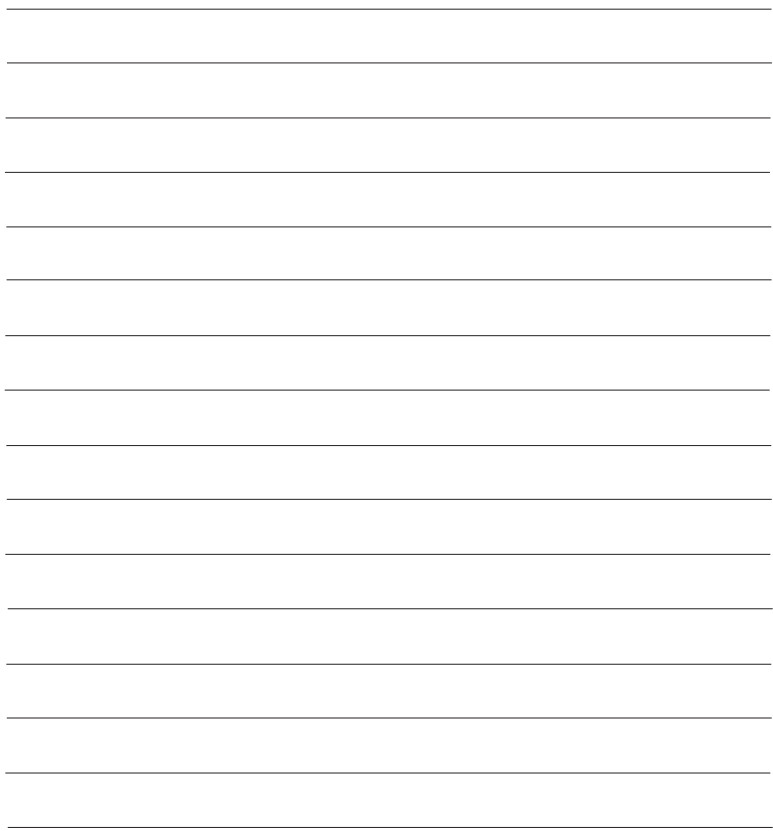
Devotional “[The] longer we meditate, the more we become aware that the source of our new-found calm in our daily lives is precisely the life of God within us. The degree of peace we possess is directly proportional to our awareness of this fact of life, a fact of human consciousness, common to every man and every woman in the world. But to realize this fact as a present reality in our lives, we have to decide that we want to be at peace. This is the reason for the psalmist’s saying: ‘Be still and know that I am God’ (Ps. 46.10). This deep inner peacefulness is in a sense more freely available for us today than it was for the Hebrew poet who wrote that psalm, even if our problems are greater and our pace of life faster than his were; and this is because of the great fact of Jesus.”¹⁷

John Main

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Scripture | Ezekiel 37:24-28

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

“But there is another kind of peace. This kind of peace does not come either from the denial of evil or the acceptance of oppression. This kind comes from the center of us and flows through us like a conduit to the world around us. This kind of peace is the peace of those who know truth and proclaim it, who recognize oppression and refuse to accept it, who understand God's will for the world and pursue it. This kind of peace comes with the realization that it is our obligation to birth it for the rest of the world so that what the mangers and crèches and crib sets of the world point to can become real in us—and because of us—in our own time.”

“That is the kind of peace—disarmed, foreign to hate, and receiving of the other—that was born in the manger we remember at Christmas time. That is the kind of Christmas peace we must ourselves seek to be. Then ‘Merry Christmas’ will really mean something.”¹⁸

Joan Chittister

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Scripture | John 18:1-11

Devotional “Do we understand God’s vision for humanity or are we just closed up in our own little worlds? Can peace come? Is there hope for Kosovo, Israel, Palestine, Iraq, or Northern Ireland? Is there hope in this world where the gap between the rich and the poor is growing daily? Is there hope? Yes, there is hope! There is hope because God is. God is! And though there is the silence of God, there is also the mystery of God working in the hearts of people doing beautiful things. They don’t hit the headlines. The headlines are frequently things of pain—catastrophes, death. We don’t see all the peace-loving people breaking down the barriers to work together and to love each other. All of us can understand the reaction of Peter. Maybe if we found Jesus kneeling at our feet we would react in the same way. We want a big God who fixes our problems. We don’t want a little God saying, ‘I need you and I’ll come and live in you. I’ll give you a new strength, a new spirit and you shall work so people become free and loving and peace-making: We always want a God who is going to fix our problems, but God is saying, ‘I’ll give you the strength so you become one of those who work with others to bring peace to our world.’”¹⁹

Jean Vanier

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Scripture | 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Devotional

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.²⁰

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

Amen.²⁰

St. Francis of Assisi

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

The Lord's Prayer Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

2 min Conclude with silence.



Midday/Evening Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | Matthew 6:25-32

Devotional “Soberly, when our trust is in things that are absolutely beyond any risk or threat, and we have learned from good sources, including our own experience, that those things are there, anxiety is just groundless and pointless. It occurs only as a hangover of bad habits established when we were trusting things—like human approval and wealth—that were certain to let us down. Now our strategy should be one of resolute rejection of worry, while we concentrate on the future in hope and with prayer and on the past with thanksgiving.”²¹

Dallas Willard

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

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

2 min Conclude with silence.



Morning Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | Luke 10:38-42

Devotional “The opposite of faith is not intellectual doubt, because faith is not localized primarily in the mind. The opposite of faith, according to a number of Jesus’ statements, is anxiety. If you are fearbased and ‘worried about many things,’ as he says in Luke 10:41, you don’t have faith in a Biblical sense. Faith is to be able to trust that God is good, involved, and on your side. So you see why it takes some years of inner experience to have faith. It is not just that somewhat easy intellectual assent to doctrines or an agreement with a moral position. This has passed as the counterfeit of faith for far too long. When you cannot rely upon an Infinite Source, you yourself become your primary reference point in terms of all preferences, needs, results, and controls. That would make anybody both anxious and insecure.”²²

Richard Rohr

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

The Lord’s Prayer Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

2 min Conclude with silence.



Midday/Evening Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | Matthew 2:7-12

Devotional

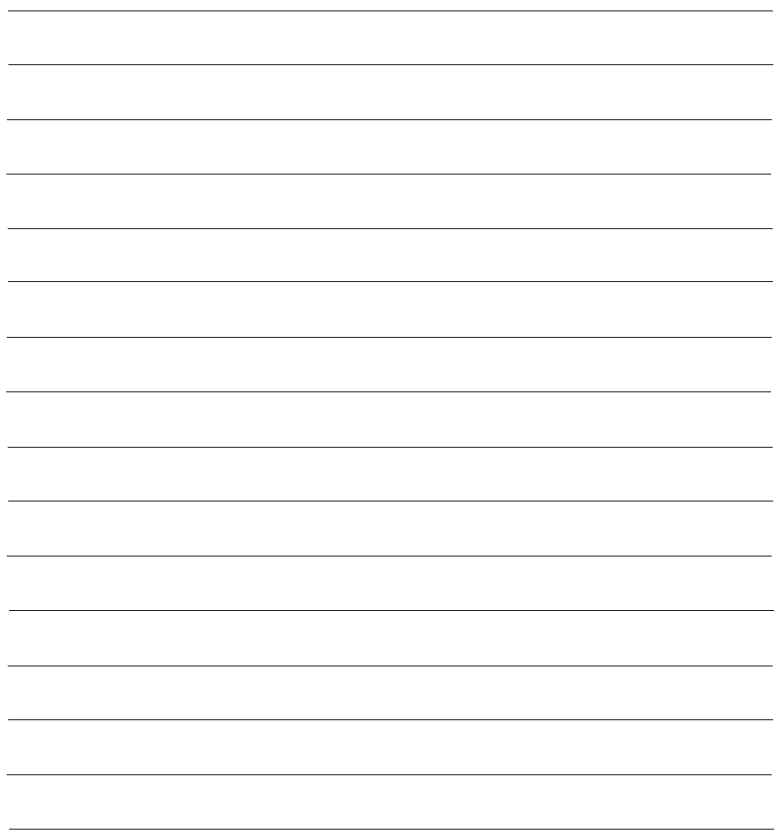
When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.²³

Howard Thurman

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

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

2 min Conclude with silence.



Morning Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | Philippians 2:5-11

Devotional “Father, I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will. Whatever you may do, I thank you; I am ready for all, I accept all. Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures—I wish no more than this, O Lord. Into your hands I commend my soul: I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands without reserve and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father. Amen.”²⁴

Charles de Foucauld

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

The Lord's Prayer Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

2 min Conclude with silence.



Midday/Evening Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | Luke 2:8-14

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

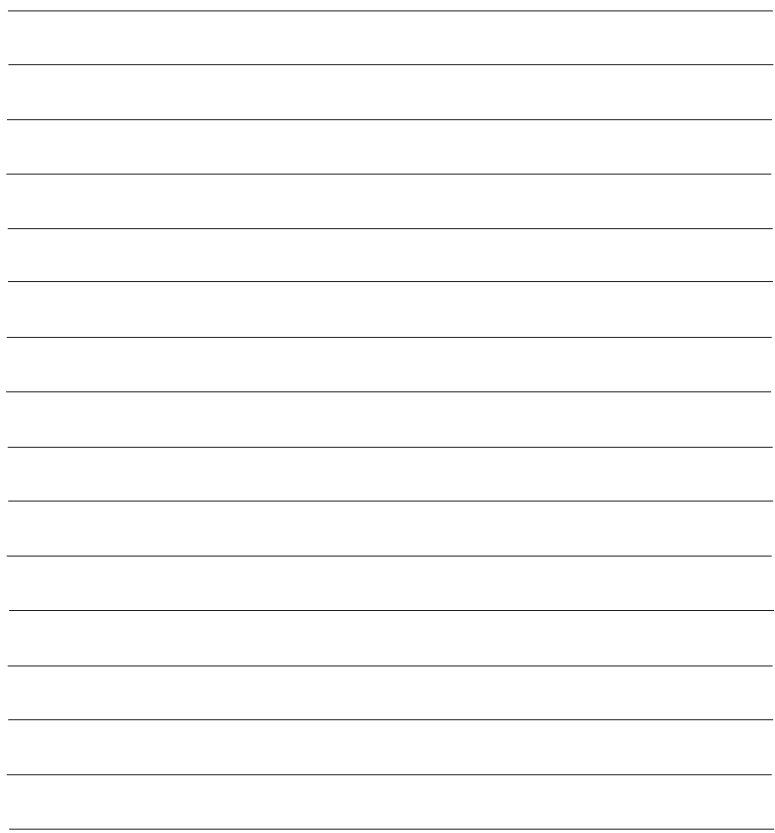
“The man who is at perfect ease is never suspicious, but the disturbed and discontented spirit is upset by many suspicions. He neither rests himself nor permits others to do so. He often says what ought not to be said and leaves undone what ought to be done. He is concerned with the duties of others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

“Now, all our peace in this life is found in humbly enduring suffering, rather than in being free from it. He who knows best how to suffer will enjoy the greater peace, because he is the conqueror of himself, the master of the world, a friend of Christ, and an heir of heaven.”²⁵ **Thomas à Kempis**

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

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

2 min Conclude with silence.



Prayer to Welcome the Sabbath

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the name of our Creator,
our Liberator,
our Resurrection and Life,
we pray.
Amen. ¹³

From *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* by Shane Claiborne,
Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and Enuma Okoro, 2010.



JOY

Week Three

Morning Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | Psalm 126

Devotional “Joy is not a requirement of Christian discipleship, it is a consequence. It is not what we have to acquire in order to experience life in Christ; it is what comes to us when we are walking in the way of faith and obedience.”

“We try to get it [joy] through entertainment. We pay someone to make jokes, tell stories, perform dramatic actions, sing songs. We buy the vitality of another’s imagination to divert and enliven our own poor lives. The enormous entertainment industry in America is a sign of the depletion of joy in our culture. Society is a bored, gluttonous king employing a court jester to divert it after an overindulgent meal. But that kind of joy never penetrates our lives, never changes our basic constitution. The effects are extremely temporary; a few quiet minutes, a few hours, a few days at most. When we run out of money, the joy trickles away. We cannot make ourselves joyful. Joy cannot be commanded, purchased, or arranged.”

“But there is something we can do. We can decide to live in response to the abundance of God and not under the dictatorship of our own poor needs. We can decide to live in the environment of a living God and not our own dying selves. We can decide to center ourselves in the God who generously gives and not in our own egos which greedily grab. One of the certain consequences of such a life is joy, the kind expressed in Psalm 126.^{26,27}

Eugene Peterson

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

The Lord’s Prayer Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

2 min Conclude with silence.



Midday/Evening Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | John 15:9-12

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

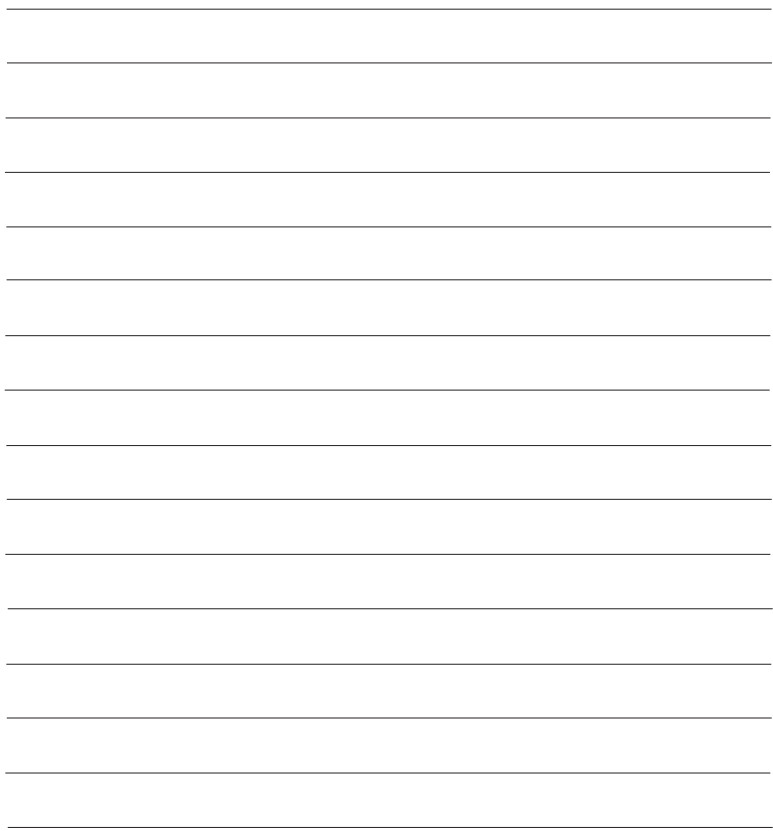
And as C.S. Lewis puts it, it has to surprise you. You can’t find joy, it has to find you. That’s its real quality. You can go to a party and say, “Tonight I’m going to have a good time, if it kills me!” It might! Indeed parties and letting off steam have their place. You might even find good cheer at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

Joy is always the by-product of something else. As the various versions of The Prayer of St. Francis put it, we can never attain joy, consolation, peace, forgiveness, love, and understanding by actively pursuing them. We attain them by giving them out. That’s the great paradox at the center of all spirituality and one of the great foundational truths within the universe itself. The air that we breathe out is the air we will eventually breathe back in. Joy will come to us if we set about actively trying to create it for others.”²⁸ **Ronald Rolheiser**

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

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

2 min Conclude with silence.



Morning Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | John 16:16-24

Devotional “Joy is the rarest and most infrequent thing in the world. We already have enough fanatical seriousness, enthusiasm, and humorless zeal in the world. But joy? This shows us that the perception of the living God is rare. When we have found God our Saviour—or when he has found us—we will rejoice in him. Joy is the simplest form of gratitude.”²⁹

Karl Barth

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2 min Conclude with silence.



Midday/Evening Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | Habakkuk 3:16-18

Devotional “Joy is what makes life worth living, but for many joy seems hard to find. They complain that their lives are sorrowful and depressing. What then brings the joy we so much desire? Are some people just lucky, while others have run out of luck? Strange as it may sound, we can choose joy. Two people can be part of the same event, but one may choose to live it quite differently than the other. One may choose to trust that what happened, painful as it may be, holds a promise. The other may choose despair and be destroyed by it. What makes us human is precisely this freedom of choice.”³⁰

Henri Nouwen

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

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

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Morning Office

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Scripture | 1 Peter 1:3-9

Devotional “A Christian is a man and a woman of joy. Jesus teaches us this, the Church teaches us this, in a special way in this time. What is this joy? Is it having fun? No: it is not the same. Fun is good, eh? Having fun is good. But joy is more, it is something else. It is something that does not come from short term economic reasons, from momentary reasons: it is something deeper. It is a gift. Fun, if we want to have fun all the time, in the end becomes shallow, superficial, and also leads us to that state where we lack Christian wisdom, it makes us a little bit stupid, naive, no? Everything is fun...no. Joy is another thing. Joy is a gift from God. It fills us from within. It is like an anointing of the Spirit. And this joy is the certainty that Jesus is with us and with the Father.”³¹

Pope Francis

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Midday/Evening Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | Philippians 4:4-7

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

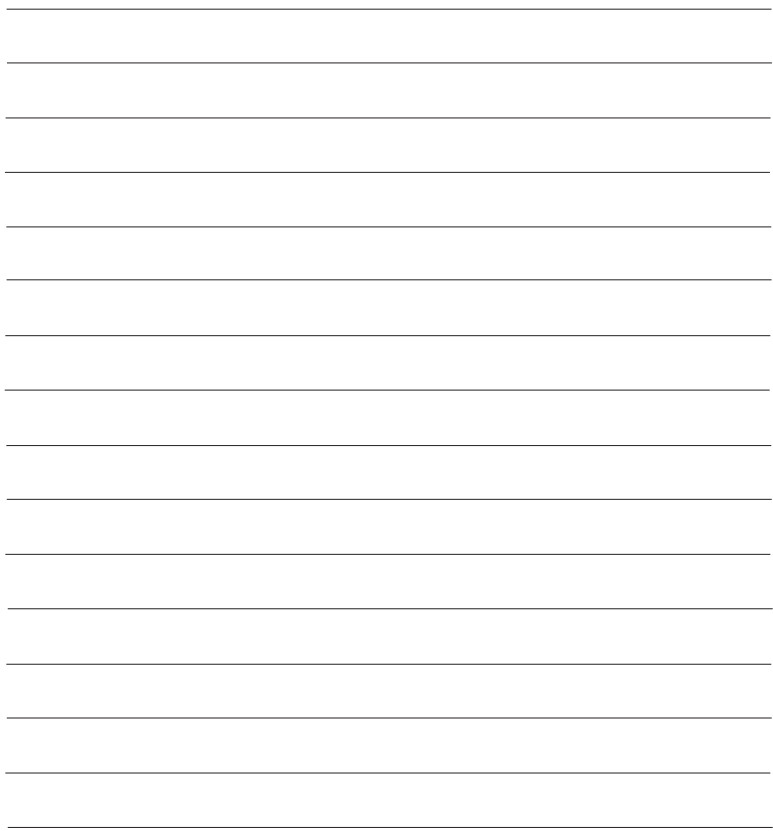
The Risen Christ shares his peace and his joy with his disciples ‘who were happy to see the Lord.’ At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit brings ‘a plenitude of joys,’ as a choice gift of the Spirit who is divine fulfilment, happiness, supreme bliss.

St. Paul time and again advises joy. The first generations of Christians were conspicuous by their love and their happiness. St. Athanasius says of them, ‘The saints rejoiced all their lives long, like men at a feast.’ Each time we witness a return to the original spirit of the Gospel, to pure, unadulterated, courageous following of Jesus in poverty, humility, simplicity and trust, happiness and the joy of the children of God are seen to come to life again.”³² **Mother Teresa**

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

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

2 min Conclude with silence.



Morning Office

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

Scripture | Psalm 30:1-5

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

“Full of joy, we are enabled to believe that there was and is One to whom no human suffering or sin is foreign and who in deepest love accomplished our redemption. Only in such joy in Christ the Redeemer shall we be preserved from hardening ourselves where human suffering encounters us.”³³

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

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Midday/Evening Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | Philippians 4:8-9

Devotional “If we think we will have joy only by praying and singing psalms, we will be disillusioned. But if we fill our lives with simple good things and constantly thank God for them, we will be joyful, that is, full of joy. And what about our problems? When we determine to dwell on the good and excellent things in life, we will be so full of those things that they will tend to swallow our problems.”³⁴

Richard Foster

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

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Morning Office

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Scripture | Psalm 20: 1-5

Devotional “Great are you, O Lord, and exceedingly worthy of praise; your power is immense, and your wisdom beyond reckoning. And so we men, who are a due part of your creation, long to praise you—we also carry our mortality about with us, carry the evidence of our sin and with it the proof that you thwart the proud. You arouse us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”³⁵

St. Augustine

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Midday/Evening Office

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

Scripture | Psalm 145:1-8

Devotional “There is not one of us whose life has not already been touched somewhere with joy, so that in order to make it real to us, to show it forth, it should be enough for Jesus simply to remind us of it, to make us remember the joyous moments of our own lives. Yet this is not easy because, ironically enough, these are likely to be precisely the moments that we do not associate with religion. We tend to think that joy is not only not properly religious but that it is even the opposite of religion. We tend to think that religion is sitting stiff and antiseptic and a little bored and that joy is laughter and freedom and reaching out our arms to embrace the whole wide and preposterous earth which is so beautiful that sometimes it nearly breaks our hearts. We need to be reminded that at its heart Christianity is joy and that laughter and freedom and the reaching out of arms are the essence of it. We need to be reminded too that joy is not the same as happiness. Happiness is man-made—a happy home, a happy marriage, a happy relationship with our friends and within our jobs. We work for these things, and if we are careful and wise and lucky, we can usually achieve them. But joy is a mystery because it can happen anywhere, anytime, even under the most unpromising circumstances, even in the midst of suffering, with tears in its eyes. Even nailed to a tree. What Jesus is saying is that men are made for joy and that anyone who is truly joyous has a right to say that he is doing God’s will on this earth. Where you have known joy, you have known him.”³⁶

Frederick Buechner

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Morning Office

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

Scripture | Galatians 5:22-26

Devotional “Don’t be satisfied with a joyless life. There ought to be in every Christian a deep, settled fullness of the joy of Christ that no circumstance of life can dispel. This comes as you allow the Holy Spirit to express Himself in your life. One of the fruits of the Spirit is joy (Gal. 5:22). This joy is unlike any happiness that is produced by the world. It fills you and permeates everything you do. Jesus did not pray that you would merely be happy or even that you would escape grief. He prayed that you would have the same joy that the Father had given Him: a divine joy, a joy that comes from a deep and unwavering relationship with the Father. It is a joy that is grounded so firmly in a relationship with God that no change in circumstances could ever shake it. This is the kind of joy that Christ is praying will be in you.”³⁷ **Henry Blackaby**

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Scripture | John 17:6-13

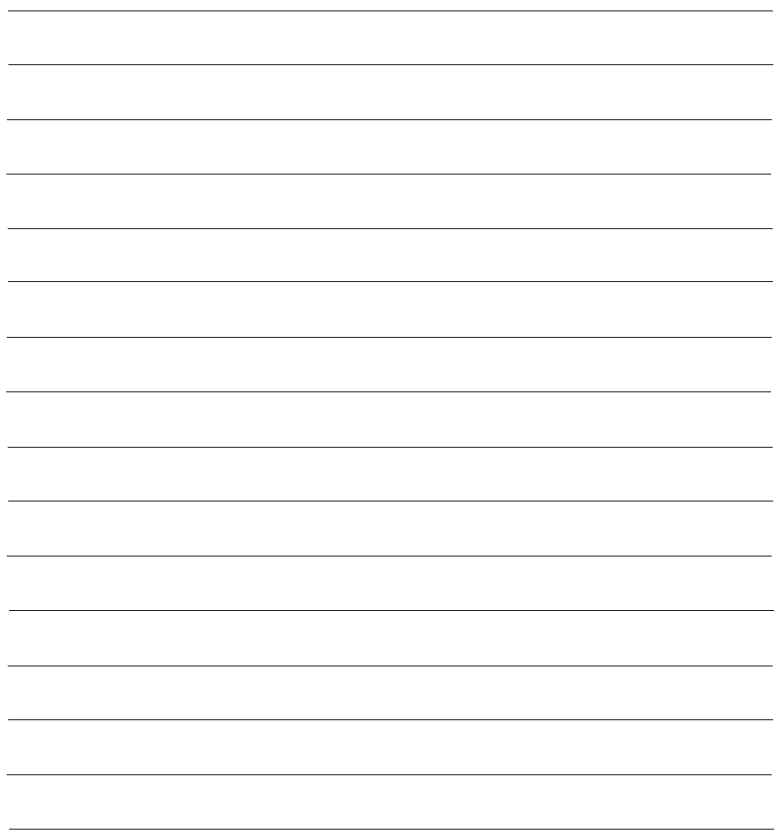
Devotional “Joy is a deep-seated sense of well-being, of safety in God’s universe. Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit, growing as a natural product of the transformation of one’s inner self to be like that of Christ, which itself is full of joy. We should, to begin with, think that God leads a very interesting life, and that he is full of joy. Undoubtedly he is the most joyous being in the universe. The abundance of his love and generosity is inseparable from his infinite joy. All of the good and beautiful things from which we occasionally drink tiny droplets of soul exhilarating joy, God continuously experiences in all their breadth and depth and richness.”²³⁸

Dallas Willard

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

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

2 min Conclude with silence.



Prayer to Welcome the Sabbath

Lord of Creation,
create in us a new rhythm of life
composed of hours that sustain rather than stress,
of days that deliver rather than destroy,
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Lord of Liberation,
by the rhythm of your truth, set us free
from the bondage and baggage that break us,
from the Pharaohs and fellows who fail us,
from the plans and pursuits that prey upon us.

Lord of Resurrection,
may we be raised into the rhythm of your new life,
dead to deceitful calendars,
dead to fleeting friend requests,
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To our packed-full planners, we bid, "Peace!"
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Drowning in a sea of deadlines and death chimes,
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By your ever-restful grace,
allow us to enter your Sabbath rest
as your Sabbath rest enters into us.

In the name of our Creator,
our Liberator,
our Resurrection and Life,
we pray.
Amen. ¹³

From *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* by Shane Claiborne,
Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and Enuma Okoro, 2010.



LOVE

Week Four

Morning Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | Matthew 21:18-21

Devotional “The word *sin* occurs forty-one times in the Gospels, and it is not accidental that in the opening chapter of the opening gospel we have an opening statement about who Jesus is. Matthew 1:21 says it this way: ‘She [Mary] will give birth to a son, and you [Joseph] are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’ ‘Jesus’ translates the Hebrew *Yeshua*, which means ‘Yahweh is salvation.’ By naming Mary’s son ‘Jesus,’ Joseph named him ‘Savior.’ From what was he saving people? ‘From their sins.’”

“The profundity of this cannot be missed: ‘Yahweh is salvation’ has just become ‘God-in-flesh-salvation’ and ‘Jesus-is-salvation.’ Israel—having failed to live up to a covenant calling and wrecked by disobedience, now mired in subjugation to Rome, blanketed with petty wars and ripping at the seams with religious and political infighting—would be rescued and the kingdom would come, and this would all occur through Mary’s son. He would rescue Israel by saving Israel from the burden of its sin.”⁴⁰

Scot McKnight

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

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2 min Conclude with silence.



Midday/Evening Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | Luke 2:13-21

Devotional “God entered into our world not with the crushing impact of unbearable glory, but in the way of weakness, vulnerability, and need. The world does not understand vulnerability. Neediness is rejected as incompetence, and compassion is dismissed as unprofitable. But in this weakness and poverty the shipwrecked at the stable would come to know the love of God.”⁴¹

Brennan Manning

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

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

2 min Conclude with silence.



Morning Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | **John 14:1-4,14**

Devotional “Our spiritual life depends on his perpetual coming to us, far more than on our going to him. Every time a channel is made for him he comes; every time our hearts are open to him he enters, bringing a fresh gift of his very life, and on that life we depend. We should think of the whole power and splendor of God as always pressing in upon our small souls.”⁴²

Evelyn Underhill

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

The Lord's Prayer Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

2 min Conclude with silence.



Midday/Evening Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | **Matthew 1:18-25**

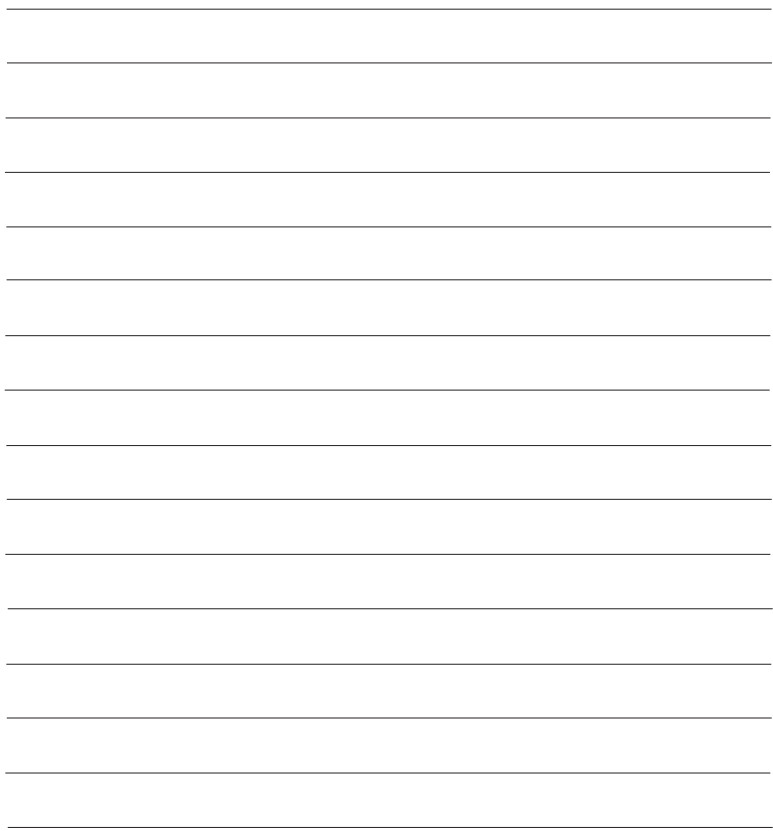
Devotional “The incarnation means that for whatever reason God chose to let us fall into a condition of being limited, to suffer, to be subject to sorrows and death—he has nonetheless had the honesty and the courage to take his own medicine.... He himself has gone through the whole of human experience—from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair, and death.... He was born in poverty and suffered infinite pain—all for us—and thought it well worth his while.”⁴³

Dorothy Sayers

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

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

2 min Conclude with silence.



Morning Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | John 3:16-18

Devotional “So how did it happen that this birth, this Jesus birth managed to set so many of us back on our heels in astonishment and gratitude and wonder? And continues to do so century after century, at least at this time of year? The brief answer is that this wasn’t just any birth. The baby’s parents and first witnesses were convinced that God was entering human history in human form. Their conviction was confirmed in angel and Magi and shepherds visitations; eventually an extraordinary life came into being before their eyes, right in their neighborhood. More and more people became convinced. Men, women, and children from all over the world continue to be convinced right up to the present moment.”

“Birth, every human birth, is an occasion for local wonder. In Jesus’ birth the wonder is extrapolated across the screen of all creation and all history as a God-birth. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”—moved into the neighborhood, so to speak. Incarnation, in-flesh-ment, God in human form in Jesus entering our history: this is what started Christmas. This is what keeps Christmas going.”⁴⁴

Eugene Peterson

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

The Lord’s Prayer Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

2 min Conclude with silence.



Midday/Evening Office

2 min Silence, stillness, and centering before God.

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

Scripture | John 3:16-18

Devotional “If you took the love of all the best mothers and fathers who ever lived (think about that for a moment)—all the goodness, kindness, patience, fidelity, wisdom, tenderness, strength and love—and united all those virtues in one person, that person would only be a faint shadow of the love and mercy in the heart of God for you and me.”⁴⁵

Brennan Manning

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

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

2 min Conclude with silence.



Notes

Week One: Restoring Hope

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