

An Order for Morning Prayer

Call to Prayer: (Psalm 96: 2 – 4)

L: Sing to the Lord and bless his Name,

P: proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day.

L: Declare his glory among the nations

P: and his wonders among all peoples.

L: For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised;

P: he is more to be feared than all gods.

The request for Presence (Psalm 90:14)

L: Satisfy us by your loving-kindness in the morning,

P: So shall we rejoice and be glad all the days of our life.

Blessing One: Creation. A Thanksgiving for Creation

(A prayer or scripture reading)

Blessing Two: Revelation (A Scripture Reading)

The Shema

All: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One.

(Silent reflection)

All: Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time.

The Morning Psalm

(Suggested Psalms: 145; 150; 18; 91; 81; 93; 100; 94; 95)

Response (Silent reflection, meditation, witness, song, or prayer)

Blessing Three: God alone is Eternal Redeemer

Who is like You, Lord, among all that is worshiped? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, working wonders?

(Exodus 15:11)

The redeemed sang a new song for You. They sang in chorus at the shore of the sea, acclaiming Your sovereignty: "The Lord shall reign throughout all time." (Exodus 15:18)

Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Prayer for the Day

All: Lord God, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your almighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Day Three

✠ Itinerary: Herodian, Bethlehem, Church of the Nativity, Shepherd's Field

We begin this day with the prayer that Jesus himself would have said:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time. Amen

Herodian

Herod the Great built this monumental fortress and palace on the highest hill in the Judean desert, 15KM south of Jerusalem. Herod was buried in the site which bore his name. The site was later a rebel stronghold and hiding place during the great revolts against the Romans.

Bethlehem – Luke 2:1-20 (Birth of Jesus)

Christmas Creed From Latin America

I BELIEVE in Jesus Christ

and in the power of the Gospel which began in Bethlehem

I BELIEVE in the One whose spirit glorified a small village,
of whose coming the shepherds saw the sign, and for whom there was not room in the inn.

I BELIEVE in the One
whose life changed the course of history, for whom the kings of the earth had no power, and
who was not understood by the proud.

I BELIEVE in the One to whom the poor, the oppressed, the discouraged, the afflicted, the
sick, the blind, the leprous, gave welcome and accepted as Lord and Savior.

I BELIEVE in the One who with love changed the hearts of the proud and with his life showed
that it is more important to serve than to be served and that the greatest glory is giving your life for
others.

I BELIEVE in peace, which is not the absence of war, but justice among all people and
nations and love among all.

I BELIEVE in reconciliation, forgiveness, and the transforming power of the Gospel.

I BELIEVE that Christmas is strength and power, and that the world can change if with
humility and with faith we kneel before the manger.

I BELIEVE that I must be the first one to do so.

Anonymous

(Translated by Joyce Hill, retired missionary)

Church of the Nativity

The gospel accounts don't mention a cave, but less than a century later, both Justin Martyr and the *Protoevangelium of James* say Jesus was born in a cave. This is reasonable, as many houses in the area are still built in front of a cave. The cave part would have been used for stabling and storage...thus the manger.

In 326, Constantine and his mother St. Helena commissioned a church to be built over the cave. This first church, dedicated on May 31, 339, had an octagonal floor plan and was placed directly above the cave.

The Constantinian church was destroyed by Justinian in 530 AD, who built the much larger church that remains today. In 1847, the theft of the silver star marking the exact site of the Nativity was an ostensible factor in the international crisis over the Holy Places that ultimately led to the Crimean War (1854–56).

In 1852, shared custody of the church was granted to the Roman Catholic, Armenian and Greek Orthodox churches. The Grotto of the Nativity, a rectangular cavern beneath the church, is the Church of the Nativity's focal point. This is the cave that has been honored as the site of Christ's birth since at least the 2nd century.

Shepherd's Field – Luke 2:8-20; Psalm 23

Reflection: If the shepherds hadn't responded to God's messengers, the angels, and hurried to see the newborn Child of God, then Mary would not have had this experience and witness to treasure up and ponder in her heart. The shepherds' treasure became Mary's treasure. And Mary's treasure has changed the world for untold numbers of people across generations!



God's word bears fruit when we listen to it, treasure it, ponder over it, and share it with others. God's word transforms the everyday things into extraordinary things and transforms tedium into eternity. Like the shepherds, we need to be on the watch, looking and listening. And when you hear God's voice you need to hurry and draw near to Christ.

If we listen and respond to God's word, great good comes to us and those we touch. If we don't hurry to be in Christ's presence and share his light with everyone we can, then God's kingdom suffers. When walking with Jesus and hearing God's word we are prompted to step out of our comfort zones to reach out with God's love to another, we ought to take action. We ought to take action so that we and they may not miss out on the life-giving treasure God revealed to the shepherds and has given to all the world.

Call to Prayer:

L: God is a faithful King.

P: Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One.

All: Praised be God's glorious sovereignty throughout all time.

A Reading: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. And these words which I command you this day you shall take to heart. You shall diligently teach them to your children. You shall recite them at home and away, morning and night. You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, they shall be a symbol above your eyes, and you shall inscribe them upon the doorposts of your homes and upon your gates. (*Deuteronomy 6:4-9*)

Prayer: Help us, our dear Lord, as we come to the end of this day, to lie down in peace; and awaken us to life again. Spread over us Your shelter of peace, guide us with Your good counsel. Save us because of Your mercy. Shield us from enemies and pestilence, from starvation, sword and sorrow. Remove the evil forces that surround us, shelter us in the shadow of Your wings. You, O God, guard us and deliver us. You are a gracious and merciful King. Guard our coming and our going, grant us life and peace, now and always. Praised is the Lord by day and praised by night, praised when we lie down and praised when we rise up. In Your hand are the souls of the living and the dead, the life of every creature, the breath of all flesh. Into Your hand I entrust my spirit: You will redeem me, Lord God of truth. Our God in Heaven, assert the unity of Your rule; affirm Your sovereignty, and reign over us forever. Amen

Biblical Verses (These biblical verses recall God's blessings and protection in ancient times:)

Then Jacob said: "May the angel who has redeemed me from all harm bless the lads. May they carry on my name and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac. May they become teeming multitudes upon the earth." And God said: "If you will listen diligently to the voice of the Lord your God, doing what is right in His sight, heeding His mitzvot and keeping all His laws, then I will not inflict upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians, for I the Lord am your healer."

The angel of the Lord said to Satan: "The Lord rebuke you, Satan. May the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you. Is not this man a brand snatched from the fire?" Behold Solomon carried in his litter — sixty of Israel's heroes are its escort. All of them are skilled swordsmen, all trained at war, each with his sword at the ready to ward off any danger of the night. May the Lord bless you and guard you. May the Lord show you favor and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you kindness and grant you peace.

The Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.

Blessing and Thanksgiving

This is the day that the Lord has made! Thank you for your blessings throughout this day. Thank you for walking with us, Jesus, as we seek to walk more closely with you. Bless us now as we rest and fill us with your spirit this evening in ways that renew our mind, body, soul, and spirit so that we may awaken to your fullness of life ready to learn, and grow as disciples who multiply your transforming love and grace!

*** Adapted from various resources*