

OPENING RESPONSES:

○ Lord, open thou our lips.

And our mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

○ God, make speed to save us.

○ Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Praise ye the Lord.

The Lord's name be praised.

PSALM: 18

I will love thee, ○ Lord, my strength; the Lord is my stony rock, and my defence *

my Saviour, my God, and my might, in whom I will trust, my buckler, the horn also of my salvation, and my refuge.

I will call upon the Lord, which is worthy to be praised *

so shall I be safe from mine enemies.

The sorrows of death compassed me *

and the overflowings of ungodliness made me afraid.

The pains of hell came about me *

the snares of death overtook me.

In my trouble I will call upon the Lord *

and complain unto my God.

So shall he hear my voice out of his holy temple *

and my complaint shall come before him, it shall enter even into his ears.

The earth trembled and quaked *

the very foundations also of the hills shook, and were removed, because he was wroth.

There went a smoke out in his presence *

and a consuming fire out of his mouth, so that coals were kindled at it.

He bowed the heavens also, and came down *

and it was dark under his feet.

He rode upon the cherubims, and did fly *

he came flying upon the wings of the wind.

He made darkness his secret place *

his pavilion round about him with dark water, and thick clouds to cover him.

At the brightness of his presence his clouds removed *

hail-stones, and coals of fire.

The Lord also thundered out of heaven, and the Highest gave his thunder *

hail-stones, and coals of fire.

He sent out his arrows, and scattered them *

he cast forth lightnings, and destroyed them.

The springs of waters were seen, and the foundations of the round world were discovered, at thy chiding, ○ Lord *

at the blasting of the breath of thy displeasure.

He shall send down from on high to fetch me *

and shall take me out of many waters.

He shall deliver me from my strongest enemy, and from them which hate me *

for they are too mighty for me.

They prevented me in the day of my trouble *

but the Lord was my upholder.

He brought me forth also into a place of liberty *

he brought me forth, even because he had a favour unto me.

The Lord shall reward me after my righteous dealing *

according to the cleanness of my hands shall he recompense me.

Because I have kept the ways of the Lord *

and have not forsaken my God, as the wicked doth.

For I have an eye unto all his laws *

and will not cast out his commandments from me.

I was also uncorrupt before him *

and eschewed mine own wickedness.

Therefore shall the Lord reward me after my righteous dealing *

and according unto the cleanness of my hands in his eye-sight.

With the holy thou shalt be holy *

and with a perfect man thou shalt be perfect.

With the clean thou shalt be clean *

and with the froward thou shalt learn frowardness.

For thou shalt save the people that are in adversity *

and shalt bring down the high looks of the proud.

Thou also shalt light my candle *

the Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light.

For in thee I shall discomfit an host of men *

and with the help of my God I shall leap over the wall.

The way of God is an undefiled way *

the word of the Lord also is tried in the fire; he is the defender of all them that put their trust in him.

For who is God, but the Lord *

or who hath any strength, except our God?

It is God, that girdeth me with strength of war *

and maketh my way perfect.

He maketh my feet like harts' feet *

and setteth me up on high.

He teacheth mine hands to fight *

and mine arms shall break even a bow of steel.

Thou hast given me the defence of thy salvation *

thy right hand also shall hold me up, and thy loving correction shall make me great.

Thou shalt make room enough under me for to go *

that my footsteps shall not slide.

I will follow upon mine enemies, and overtake them *

neither will I turn again till I have destroyed them.

I will smite them, that they shall not be able to stand *

but fall under my feet.

Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle *

thou shalt throw down mine enemies under me.

Thou hast made mine enemies also to turn their backs upon me *

and I shall destroy them that hate me.

They shall cry, but there shall be none to help them *

yea, even unto the Lord shall they cry, but he shall not hear them.

I will beat them as small as the dust before the wind *

I will cast them out as the clay in the streets.

Thou shalt deliver me from the strivings of the people *
and thou shalt make me the head of the heathen.

A people whom I have not known *
shall serve me.

As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me *
but the strange children shall dissemble with me.

The strange children shall fail *
and be afraid out of their prisons.

The Lord liveth, and blessed be my strong helper *
and praised be the God of my salvation.

Even the God that seeth that I be avenged *
and subdueth the people unto me.

It is he that delivereth me from my cruel enemies, and setteth me up above mine adversaries *
thou shalt rid me from the wicked man.

For this cause will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the Gentiles *
and sing praises unto thy Name.

Great prosperity giveth he unto his King *
and sheweth loving-kindness unto David his Anointed, and unto his seed for evermore.

Glory be to the Father:
and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

**As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be:
world without end. Amen.**

FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 46:3-13

Listen to me, O house of Jacob,
all the remnant of the house of Israel,
who have been borne by me from your birth,
carried from the womb;
even to your old age I am he,
even when you turn grey I will carry you.
I have made, and I will bear;
I will carry and will save.

To whom will you liken me and make me equal,
and compare me, as though we were alike?
Those who lavish gold from the purse,
and weigh out silver in the scales—
they hire a goldsmith, who makes it into a god;
then they fall down and worship!
They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it,
they set it in its place, and it stands there;
it cannot move from its place.
If one cries out to it, it does not answer
or save anyone from trouble.

Remember this and consider,
recall it to mind, you transgressors,
remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is no one like me,
declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, 'My purpose shall stand,
and I will fulfil my intention',

calling a bird of prey from the east,
the man for my purpose from a far country.
I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;
I have planned, and I will do it.

Listen to me, you stubborn of heart,
you who are far from deliverance:
I bring near my deliverance, it is not far off,
and my salvation will not tarry;
I will put salvation in Zion,
for Israel my glory.

MAGNIFICAT:

**My soul doth magnify the Lord:
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded:
the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold, from henceforth:
all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath magnified me:
and holy is his Name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him:
throughout all generations.
He hath shewed strength with his arm:
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat:
and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things:
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel:
as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.**

**Glory be to the Father:
and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be:
world without end. Amen.**

SECOND LESSON: Romans 12:1-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

NUNC DIMITTIS:

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace:

according to thy word.

For mine eyes have seen:

thy salvation.

Which thou hast prepared:

before the face of all people.

To be a light to lighten the Gentiles:

and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

Glory be to the Father:

and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be:

world without end. Amen.

THE APOSTLES' CREED:

I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Lord be with you.

And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Our Father, which art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done,

In earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive them that trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;

But deliver us from evil. Amen.

○ Lord, shew thy mercy upon us.

And grant us thy salvation.

○ Lord, save the Queen.

And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.

Endue thy ministers with righteousness.

And make thy chosen people joyful.

○ Lord, save thy people.

And bless thine inheritance.

Give peace in our time, O Lord.

Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God.

O God, make clean our hearts within us.

And take not thy Holy Spirit from us.

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

Almighty God, who hast poured upon us the new light of thine incarnate Word; grant that the same light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COLLECT FOR PEACE

O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels and all just works do proceed; Give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that both, our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, and also that by thee we being defended from the fear of our enemies may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

COLLECT FOR AID AGAINST ALL PERILS

Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord: and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

PRAYERS

Let your goodness, Lord, appear to us, that we, made in your image, conform ourselves to it. In our own strength we cannot imitate your majesty, power and wonder; nor is it fitting for us to try. But your mercy reaches from the heavens, through the clouds, to the earth below. You have come to us as a small child, but you have brought us the greatest of all gifts, the gift of eternal love. Caress us with your tiny hand, embrace us with your tiny arms, and pierce our hearts with your soft, sweet cries.

Bernard of Clairvaux

We thought we knew where to find you; we hardly needed a star to guide the way, just perseverance and common sense; why do you hide yourself away from the powerful and join the refugees and outcasts, calling us to follow you there? *Wise God, give us wisdom.* We thought we had laid you safe in the manger; we wrapped you in the thickest sentiment we could find, and stressed how long ago you came to us; why do you break upon us in our daily life with messages of peace and goodwill, demanding that we do something about it? *Just and righteous God, give us justice and righteousness.* So where else would we expect to find you but in the ordinary place with the faithful people, turning the world to your purpose through them. Bring us to that manger, to that true rejoicing, which will make wisdom, justice and righteousness alive in us.

Stephen Orchard

God of love, open the hearts and minds of many this Christmas time to the good and saving news of Jesus Christ; that those whose lives are insecure, or empty, or aimless, may find in the one born at Bethlehem all that they need today, and much more besides. For his name's sake.

Worship Now

Pause for **SILENT REFLECTION**

A PRAYER OF ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee; and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests: Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. **Amen.**

THE GRACE

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. **Amen.**

*Bible passages in this service are from the New Revised Standard Version.
Material in this service is reproduced from the Book of Common Prayer copyright © RCB 2004. Belfast Cathedral text,
music and live streaming licence numbers CCL 8124, MRL 1049409*
belfastcathedral.org

Hymns suitable for use at home:

ICH 159

Good Christians all, rejoice
with heart, and soul, and voice;
give ye heed to what we say;
Jesus Christ is born today;
ox and ass before him bow
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!

Good Christians all, rejoice
with heart, and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss;
Jesus Christ was born for this;
he has opened heaven's door,
and all are blessed for evermore.
Christ was born for this!

Good Christians all, rejoice
with heart, and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave;
Jesus Christ was born to save:
calls you one, and calls you all,
to gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!

Words: John Mason Neale (1818-66) alt.

Tune: IN DULCI JUBILO German medieval carol melody harm. R. L. de Pearsall (1795-1856)

ICH 168

Lord, you were rich beyond all splendour,
yet, for love's sake, became so poor;
leaving your throne in glad surrender,
sapphire-paved courts for stable floor:
Lord, you were rich beyond all splendour,
yet, for love's sake, became so poor.

You are our God beyond all praising,
yet, for love's sake, became a man;
stooping so low, but sinners raising
heav'nwards, by your eternal plan:
You are our God beyond all praising,
yet, for love's sake, became a man.

Lord, you are love beyond all telling,
Saviour and King, we worship you;
Emmanuel, within us dwelling,
make us and keep us pure and true:
Lord, you are love beyond all telling,
Saviour and King, we worship you.

Words: Frank Houghton (1894-1972) based on 2 Corinthians 8:9

Tune: BERGERS French traditional carol melody