

The Order of Service for Home Worship

THE THIRD SUNDAY of ADVENT



Hymn 1: O come, O come, Emmanuel,

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
2. O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
3. O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
4. O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
5. O come, O come, thou Lord of might,
who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
in ancient times didst give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**
Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father of glory, holy and eternal, look upon us now in power and mercy. May your strength overcome our weakness, your radiance transform our blindness, and your Spirit draw us to that love shown and offered to us by your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

As we come into the presence of our heavenly Father let us seek his forgiveness of our sins that we may know his peace is our hearts.

Lord Jesus, you came to gather the nations into your kingdom of peace.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you come in word and sacrament to strengthen us in holiness.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you will come in glory to judge the living and the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Collect:

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you: grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you are alive and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

A reading from the book of Isaiah

61. 1-4, 8-11

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion - to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.

They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations. and gently lead the mother sheep.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 126

Response: The Lord hath done great things for us and we rejoiced.

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongues with shouts of joy; (R)

then it was said among the nations,
'The Lord has done great things for them.'

The Lord has done great things for us.
and we rejoiced.

Restore our fortunes, O Lord;
like the watercourses in the Negeb. (R)

May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.

Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves. (R)

A reading from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians

5. 16-24

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to St. John

1. 6-8, 19-28

Glory to you, O Lord.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord" ', as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.' This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Meditation:

In today's gospel we are given a wonderful sense of the fulfilment of the prophecy. Everything promised in the scriptures is about to be fulfilled with all the hopes contained in the old covenant soon to be accomplished. Into this picture of hope and promise steps the powerful figure of Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist. John had recognised Jesus as the promised Messiah – it could be said that he recognised his place. What John knew, was that God had a plan and purpose for his life. This divine purpose, his vocation lay in fulfilling the words spoken many years earlier through the prophet Isaiah, to be "A voice that cries in the wilderness. Make a straight way for the Lord." In the gospel we are given a clear glimpse into John the Baptist's heart and his extraordinary openness and willingness to play his part in God's wonderful plan of salvation for the world. He knows that his joy and privilege do not lie in proclaiming himself but instead in pointing clearly to Jesus, the promised Messiah, who is the light and source of our hope. Jesus is the only one with the power to save his people and John knew this. It is this recognition of the Messiah, Jesus, already standing among his people that forms the heart of the prophetic proclamation of John. As effectively, the last of the Old Testament prophets, John bears witness in Christ in his preaching, his fearless truthfulness, his ministry of Baptism and repentance. Looking to the present day, we can be like any of the crowd who gathered around John the Baptist. We can be alert to his message, that the Messiah is already among us, or we can be blind to this saving presence. We can also be like the interrogators sent by the Pharisees with many questions but not really listening attentively to the answers. The readings in these days of Advent, especially today, are full of joy and hope. The joy and hope are found in the fact that the promises of God are being fulfilled before our very eyes, even as we listen. The Lord calls on each one of us to play our part in the unfolding of his plan of salvation. We may feel that our part is small. We may wonder, as John would have, what exactly is God asking us to do and say that will make a difference to the world and society in which we live. But what matters is that we try to help each other to see and recognise Jesus standing among us – it is through our thoughts, words and actions – not necessarily big deeds but through our being pleasant and polite, being prepared to help anyone we meet that may be in need, checking on our neighbours, - acts of kindness and thoughtfulness. This is the Good News; and our joy and privilege, like John's, lie in proclaiming this to others. Our being aware of Christ living amongst us should make us more respectful, patient, loving and caring towards those that we meet in the hope that they may see a little of Christ both among us and in each of us. **Amen.**

In the power of the Holy Spirit and in union with Christ let us bring our prayers for the Church and for the world to our heavenly Father.

We pray for the Church throughout the world, for the leaders of the Church among them Mary our bishop. We pray for the clergy and people of our diocese and for our own ministry area; may the Church, following the example of John the Baptist, be a faithful sign of Christ's love and compassion for all.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the people of the world, for the victims of violence and oppression, for all suffering the effects of natural disaster and for those suffering from famine or drought; May the leaders of the Nations strive to bring peace and reconciliation between their people's that all may live safe and secure lives.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our own community, for our families, friends and neighbours. We give thanks for all who serve the needs of the vulnerable; May we bring the hope that only Christ can give to all who we meet each day.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are in need, for those who are sick, for those who are bereaved, for the lonely and isolated and for all in any kind of need. We hold in our hearts before God those known to us who are in need at this time and all whose names are recorded in our parish intercession books; may they be strengthened by the Holy Spirit and consoled with the love of Christ.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who have died. We remember before God our own departed loved ones and we pray for the recently departed and those whose anniversary of death falls at this time. May they share the eternal glory of heaven in the company of all the saints.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We bring all our prayers to our heavenly Father as we pray together:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy Kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the Kingdom,
The power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Peace:

Jesus said, "Peace, I bequeath to you; my own peace I give you; a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. The peace of the Lord be with you and with all those whom you love. **And also with you.**

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters we do also for you: give us the will to be the servant of others as you were the servant of all, and gave up your life and died for us, but are alive and reign, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Blessing:

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

The peace of God which is beyond all understanding guard your hearts in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. **Amen**

Hymn 2: Come, Thou long expected Jesus

1. **Come, Thou long expected Jesus
born to set Thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in Thee.**
2. **Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth Thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.**
3. **Born Thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now Thy gracious kingdom bring.**
4. **By Thy own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by Thine all sufficient merit,
raise us to Thy glorious throne**

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