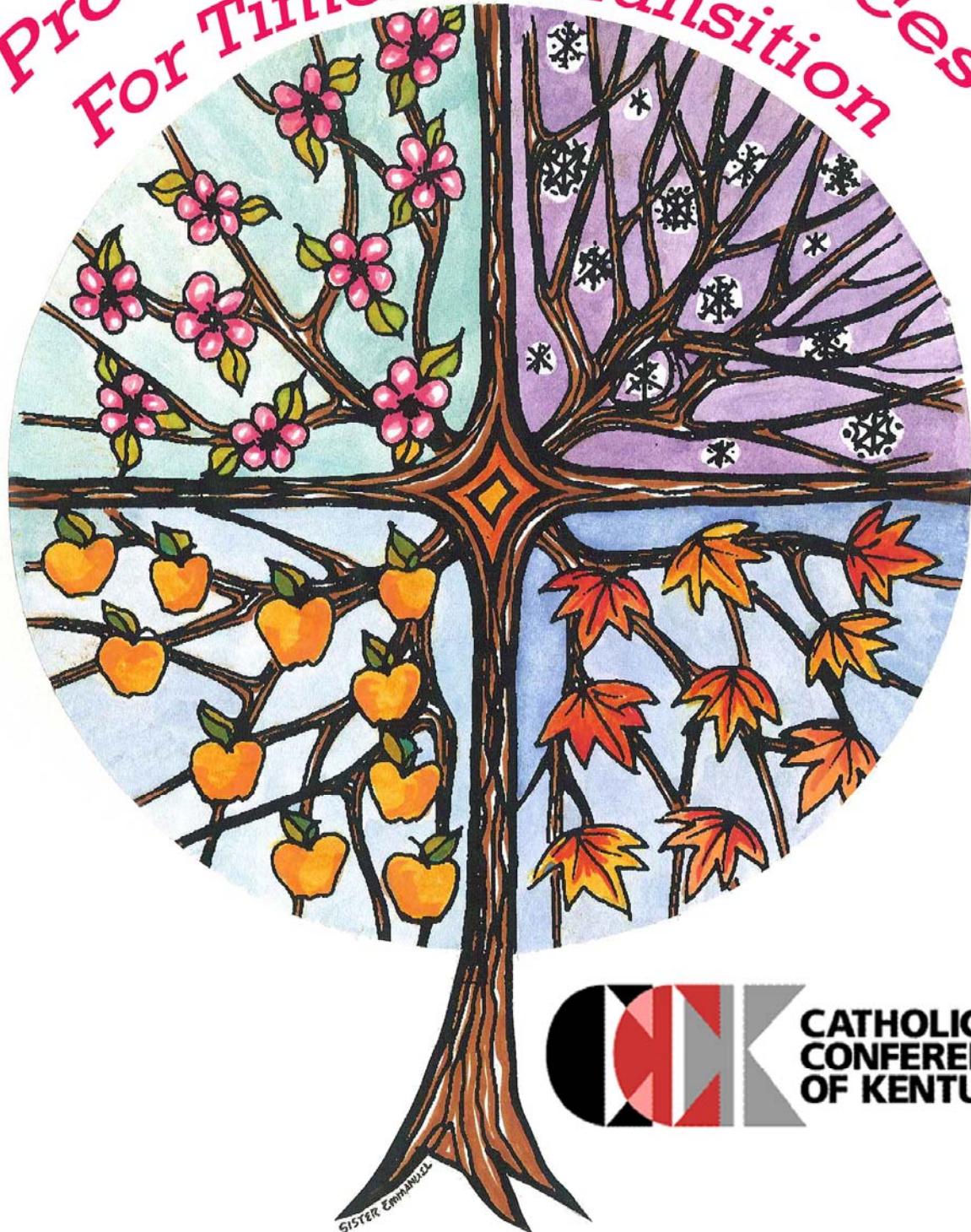


# Pro-Life Prayer Services For Times of Transition





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[www.ccky.org](http://www.ccky.org)

September 1, 2006

To the Catholic People of Kentucky:

*Reverence for Life: The Pursuit of Justice*, [www.ccky.org/PDF%20Files/Reverence-.PDF](http://www.ccky.org/PDF%20Files/Reverence-.PDF), our 1999 pastoral letter on abortion and the consistent ethic of life, highlighted the essential place for prayer and worship in living the Gospel of life. In the Catholic tradition, participation in the Eucharist is the privileged sacramental celebration that empowers and supports us in our attempts to answer the call to service and the pursuit of justice on behalf of human life from conception to natural death.

The spirituality, however, that enlivens our participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church must be rooted in the spirit of prayer and contemplation which should mark our personal practice of the faith.

Living the Gospel of life, in particular, must be sustained by prayer, reflection, and solitude, for these are the indispensable spiritual means by which we as a people *of* and *for* life singly and together commune with God and in Christ become ministers of God's grace --- ministers of the Gospel of life.

As our pastoral letter challenges, "How can we expect to have a heart for the long struggle for life unless new hearts are created within us?" In a pre-eminent way, prayer sustains us with the assurance that "God is always ready to answer our prayers for help with the virtues we need to do his will." (USCCB. *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998: n. 27)

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the prayer of petition centers "on the desire and search for the Kingdom to come, in keeping with the teaching of Christ." In effect, through prayer all the baptized work towards the coming of the kingdom. (CCC n. 2632) Sacred scripture exhorts the followers of Jesus to pray constantly and with perseverance.

In the *Gospel of Life* Pope John Paul II declared: "*A great prayer for life is urgently needed*, a prayer which will rise up throughout the world. Through special initiatives and in daily prayer, may an impassioned plea rise to God, the Creator and lover of life, from every Christian community, from every group and association, from every family and from the heart of every believer.... Let us therefore discover anew the humility and courage to pray and fast so that power from on high will break down the walls of lies and deceit: the walls which conceal from the sight of so many ... the evil practices and laws which are hostile to life." [EV. n. 100]

In accord with the *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities* we continue to recommend that our dioceses, parishes, apostolic groups, and formation programs take initiatives "to sponsor programs of prayer and fasting as well as paraliturgical programs" to promote the Gospel of life. In addition to renewed participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church, we encourage Catholics to adopt programs of private prayer.

To that end, we are publishing "Pro-Life Prayer Services for Times of Transitions," a collection of prayer services adaptable to a variety of settings. As a response to important pastoral concerns and needs, it is our hope that these prayer services will truly enhance and enrich the practice of intercessory prayer among our people, an indispensable component for building a new culture of life.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads '+ Thomas C. Kelly OP'.  
+ Most Reverend Thomas C. Kelly, OP  
Archbishop of Louisville

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads '+ Roger J. Foys'.  
+ Most Reverend Roger J. Foys  
Bishop of Covington

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads '+ John J. McRaith'.  
+ Most Reverend John J. McRaith  
Bishop of Owensboro

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads '+ Ronald W. Gainer'.  
+ Most Reverend Ronald W. Gainer  
Bishop of Lexington

**Most Reverend**  
**Thomas C. Kelly, O.P.**  
Archbishop of Louisville

**Most Reverend**  
**John J. McRaith**  
Bishop of Owensboro

**Most Reverend**  
**Roger J. Foys**  
Bishop of Covington

**Most Reverend**  
**Ronald W. Gainer**  
Bishop of Lexington

**Edward C. Monahan**  
Executive Director



# *Celebration of the Sanctity of Life*

From the Catholic Conference of Kentucky Pro-Life Committee

## **Notes on Using the Prayer Service**

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### **GATHERING HYMN**      *May We Praise You* (John Foley, SJ)

### **GATHERING PRAYER**

**Leader:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Response:** Amen.

**Leader:** God our Creator, you fashioned human life in your divine image, and each new life receives from you an eternal destiny. From the very moment of inception, we grow to fulfill your purpose for us. Through your Son Jesus Christ, we have been redeemed. Through him we have become your adopted children. We are stewards of creation; we are heirs of heaven. Thank you for these gifts of sacred life and holy love. We praise your goodness; we adore you. Hear us as we pray, through Jesus Christ, your Son, Our Lord.

**Response:** Amen.

### **READINGS**

#### **First Reading:** (*Col 1:9 – 14*) A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Colossians.

Therefore, from the day we heard this, we do not cease praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding to live in a manner worthy of the Lord, so as to be fully pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with every power, in accord with his glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy giving thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light. He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The word of the Lord.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

**Pause for silent reflection.**

#### **Second Reading:** (*Dt 30:19*) A reading from the Book of Deuteronomy.

I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live...

The word of the Lord.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

**Pause for silent reflection.**

#### **Third Reading:** (*DV 41*) A reading from the Vatican Instruction *Donum Vitae (The Gift of Life)*.

Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves “the creative action of God,”

and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can, in any circumstance, claim for himself the right to destroy directly an innocent human being.

**Pause for silent reflection.**

**PRAYER**    *The Life Promise*

**Leader:**       Please join me now in making the “Life Promise.”

**All:**

In the name of the One God, ever living and life-giving, faithful and true, I promise always to choose life.

- ◆ I accept God’s gift of life to me, whatever the circumstances of my conception and my birth, of my parents, of my family, of all who ever cared for me or did me harm in the journey of my early years. God calls me by name and works all together for my good. Grateful for his faithful love, I choose life.
- ◆ I accept God’s gift of life around me, whether sister or brother, friend or stranger, however whole or broken, great or small, whether saint or sinner, rich or poor, both well and ill, ally, enemy, or indifferent. I accept them, for each human life is a sacred treasure; each is crafted in God’s image; in each moves the Spirit’s blessing. Grateful for his abundant blessings, I choose life.
- ◆ I accept God’s gift of life in my dying. His hands shape the manner of my death; his clock counts out my hours. God lays me down and he upholds me. Grateful that God is Life, I choose life.

All this we pray in the name of the One God, everlasting and life-giving, faithful and true.  
Amen.

**INTERCESSIONS**

**Leader:**       In faith and hope, let us place our petitions before the Lord.

The response is: ***Loving God, hear our prayer.***

**Leader:**

- ◆ That God may send an angel to every child who lives in the womb, to guard each defenseless life, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)
- ◆ That we may see the image of Christ in all who are neglected or ignored, especially the poor, the sick, and the aged, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)
- ◆ That through the intercession of Mary, whose heart was pierced with a sword, everyone who suffers from violence may find peace and strength, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)
- ◆ That every parent who struggles alone to raise children may find support and community within our Church, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)
- ◆ That men and women condemned to death row may know repentance and forgiveness, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)
- ◆ That the rights to life and liberty may be watchwords of our nation, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)
- ◆ That all those who work for life, physicians, teachers, religious, deacons, priests,

legislators, judges, social workers, especially those who pray at abortion clinics and serve families in crisis, may please God by their perseverance, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

**PRAYER**    *The Lord's Prayer*

**Leader:**    Let us call on our Father as Jesus taught us.

**Response:**    Our Father, who art in heaven.... Amen.

**CLOSING PRAYER**

**Leader:**    O God, compassionate and merciful, protector of the widowed, defender of the orphaned, you who are Love itself have fashioned us in your divine image. You command us to love as we are loved by you, loving our neighbors and forgiving our enemies. Holy God, send out your Spirit to fill our hearts with courage. Guide our steps along your way toward our heavenly home, that we may live with you there for ever and ever. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**Response:**    Amen.

**CLOSING HYMN**    *Now Thank We All Our God* (Martin Rinkart, Johan Cugar)

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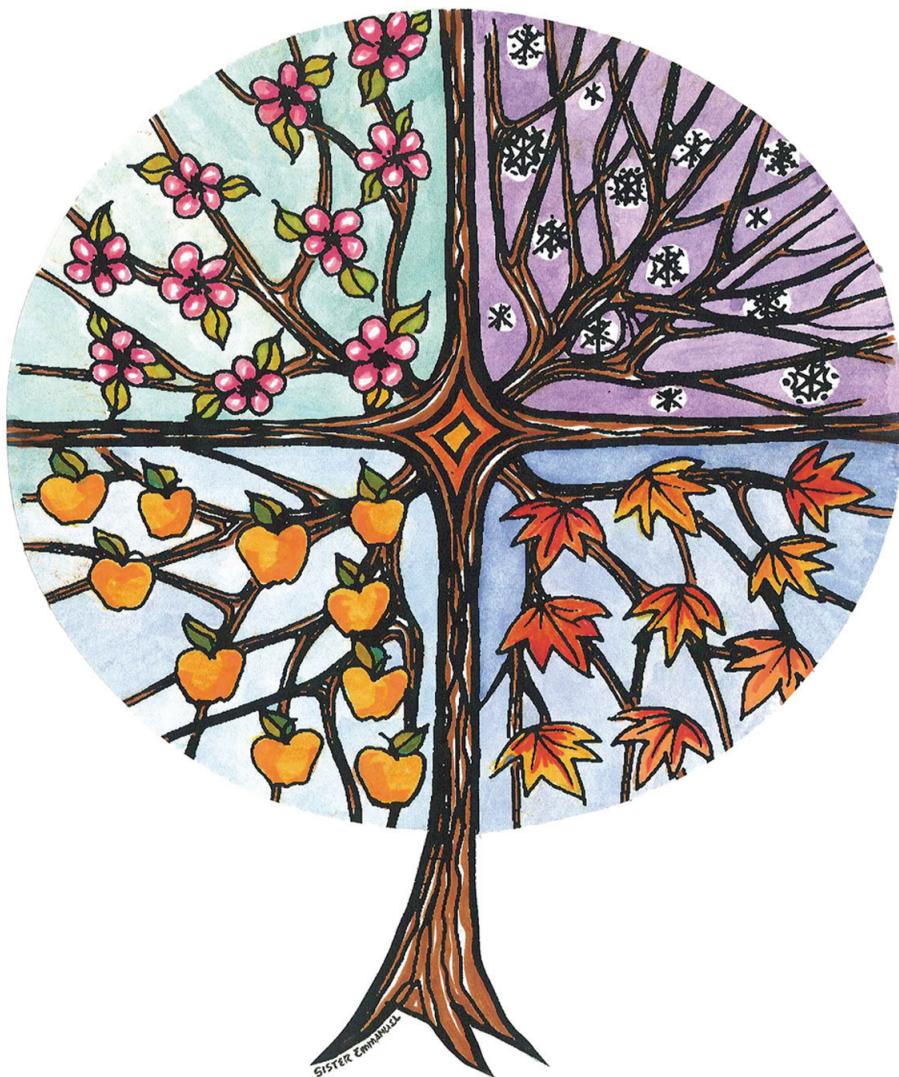
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# **Uniting Our Suffering**

**with  
the  
Cross  
of  
Christ**



From the Catholic Conference of Kentucky Pro-Life Committee

## **Notes on Using the Prayer Service**

The services in this collection were designed for a variety of settings, and we encourage you to adapt them to your particular needs. The role of the leader can be shared by one or more persons. Some advance preparation such as handouts or candles may be required. Suggested hymns are widely available.

### **GATHERING HYMN *Holy Is Your Name* (arr. David Haas)**

### **GATHERING PRAYER**

**Leader:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Response:** Amen.

**Leader:**

Almighty God, your ways are not our ways, nor are your thoughts our thoughts. You chose to redeem us not by force of logic; not by earthly power; not by wondrous signs; but by the bloodstained wood of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Your way still seems to many a stumbling block and absurdity. Yet how simple is your good news! Through Jesus Christ we know your love and mercy. Through his pain, we have our redemption.

Dear Father, shine the light of your Holy Spirit into our hearts. Open our eyes to your eternal plan. Humble and trusting, may we surrender to your merciful love.

O God, redeem every human life endangered by sin. Rescue us through the cross and resurrection of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

**Response:** Amen.

### **SCRIPTURE**

#### **First Reading: (*Is 49:8-10*) A reading from the Prophet Isaiah.**

Thus says the LORD:

In a time of favor I answer you,  
on the day of salvation I help you,

To restore the land  
and allot the desolate heritages,  
Saying to the prisoners: Come out!

To those in darkness: Show yourselves!

Along the ways they shall find pasture,  
on every bare height shall their pastures be.

They shall not hunger or thirst,  
nor shall the scorching wind or the sun strike them;<sup>125</sup>

For he who pities them leads them  
and guides them beside springs of water.

The word of the Lord.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

**Pause for silent reflection.**

**Second Reading:** (I Cor 1:18–25) A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
and the learning of the learned I will set aside."

Where is the wise one? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made the wisdom of the world foolish? For since in the wisdom of God the world did not come to know God through wisdom, it was the will of God through the foolishness of the proclamation to save those who have faith. For Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

The word of the Lord.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

**Gospel Reading:** (Matt 16:23–27) A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Response:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**Leader:** (Reflection on Scripture and this occasion.)

## INTERCESSIONS

**Leader:** In faith and hope, let us place our petitions before the Lord.

The response is: Keep me safe, O God;  
in you I take refuge. (*Ps 16:1*)

**Response:** Keep me safe, O God;  
in you I take refuge.

**Leader:**

That God will end violence and injustice, bringing peace to the world, we pray to the Lord.  
(Response)

That our national, state, and local officials may preserve and defend life, we pray to the Lord.  
(Response)

That all Christians may be converted to a greater than human love, we pray to the Lord.  
(Response)

That all who oppose the cross of Jesus Christ may be converted, we pray to the Lord. (Response)

That we may proclaim the gospel of life with meekness and humility, we pray to the Lord.  
(Response)

That our society may revere chastity, the marriage covenant, and family bonds, we pray to the

Lord. (*Response*)

That all children in the womb and all newly born be cherished and welcomed, we pray to the Lord.  
(*Response*)

That those facing crisis pregnancies find generous support for all their needs, we pray to the Lord.  
(*Response*)

That the weak and defenseless, the sick, the aged, and those threatened by euthanasia find compassionate support, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

That those who are depressed and tempted by suicide find help and health, we pray to the Lord.  
(*Response*)

That God may be merciful in judging all who have died, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

#### **PRAYER      *The Lord's Prayer***

**Leader:** Almighty and ever-living God, we praise you for glorifying your Son, Jesus Christ. Though innocent, he was condemned. Though divine, he suffered. Though dead and buried, he rose, Lord of both the living and the dead. In him we have the promise of eternal life with you, Father, to whom we now pray.

**Response:** Our Father, who art in heaven.... Amen.

#### **CLOSING PRAYER**

**Leader:** God of Life, in your compassion you reach out to us, even before we know we need your aid. When we fall, you lift us. When we sin, you move us to repentance. When we are hurting, you heal our wounds.

All your children on earth walk in the shadow of death. But we have no fear, for you have promised rescue and salvation. Help us to cherish everyone around us as brothers and sisters in Christ. Share with us your gifts of kindness, patience, and compassion. Whatever our sufferings and sacrifices may be today, let us unite them with your Son's holy and eternal offering of himself to you.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

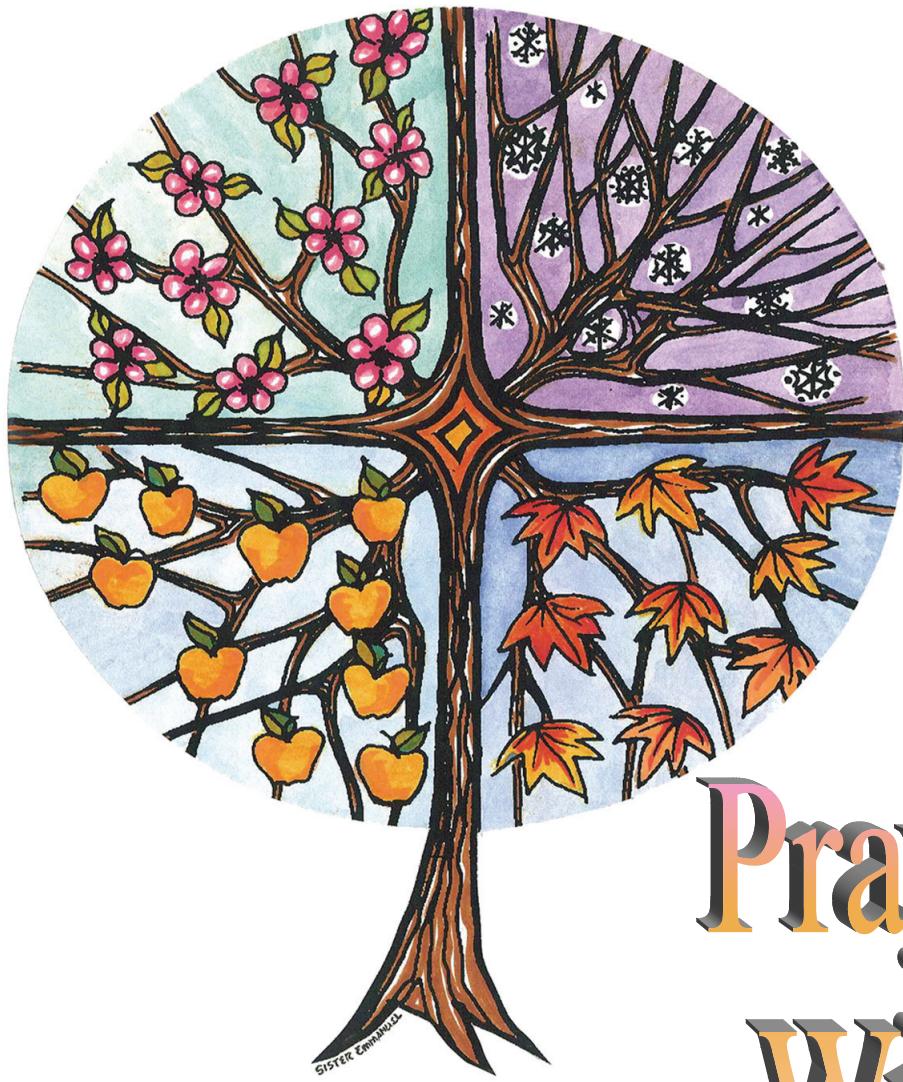
**Response:** Amen.

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# Prayer With One Who Is Dying

From the Catholic Conference of Kentucky Pro-Life Committee

## **Notes on Using the Prayer Service**

The services in this collection were designed for a variety of settings, and we encourage you to adapt them to your particular needs. This service can be prayed in parts, over the duration of the vigil, as desired. The role of the leader can be shared by one or more persons. Some advance preparation such as handouts or candles may be required. Suggested hymns are widely available.

### **GATHERING HYMN *Be Not Afraid* (Bob Dufford, SJ )**

### **GATHERING PRAYER**

**Leader:** We come together in prayer as we have done so many times before, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**Response:** Amen.

**Leader:** God of all compassion, in love you created (name), and in love you have walked with (him, her) throughout (his, her) life on this earth. Now you are calling (name) home to you. Now is the time of transition from this earthly life to (his, her) eternal home, with you and all those who have gone before.

Lord God of hope and mercy, we know that you remain with (name) now and always. Comfort (him, her) with your promise of salvation. Assure (him, her) that the trials of this earth bring us nearer to you.

Remind (name) of those loved ones who have gone before (him, her) into eternal life. May they be reunited in joy: [names of dear departed].

O compassionate Lord, we ask that you guide and guard (name) on this journey home. May we assist (him, her) with our prayers and loving support. All this we ask this through Jesus Christ, our savior and brother.

**Response:** Amen.

### **SCRIPTURE**

**First Reading:** (*Psalm 23*) A reading from the book of Psalms.

The LORD is my shepherd;  
    there is nothing I lack.  
In green pastures you let me graze;  
    to safe waters you lead me;  
    you restore my strength.  
You guide me along the right path  
    for the sake of your name.  
Even when I walk through a dark valley,  
    I fear no harm for you are at my side;  
    your rod and staff give me courage.  
You set a table before me  
    as my enemies watch;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
    my cup overflows.  
Only goodness and love will pursue me  
    all the days of my life;  
I will dwell in the house of the LORD  
    for years to come.

The word of the Lord.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

**Pause** for silent reflection.

## **Second Reading:** (John 14: 1-6, 27) A reading from the Gospel of John

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where [I] am going you know the way." Thomas said to him, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.... Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Response:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**Pause** for silent reflection.

## **PRAYER** The Jesus Prayer

**Leader:** God has shown us his mercy throughout our lives. Remembering his love and compassion, let us say together three times, slowly and softly, the Jesus Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

**Response:** Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. (3x)

## **INTERCESSIONS**

**Leader:** In faith and hope, let us place our petitions before the Lord. I invite everyone here to name people, groups, and intentions that are beloved of (name) and the family. Please respond to each petition: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

**First Petition:** For..., we pray to the Lord.

**Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Second Petition:** For..., we pray to the Lord.

**Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Other Petitions:** For..., we pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.*

**Leader:** Let us pray together the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

**Response:** Our Father.... Hail Mary.... Glory be.... Amen.

## **HYMN** Eye Has Not Seen (Marty Haugen)

## **PRAYER**

**Leader:** Loving God, you so loved the world and your servant (name) that you sent your beloved son Jesus to come to earth, with all its joys and sorrows, in order to save us from our sins. Through his death he vanquished death. Through his cross he conquered sin.

Whatever sins and failings have separated (name) from you, forgive them. Show (him, her) your boundless mercy. Receive (him, her) into the joy of your kingdom, where (he, she) has an everlasting home. We ask this in confidence in the name of Jesus our savior and brother, through the Holy Spirit, with you, one God forever and ever.

**Response:** Amen

**Leader:** We also pray for ourselves as we prepare for the passing of our beloved (name). Loving God, may your peace, which surpasses all that the world has to offer, bless us, console us, and gently wipe every tear from our eyes. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Response:** Amen.

[Choose additional prayers and hymns as desired. See suggestions below.]

**Leader:** Let us exchange a sign of peace with one another. [Pause.]

Now may we all go in peace.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

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Additional prayers and songs may be voiced during the bedside vigil. For example:

**Hymns:**

*I, the Lord (Tom Kendzia)*  
*Amazing Grace*  
*Abide with Me*  
*In the Garden*  
*What Wondrous Love Is This?*  
*O Lord I Am Not Worthy*  
*Immaculate Mary*

**Prayers:**

The Rosary  
The Chaplet of Divine Mercy  
The Divine Praises  
The Litany of the Saints  
The Apostles' Creed  
The Prayer of Saint Francis  
Prayer to Our Guardian Angel  
The Angelus

**Hail, Holy Queen**

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning, and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Pray for us that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Amen.

**Memorare (St. Bernard)**

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother; to thee I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

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# Entrustment Ceremony

# Entrustment Ceremony



For  
For  
An Adopted Child

Adapted from Diocese of Covington Catholic Social Services

## **Notes** on Using the Prayer Service

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## **GATHERING PRAYER**

**Leader:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Response:** Amen.

**Leader:**

We welcome each one of you here today. We have come here together to join in celebration of (*name*)'s life and those who are a part of it.

(*Name*) was brought into this world by the holy and generous love of (his, her) birth mother, (*name*). We are here today because of her courage and unselfishness.

(*Name*) has been lovingly cared for by (his, her) foster parents, (*name*) and (*name*). We know theirs is a home filled with joy and the Spirit of Peace.

(*Name*) is the answer to the prayers and longing of (his, her) adoptive parents, (*name of father*) and (*name of mother*), who will happily and lovingly receive (him, her) into their home.

For (*name*) we have gathered to celebrate our shared inheritance as adopted children of God. We ask your blessing on (him, her).

May (he, she) grow in wisdom and grace over the years to come. May (he, she) discover the special place the Lord has made for (him, her) in this world. And may (he, she) echo the love that today surrounds (him, her), growing up to be a (man, woman) of honor, peace, and love.

All this we ask through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

**Response:** Amen.

## **SCRIPTURE**

**First Reading:** (Num 6:24–26) A reading from the book of Numbers.

The LORD bless you and keep you!  
The LORD let his face shine upon you,  
and be gracious to you!  
The LORD look upon you kindly and  
give you peace!

The word of the Lord.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

**Pause** for silent reflection.

**Gospel Reading:** (Mark 10:13–16) A reading from the Gospel of Mark.

And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

**Pause** for silent reflection.

**BLESSINGS** [Foster parents hold the child during the following blessings.]

**Blessing of Birth Mother**

**Leader:** O God, we ask your blessing upon (child)'s birth mother, (name). We thank you for giving her the courage and love to bear (him, her) and give (him, her) life. We ask that she may find comfort and peace in the selfless decision she has made. May she always keep a special place in her heart for her blessed child.

**Response:** Amen.

**Blessing of Foster Parents**

**Leader:** O God, we ask your blessing upon (child)'s foster parents, (name) and (name). We thank them for accepting this vocation to be a holy family, to offer kindness, protection, and loving care. Their home has been a safe haven. Their nurturing has given (child) a wonderful start in life. We ask that your blessings may shower down upon them, Lord, abundantly.

**Response:** Amen.

**Entrustment of Child to Adoptive Parents**

**Leader:** (Birth mother), do you accept (father) and (mother) as the new parents of (child)?

Birth Mother: I do.

**Leader:** (Adoptive father) and (mother), do you desire to take (child) as your own (son, daughter)?

Adoptive Parents: We do.

**Leader:** Do you promise that you will be to (child) a loving mother and father in every way?

Adoptive Parents: We do. We will hold (him, her) when (he, she) is happy. We will console (him, her) when (he, she) is sad. We will guide (him, her) to be the best person (he, she) can be. We will educate (him, her) to know and love the Lord and his commands.

**Leader:** Receive (child) with God's blessing.

**Child is handed to the adoptive parents**

**Blessing of Adoptive Parents**

**Leader:** O God, bless these parents as you blessed Mary and Joseph in the temple. Help them nurture this life which has been entrusted to their care. Give them the patience and wisdom all parents need. Direct their words as they explain to (name) that (he, she) is theirs by adoption, just as we all have been adopted by you. Look with mercy upon this couple, and strengthen their mutual love as they open their home and hearts and lives to (name). May (he, she) know security and stability in their home.

**PRAYERS**

**Leader:** Let us dedicate ourselves to the great mother of God, Mary most holy. We pray:

**Response:** Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

**Leader:** Remembering that we are all God's children by adoption, let us pray to our Father.

**Response:** 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. Amen.

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Leader:** Loving God, your Son has taught us that to welcome a little one in his name is to welcome him. We give you thanks for (birth mother), who brought (child) into this world, and for (foster name) and (name), who welcomed (him, her) into their home. We ask you to bless this new family, (adoptive father), (mother), and (child). Make them a holy family. May (adoptive father) and (mother) show the love of Christ as they bring up (child) to love all that is good.

All this we ask through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Response:** Amen.

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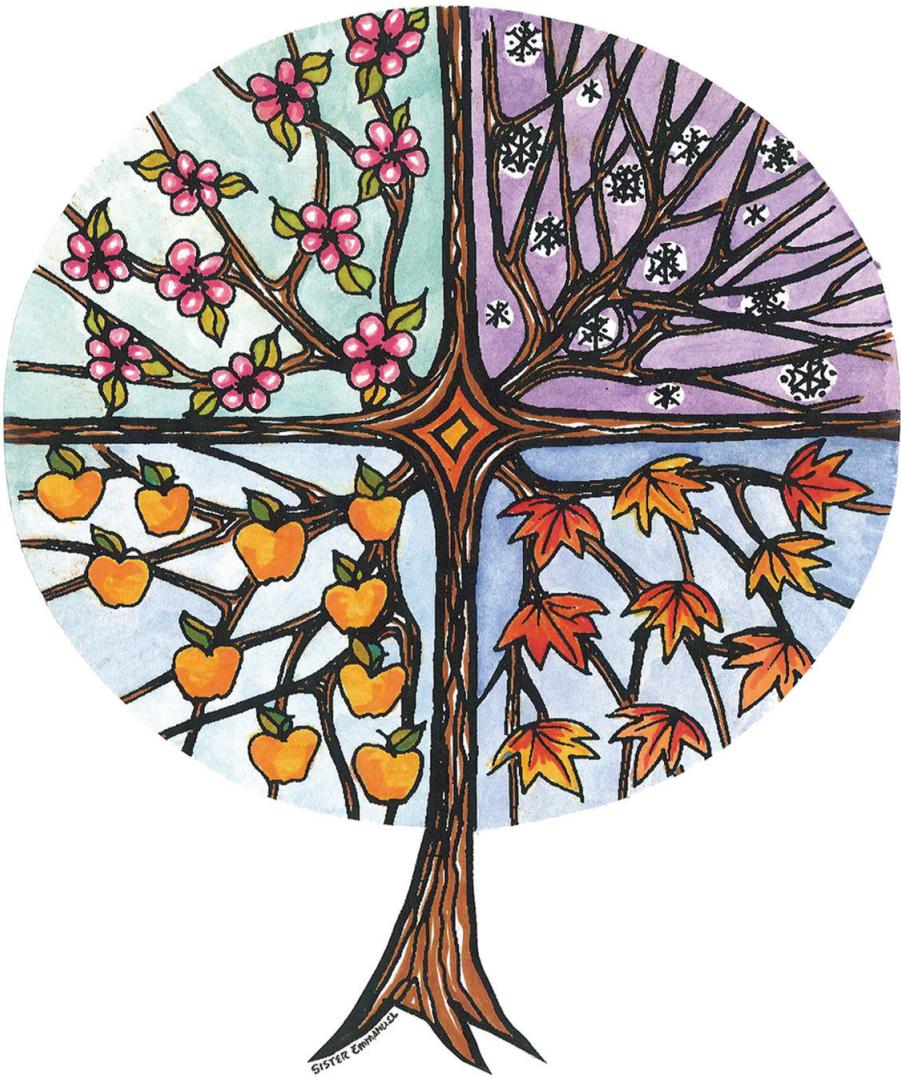
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# Memorial

For

The

Loss Of A Child



Adapted from Diocese of Covington Catholic Social Services

## **Notes on Using the Prayer Service**

The services in this collection were designed for a variety of settings, and we encourage you to adapt them to your particular needs. The role of the leader can be shared by one or more persons. Some advance preparation such as handouts or candles may be required. Suggested hymns are widely available.

### **GATHERING HYMN *You Are Mine* (David Haas)**

#### **GATHERING PRAYER**

**Leader:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Response:** Amen.

**Leader:** Gracious God and Giver of Life, you bring us together in faith, united in Christ, that we may be your people. Increase our faith in Jesus the Lord. Inspire us anew in our efforts to revere and protect every gift of human life. Give us new hope. Create a new heart in each of us that your name may be glorified in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**Response:** Amen.

#### **SCRIPTURE**

##### **First Reading: (Is 49:13–16a) A reading from the Prophet Isaiah.**

Sing out, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth,  
break forth into song, you mountains.  
For the LORD comforts his people  
and shows mercy to his afflicted.  
But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me;  
my Lord has forgotten me."  
Can a mother forget her infant,  
be without tenderness for the child of her womb?  
Even should she forget,  
I will never forget you.  
See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name....  
The word of the Lord.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

**Pause** for silent reflection.

##### **HYMN *I Have Loved You* (Michael Joncas)**

##### **Gospel Reading: (Mark 10:13–16) A reading from the Gospel of Mark.**

And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Response:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**Pause** for silent reflection.

#### **ACT OF OFFERING**

**Leader:** [Invites participants to come forward, light their tapers from the Paschal candle in memory of their children, and place them in the receptacle.]

##### **HYMN *How Beautiful* (Twila Paris)**

## INTERCESSIONS

**Leader:** In faith and hope, let us place our petitions before the Lord.

Please respond: *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.*

**Response:** Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.

**Leader:**

That we always remember you hear and answer our prayers, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

That we feel your Spirit when we are brokenhearted and our spirits have been crushed, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

That we allow you to comfort us in our troubles, and strengthen us to comfort others in need, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

That we may unite our sufferings with those of your beloved son, Jesus Christ, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

That even in the shadow of darkness we may trust you to deliver us from evil and fear, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

## PRAYER *The Lord's Prayer*

**Leader:** As children secure in their parent's love, we have the confidence to pray.

**Response:** Our Father, who art in heaven.... Amen.

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Leader:** Gracious God, you know all of our needs and you care for us daily. Be with us who are in great need of your presence. We have lighted these candles and dedicate them in loving memory of our children. As we hold their memories dear, may your light surround us. May your love support us. May we feel your love flow through us, as you wrap our beloved children in your gentle embrace. We ask this in the name of your most precious child, Jesus Christ.

**Response:** Amen.

**Leader:** Go now in the peace and light of Christ.

**Response:** Amen.

## CLOSING HYMN *Isaiah 49* (Carey Landry)

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# Healing and Reconciliation After an Abortion

Adapted from Project Rachel, Diocese of Covington Pro-Life Commission

## **Notes on Using the Prayer Service**

The services in this collection were designed for a variety of settings, and we encourage you to adapt them to your particular needs. The role of the leader can be shared by one or more persons. Some advance preparation such as handouts or candles may be required. For this service, ask participants to bring a token gift and/or letter in memory of their child. Have a table to receive these tokens and a Memorial Book on hand to be inscribed with names. Suggested hymns are widely available.

## **GATHERING SONG** *Song of the Body of Christ* (David Haas)

## **GATHERING PRAYER**

**Leader:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Response:** Amen.

**Leader:** Lord God, creator of life and of all that is, your compassion embraces all people. Your law is wisdom, freedom, and joy for the poor. Fulfill your promise of favor, that we may hear and believe the Gospel of Life. Anointed by your Holy Spirit, may we proclaim the sanctity of life. Grant this, we ask, in the name of Jesus the Christ.

**Response:** Amen.

## **SCRIPTURE**

### **First Reading:** (*Ps 145*) A reading from the book of Psalms.

I will extol you, my God and king;  
I will bless your name forever.  
Every day I will bless you;  
I will praise your name forever.  
Great is the LORD and worthy of high praise;  
God's grandeur is beyond understanding.  
One generation praises your deeds to the next  
and proclaims your mighty works.  
They speak of the splendor of your majestic glory,  
tell of your wonderful deeds.  
They speak of your fearsome power  
and attest to your great deeds.  
They publish the renown of your abounding goodness  
and joyfully sing of your justice.  
The LORD is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in love.  
The LORD is good to all,  
compassionate to every creature.  
All your works give you thanks, O LORD  
and your faithful bless you.  
They speak of the glory of your reign  
and tell of your great works,  
Making known to all your power,  
the glorious splendor of your rule.  
Your reign is a reign for all ages,  
your dominion for all generations.  
The LORD is trustworthy in every word,  
and faithful in every work.  
The LORD supports all who are falling  
and raises up all who are bowed down.  
The eyes of all look hopefully to you;  
you give them their food in due season.

You open wide your hand  
and satisfy the desire of every living thing.  
You, LORD, are just in all your ways,  
    faithful in all your works.  
You, LORD, are near to all who call upon you,  
    to all who call upon you in truth.  
You satisfy the desire of those who fear you;  
    you hear their cry and save them.  
You, LORD, watch over all who love you,  
    but all the wicked you destroy.  
My mouth will speak your praises, LORD;  
    all flesh will bless your holy name forever.

The word of the Lord.

**Response:**     Thanks be to God.

**Pause** for silent reflection.

**Second Reading:** (*Jn 8:2–11*) A reading from the Gospel of John.

But early in the morning he arrived again in the temple area, and all the people started coming to him, and he sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he bent down and wrote on the ground.

And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, [and] from now on do not sin any more."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Response:**     Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**Pause** for silent reflection.

## ACT OF OFFERING

**Leader:** I invite you all, if you so choose, to come forward in memory of your unborn children. Inscribe your child's name in this Memorial Book. If you have brought letters or gifts to your child, place them on this table. After you have done so, please remain standing around the table to receive a blessing.

## BLESSING

**Leader:** [Lays hands on each participant's head and blesses her individually.]

**Response:**     Amen.

## INTERCESSIONS

**Leader:** Heavenly Father, we thank you for your mercy. We praise your kindness to us. Your faithful love assures us of our integrity and purpose.

Let us respond together: *Your will be done in our lives.*

**Response:**     Your will be done in our lives.

**Leader:**

Father in heaven, we greet you with joy, your children, the work of your hand. We praise your greatness, we celebrate your goodness, we welcome the good news of your love. For all this we pray. (*Response*)

We pray for the coming of your kingdom. Set us free from fear and darkness, heal our brokenness, and reveal the lasting peace that is the heart of your creation. For all this we pray. (*Response*)

Give us the wisdom to seek your will, especially when we are hurting and confused, misled and misdirected, or trapped by our emotions. For this we pray. (*Response*)

We thank you for your daily gifts, which we so often take for granted: the food that nourishes our bodies, the experiences that nourish our minds, the love that nourishes our spirits, the faith that sustains us, the friends who comfort us, and the beauty of the world that brightens our day. For all this we pray. (*Response*)

Help us to forgive each other as you forgive us. We acknowledge our sins and we rejoice in the power of repentance. You wash away anger; you cleanse our hearts; you refresh our spirits; you awaken us from grief and silence into song. For all this we pray. (*Response*)

Give us courage and strength, Lord. Make us bold so we may reach out to others who need healing. Help us to build bridges rather than walls among your children throughout this world. For all this we pray. (*Response*)

**Leader:** In thankfulness, we place our trust in you, Heavenly Father.

**Response:** Amen.

**CLOSING PRAYER**

**Leader:** In the certainty that God's love never fails, let us go in peace.

**Response:** Amen.

**CLOSING HYMN**      **You Are Mine (David Haas)**

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# Blessing of Pilgrims



On The  
March for Life

Adapted from Diocese of Covington Pro-Life Commission

## **Notes** on Using the Prayer Service

The services in this collection were designed for a variety of settings, and we encourage you to adapt them to your particular needs. The role of the leader can be shared by one or more persons. Some advance preparation such as handouts or candles may be desired. Suggested hymns are widely available.

### **GATHERING HYMN** *Here I Am Lord* (Dan Schutte, S.J.)

### **GATHERING PRAYER**

**Leader:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Response:** Amen.

**Leader:** Gracious God and Giver of Life, you bring us together in faith, united in Christ, so that we may be your people. Increase our faith in Jesus the Lord. Inspire us to revere and protect every gift of human life. Give us hope and courage. Create a new heart in each of us, so that your name may be glorified. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**Response:** Amen.

### **SCRIPTURE**

#### **First Reading:** (*2 Tim 1:6-14*) A reading from second letter of St. Paul to Timothy.

For this reason, I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control. So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, nor of me, a prisoner for his sake; but bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God.

He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began, but now made manifest through the appearance of our savior Christ Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed preacher and apostle and teacher. On this account I am suffering these things; but I am not ashamed, for I know him in whom I have believed and am confident that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day. Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard this rich trust with the help of the holy Spirit that dwells within us.

The word of the Lord.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

**Pause** for silent reflection.

#### **SUNG PSALM** *Remember Your Love*, verses 1, 3, 5 (Daryl Ducote, Gary Daigle)

**Refrain:** Remember your love and your faithfulness, O Lord.

Remember your people and have mercy on us, Lord.

#### **Second Reading:** (*Matt 5:13–16*) A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

"You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lamp stand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Response:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**Leader:** Reflection on Scripture and this occasion.

## **INTERCESSIONS**

**Leader:** In faith and hope, let us place our petitions before the Lord.

The response is: Lord, hear our prayer.

**Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:**

That our Holy Father (name), our Bishop (name), and all church leaders may speak words of life and light to people struggling in a culture of death, we pray to the Lord. (Response)

That President (name) and all elected officials at every level may have the courage and wisdom to recognize in law the dignity of human life from conception to natural death, we pray to the Lord. (Response)

That all judges throughout our nation may uphold the inalienable right to life, we pray to the Lord. (Response)

That children who are unwanted, neglected, or abused may they feel God's protective love, we pray to the Lord. (Response)

That parents tempted to consider abortion may find help to choose life, we pray to the Lord. (Response)

That those who provide or cooperate in abortions may hear the truth and turn from darkness and death, we pray to the Lord. (Response)

That all who journey to Washington in defense of life may have our Blessed Mother Mary at their side, to be their constant companion and guide, we pray to the Lord. (Response)

## **CLOSING PRAYER *Prayer for Life***

**Leader:** Please repeat after me the "Prayer for Life."

**Response:** O God, our Creator, / all life is in your hands / from conception until death. / Help us to cherish our children / and to reverence the awesome privilege / of our share in creation. / May all people live and die / in dignity and love. / Bless all those who defend /the rights of the unborn and vulnerable. / Enlighten and be merciful / toward those who fail to love, / and give them peace. / Let freedom be tempered / by responsibility, / integrity / and morality. / Amen.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS [Departure information]**

## **BLESSING**

**Leader:** All-powerful God, you always show mercy to those who love you. You are never far away from those who seek you. We love you and we seek you. Remain with your servants on this journey and guide their way in your love. Shelter them with your protection by day; give them the light of your grace by night; and, as their companion on the journey, bring them to their destination in safety. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**Response:** Amen.

## **CLOSING HYMN *Anthem (Tom Conry)***

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# Memorial

For  
Deceased  
Homeless  
Persons



Adapted from Welcome House of Northern Kentucky

## **Notes on Using the Prayer Service**

The services in this collection were designed for a variety of settings, and we encourage you to adapt them to your particular needs. The role of the leader can be shared by one or more persons. Some advance preparation such as handouts or candles may be desired. Suggested hymns are widely available.

## **GATHERING HYMN *The Strife Is O'er* (tr. Francis Pott)**

**Refrain:** Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

The strife is o'er, the battle done. Now is the Victor's triumph won.

O let the song of praise be sung, alleluia! (*Refrain*)

Death's might pow'rs have done their worst But Jesus has his foes dispersed.

Let shouts of praise and joy outburst, alleluia! (*Refrain*)

He closed the yawning gates of hell. The bars from heav'n's high portals fell.

Let hymns of praise his triumph tell, alleluia! (*Refrain*)

On the third morn he rose again, Glorious in majesty to reign.

O let us swell the joyful strain, alleluia! (*Refrain*)

## **GATHERING PRAYER**

**Leader:** My brothers and sisters, we have come together to remember our friends who have gone before us. We believe that the bonds of friendship and affection that united us in life do not dissolve with death. Let us heed the word of the Lord, who challenges us to love one another, to offer friendship and consolation to those we meet. He points to the needs of the poor and homeless, saying "you do this to Me."

**Response:** Amen.

## **SCRIPTURE AND REFLECTIONS**

**First Reading:** (*I Cor 13:1–8a*) A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails.

The word of the Lord.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

**Leader:** Spirit of Love, who moves among us, strengthen us, we pray.

**Response:** Come to our aid, Spirit of Love.

**Leader:** Spirit of Compassion, who transforms the face of the earth, turn our hearts to the needs of the poor, we pray.

**Response:** Come to our aid, Spirit of Compassion.

**Leader:** Spirit of the Living One, who rouses us from our sleep, impel us to act justly with sensitivity and with courage, we pray.

**Response:** Come to our aid, Spirit of the Living One.

**Second Reading:** (*Gal 6:2, 9*) A reading from the letter of Paul to the Galatians.

Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ.... Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up.

The word of the Lord.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

**Leader:** O God, who bears all the burdens of the world, we call on you for strength.

**Response:** Lord, help us carry each other's troubles.

**Leader:** O God, we give thanks for those who help us bear our burdens.

**Response:** Lord, help us carry each other's troubles.

**Leader:** O God, helps us reach out to carry the burdens of others.

**Response:** Lord, help us carry each other's troubles.

**HYMN** *Be Not Afraid* (Bob Dufford, S.J.)

### READING OF THE NAMES

**Leader:** These are the names of homeless people who have died in the last year [or longer]. We pray that they may rest in peace. After each ten names I will say: "Let us pray." Please respond: *God of mercy, hear our prayer.*

**Response:** God of mercy, hear our prayer.

**Third Reading:** (*1 Pet 2:4–5*) A reading from the first letter of Peter.

Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

The word of the Lord.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

**Leader:** Loving God, we long for a welcoming community.

**Response:** Lord, build us into a spiritual house.

**Leader:** Great architect of creation, make us living stones through Christ.

**Response:** Lord, build us into a spiritual house.

**Leader:** Loving God, make your dwelling place secure in us.

**Response:** Lord, build us into a spiritual house.

### SHARED REMEMBRANCE

**Leader:** At this time we have an open microphone for anyone here who wishes to share a story of the lives of the individuals being remembered.

## **CLOSING PRAYER** The Lord's Prayer

**Leader:** Secure in the certainty that we all are children of God, let us call on our Father as Jesus taught us.

**Response:** Our Father, who art in heaven.... Amen.

**Leader:** United in the promise of salvation, let us go in peace.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

## **CLOSING HYMN** *Amazing Grace* (John Newton)

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.  
'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!  
The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.  
Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come;  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.  
When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun.  
We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun.

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# On The Anniversary



# Of A Death

From the Catholic Conference of Kentucky Pro-Life Committee

## **Notes on Using the Prayer Service**

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## **GATHERING HYMN *Come to Me (Weston Priory)***

### **GATHERING PRAYER**

**Leader:** In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**Response:** Amen.

**Leader:** God of Life, we gather today to honor the memory of (name). We pray for your comfort and compassion. We believe in your promise to be with us always. May we trust in you without reservation, knowing that your love sustains us through all trials.

Heal our weakness and strengthen our faith. Give us the courage to extend your compassion to a grieving world. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our brother, savior, and friend, now and forever.

**Response:** Amen.

### **ACT OF COMMEMORATION**

**Leader:** We all knew (name) in different ways. I invite each of you to take a moment to describe your connection to (him, her). Tell us your name, your relationship, and share a memory.

[For a deceased or stillborn infant, suggest recollections of the anticipated birth.]

**Pause** after each contribution for silent reflection.

**Leader:** Those who have gone before us influence us still. We recall their example. We ask them to intercede for us. Let us reflect on how (name) has been a blessing to us, even in death. I invite you, if anyone is willing, to tell us of a grace received through (name).

**Pause** after each contribution for silent reflection.

### **SCRIPTURE**

**Reading:** (*John 6:37–40*) A reading from the Gospel of John.

“Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it [on] the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him [on] the last day.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Response:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**Pause** for silent reflection.

### **LITANY**

**Leader:** Many children of God have preceded (name) into eternal life. That their intercession may bring (him, her) peace and ease our sorrow, we pray to the Lord. Please respond: *Pray for us.*

**Leader:** Holy Mary, Mother of God.    **Response:** Pray for us.

Saint Joseph. (*Response*)

Holy Apostles and Martyrs. (*Response*)

(Name)’s patron saint, Saint (patron). (*Response*)

(Name)’s favorite saints: (name one by one). (*Response after each*)

All holy women and men. (*Response*)

## **INTERCESSIONS**

**Leader:** Many people in (name)'s life preceded (him, her) into eternity. For all of them, we pray to the Lord. Please respond: May they rest in peace.

**Leader:** For (his, her) parents, (name) and (name), we pray to the Lord.

**Response:** May they rest in peace.

For (his, her) other departed relatives, (names), we pray to the Lord. (Response)

For (his, her) departed friends, (names), we pray to the Lord. (Response)

For anyone in need of (name)'s forgiveness, we pray to the Lord. (Response)

## **PRAYER The Lord's Prayer**

**Leader:** In our eternal home there will be no more tears, sorrow, or pain. Filled with faith and hope, we call on our Father as Jesus taught us.

**Response:** Our Father, who art in heaven.... Amen.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

**Leader:** God of Hope, we thank you for the graces of this time spent together in prayer. We believe that (name)'s life has been changed, not taken away. In your providence, increase the harvest of blessings through (name)'s intercession. Forgive any wrongs (he, she) did while among us. Forgive too those who wronged (him, her) or caused (him, her) harm. We whose many trespasses have been forgiven ask this kindness in the name of Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord forever and ever.

**Response:** Amen.

**Leader:** Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord and one another.

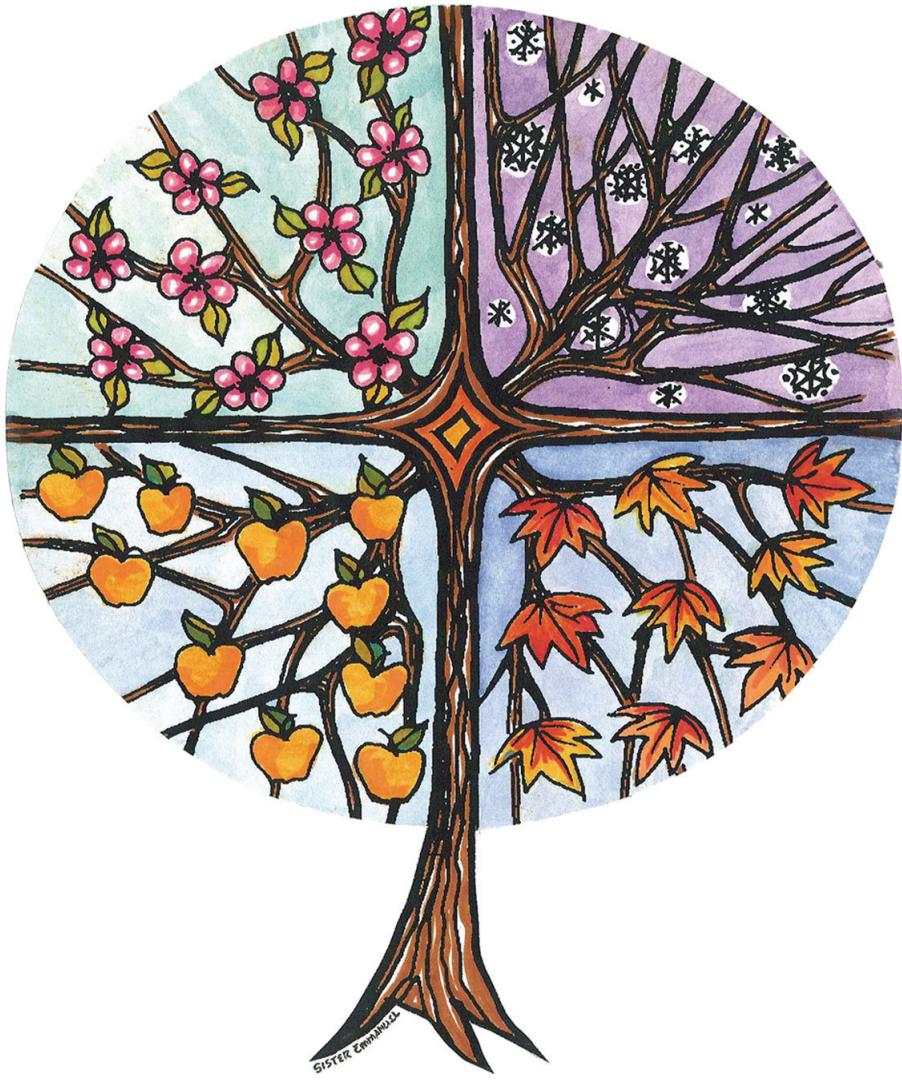
**Response:** Amen.

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# VIGIL



**At the Time  
of an Execution**

Adapted from Diocese of Covington Office of Justice and Peace

## **Notes on Using the Prayer Service**

The services in this collection were designed for a variety of settings, and we encourage you to adapt them to your particular needs. The role of the leader can be shared by one or more persons. Some advance preparation such as handouts or candles may be required. Suggested hymns are widely available.

### **GATHERING HYMN *Be Not Afraid* (Bob Dufford, SJ)**

### **GATHERING PRAYER**

**Leader:** Welcome in the name of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**Response:** Amen.

**Leader:** We have gathered here in prayerful response to the many acts of violence in our society. We offer our prayers in remembrance of (victim/s), in compassion for (his, her, their) family, and on behalf of all those who are victims of violence. We pray for (condemned) and for (his, her) executioners. Holy Spirit of God our Creator, inspire us. May our presence here be a living sign of God's justice, compassion, and mercy. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

**Response:** Amen.

### **SCRIPTURE**

**First Reading:** (*Gen 4:8–16*) A reading from the book of Genesis.

Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out in the field." When they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the LORD asked Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He answered, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" The LORD then said: "What have you done! Listen: Your brother's blood cries out to me from the soil! Therefore you shall be banned from the soil that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. If you till the soil, it shall no longer give you its produce. You shall become a restless wanderer on the earth." Cain said to the LORD: "My punishment is too great to bear. Since you have now banished me from the soil, and I must avoid your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, anyone may kill me at sight." Not so!" the LORD said to him. "If anyone kills Cain, Cain shall be avenged sevenfold." So the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest anyone should kill him at sight. Cain then left the LORD's presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

The word of the Lord.

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

**Pause** for silent reflection.

**Second Reading:** (*Matt 5:38–48*) A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on [your] right cheek, turn the other one to him as well. If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles. Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Response:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**Pause** for silent reflection.

**Third Reading:** (*Matt 6:14–15*) A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Response:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**Pause** for silent reflection.

## INTERCESSIONS

**Leader:** In faith and hope, let us place our petitions before the Lord.

Please respond: *Our Creator is kind and merciful.*

**Response:** Our Creator is kind and merciful.

**Leader:**

That all victims of crime and hatred may know your healing power and be transformed by it, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

That all whose lives are taken by the state, especially (condemned), may trust in your promise of salvation, we pray. (*Response*)

That Governor (name) and (condemned)'s executioners may be comforted by you, who are Mercy and Justice, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

That we may have the courage and prudence to speak and act without violence, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

That our society may be transformed by people of peace, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

That our hearts may be open to your gifts of reconciliation and unconditional love, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

Holy God, Creator of all that is, seen and unseen, hear the intentions that are in our hearts. (*Invite participants to share their petitions.*) We pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

## ACT OF OFFERING

**Leader:** Now let us offer one another a sign of peace.

(*A Prayer to Abolish the Death Penalty* by Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ; used with permission)

**Leader:**

God of Compassion, let your rain fall on the just and the unjust. Expand and deepen our hearts so that we may love as you love, even those among us who have caused the greatest pain by taking life. For there is in our land a great cry for vengeance as we fill up death rows and kill the killers in the name of justice, in the name of peace.

Jesus, our brother, you suffered execution at the hands of the state but you did not let hatred overcome you. Help us to reach out to victims of violence so that our enduring love may help them heal.

Holy Spirit of God, you strengthen us in the struggle for justice. Help us to work tirelessly for the abolition of state sanctioned death and to renew our society in its very heart so that violence will be no more.

**Response:** Amen.

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Leader:** Each of us needs the Lord's guidance and mercy. We humbly place before him all that is in our hearts, and we ask his blessing now and always, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Response:** Amen.

**Leader:** Let us go in peace.

**Response:** Amen.

## CLOSING HYMN     *Amazing Grace* (John Newton)

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.  
'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!  
The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.  
Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come;  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.  
When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun.  
We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun.

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