

Night Prayer from *The New Zealand Prayer Book*

The offering of prayer late in the evening, by laity, religious orders or clergy, often called Compline, has sometimes been described as the 'goodnight prayer of the Church'. It rounds off the day and prepares us for a quiet night. As the psalmist wrote:

***I lie down in peace and take rest my rest
for it is in God alone that I dwell unafraid.***

Night Prayer derives its content from the wisdom of the centuries in Scripture and above all in the psalms, but also from contemporary Christian experience of God. It celebrates the awareness that each of us who tries to pray is a part of the human whole. So we are taken over the threshold from daytime, not in a mood of self-centered spirituality, but as representatives of humanity, acknowledging our creaturehood before God.

Approach

The angels of God guard us through the night,
and quiet the powers of darkness.

The spirit of God be our guide
to lead us to peace and to glory.

It is but lost labor that we haste to rise up early,
and so late take rest and eat the bread of anxiety.
For those beloved of God are given gifts even when they sleep.

Silence

My brothers and sisters, our help is in the name of the eternal God,
who is making the heavens and the earth.

(read in unison)

Dear God, thank you for all that is good, for our creation and our humanity, for the stewardship you have given us of this planet Earth, for the gifts of life and of one another, for your love which is unbounded and eternal. O Thou, most holy and beloved, my Companion, my Guide upon the way, my bright Evening Star. We repent the wrongs we have done.

Silence

We have wounded your love.
O God, heal us.

We stumble in the darkness.
Light of the World, transfigure us.

We forget that we are your home.
Spirit of God, dwell in us.

Eternal Spirit, living God, in whom we live and move and have our being, all that we are, have been, and shall be is known to you, to the very secret of our hearts and all that rises to trouble us. Living flame, burn into us, cleansing wind, blow through us, fountain of water, well up within us, that we may love and praise in deed and in truth.

Invocation

Eternal Spirit, flow through our being and open our lips,
that our mouths may proclaim your praise.

Let us worship the God of Love,
Alleluia, Alleluia.

One of the following psalms may be said:

Psalm 4

Answer me when I call, O God, for you are the God of justice.
You set me free when I was hard-pressed: be gracious to me now and hear my prayers.
Men and women, how long will you turn my glory to my shame?
How long will you love what is worthless and run after lies?
Know that God has shown me such wonderful kindness: when I call out in prayer, God hears me.
Tremble, admit defeat, and sin no more.
Look deep into your heart before you sleep and be still.
Bring your gifts, just as you are, and put your trust in God.
Many are asking, Who can make us content?
The light of your countenance has gone from us, O God.
Yet you have given my heart more gladness than those whose corn and wine and oil increase.
I lie down in peace and sleep comes at once, for in you alone, O God, do I dwell unafraid.

Psalm 16

O God, I give you thanks for the wisdom of your counsel,
even at night you have instructed my heart.
I have set your face always before me, you are at my right hand and I shall not fall.
Therefore my heart is glad and my spirit rejoices, my flesh also shall rest secure.
For you will not give me over to the power of death, nor let your faithful one see the Pit.
In your presence is the fulness of joy, and from your right hand flow delights for evermore.

Psalm 23

Dear God, you sustain me and feed me: like a shepherd you guide me.
You lead me to an oasis of green, to lie down by restful waters.
You refresh my soul for the journey and guide me along trusted roads.
The God of justice is your name.
Though I must enter the darkness of death, I will fear no evil.
For you are with me, your rod and staff comfort me.
You prepare a table before my very eyes, in the presence of those who trouble me.
You anoint my head with oil, and you fill my cup to the brim.
Your loving kindness and mercy will meet me every day of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of my God for ever.

Psalm 31

O God, I have come to you for shelter: let me never be put to shame.
Deliver me in the justice of your ways: incline your ear to me and be swift to save me.
Be for me a rock of refuge, a fortress to defend me: for you are my rock and my stronghold.
Lead me and guide me for your name's sake:
deliver me out of the net that they have laid secretly for me, for you are my strength.
Into your hands I commit my spirit, for you will redeem me, eternal God of truth.

Psalm 65. *A Version for New Zealand*

Praise is your due O God in the holy city; promises made to you shall be fulfilled;
prayer you always listen to.
You accept all who come to you with shame; sin would overwhelm us, but you wash it away.
Blest is anyone you choose to live with you; your house is an inspiration, a hallowed place.
You spread your justice, God our Savior, across the world to the farthest oceans.
You have laid down the mountain ranges and set them fast;
you make the seas calm and the sounds peaceful; you reconcile the peoples who dwell here.
So in this corner of the earth we wonder at your deeds;
at the meeting of east and west we sing your praise.
You water the land and make it flourish, from your own bursting river.
To provide our crops, you plough and irrigate the land, softening it with rain to make it fruitful;
a record harvest is achieved, and the stores are overflowing.
The tussock land becomes pasture and the brown hills turn green;
the paddocks are crowded with sheep and the plains thick with wheat:
the world itself a canticle of praise.

Psalm 121

I will lift up my eyes to the mountains, but where shall I find help?
From you alone, O God, does my help come, creator of the ever-changing hills.
You will not let me stumble on the rough pathways,
you care for me and watch over me without ceasing.
I am sure that the Guardian of my people neither slumbers nor sleeps.
The God of all nations keeps watch, like a shadow spread over me.
So the sun will not strike me by day, nor the moon by night.
You will defend me in the presence of evil, you will guard my life.
You will defend my going out and my coming in, this night and always.

Psalm 134

We your servants bless you, O God,
As we stand by night in your house.
We lift up our hands toward the holy place,
And give you thanks and praise.
Bless us from all places where you dwell,
O God, creator of the heavens and the earth.

Daily Readings *(the appropriate day is chosen)*

Silence may follow the reading.

Sunday: God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. *2 Timothy 1:7*

Monday: You Lord are in the midst of us, and we are called by your name. Leave us not. *Jeremiah 14:9*

Tuesday: Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you. Do good and lend, expecting nothing in return; for God is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful as your father is merciful. Judge not and you will not be judged. Condemn not and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you; for the measure you give will be the measure you receive. *From Luke 6:27-38*

Wednesday: Do not ask anxiously, What are we to eat? What are we to drink? What shall we wear? The whole world runs after such things. Set your heart and mind on God's commonwealth and justice first, and all the rest will come to you as well. So do not be anxious about tomorrow. Today has enough problems of its own; tomorrow can look after itself. *Matthew 6:31-34*

Thursday: There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and those who are afraid are not perfected in love. We love because God first loved us. If anyone says, I love God, and hates his brother or sister, that person is a liar; for those who do not love their brothers and sisters whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. *1 John 4:18-20*

Friday: It is the God who said, Let light shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body. *2 Corinthians 4:6-10*

Saturday: According to the riches of God's glory, may you be strengthened with the might through the Holy Spirit in your inner being, and may Christ dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge; that you may be filled with the fulness of God. *Ephesians 3:16-19*

(Silence)

Prayers

Into your hands, O God, I commend my spirit,
For you have redeemed me, O God of truth and love.

Keep me, O God, as the apple of an eye;
Hide me under the shadow of your wings.

Song of Simeon (*Nunc Dimittis*) *read in unison*

**Praise be to God, I have lived to see this day.
God's promise is fulfilled, and my duty is done.
At last you have given me peace, for I have seen with my own eyes
The salvation you have prepared for all nations-
A light to the world in its darkness, and the glory of your people Israel.
Glory be to God, sustaining, redeeming, sanctifying,
As in the beginning, so now, and forever. Amen.**

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

The Lord's Prayer

**Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, Source of all is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven; The hallowing of your name
echo through the universe! The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the
world! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your commonwealth of peace
and freedom sustain our home and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed
us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test,
strengthen us. From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil,
free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, Now and forever. Amen.**

I will lie down in peace and take my rest,
for it is in God alone that I dwell unafraid.

Let us bless the Earth-maker, the Pain-bearer, the Life-giver,
let us praise and exalt God above all forever.

May God's name be praised beyond the furthest star,
glorified and exalted above all forever.

A General Thanksgiving (*read in unison*)

**Eternal God, compassionate and merciful, we your unworthy servants give you humble
thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and to all people.
We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life;
but above all for your boundless love in the redemption of the world by our Savior Jesus
Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.
And, we pray, give us that due sense of all your mercies, that our hearts may be truly
thankful, and that we praise you, not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving
ourselves to your service and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all**

our days; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.

O living God, in Jesus Christ you were laid in the tomb at this evening hour, and so sanctified the grave to be a bed of hope to your people. Give us courage and faith to die daily to our sin and pride, that even as this flesh and blood decays, our lives still may grow in you, that at our last day our dying may be done so well that we live in you forever. **Amen.**

**Be present, Spirit of God, within us, your dwelling place and home,
that this house may be one where all darkness is penetrated by your light,
all troubles calmed by your peace, all evil redeemed by your love,
all pain transformed in your suffering, and all dying glorified in your risen life. Amen.**

God our Creator, our center, our friend, we thank you for our good life, for those who are dear to us, for our dead, and for all who have helped and influenced us. We thank you for the measure of freedom we have, and the extent to which we control our lives; and most of all we thank you for the faith that is in us, for our awareness of you and our hope in you. Keep us, we pray you, thankful and hopeful and useful until our lives shall end. **Amen.**

Closing

Lord, it is night.

The night is for stillness.

Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day.

What has been done has been done; what has not been done has not been done; let it be.

The night is dark. Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives rest in you.

The night is quiet. Let the quiet of your peace enfold us, all dear to us, and all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn. Let us look expectantly to a new day, new joys, new possibilities.

In your name we pray.

Amen.