

# THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS

Sunday 22 March | 7.00pm



# Preparing to Worship

*'Surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age'*

**T**hese are Jesus' words to the disciples as he commissions them to go out into the world and make disciples of all nations. As the collective worship in our Churches ceases for the time being and as we exercise social distancing, it is good to be reminded that Jesus is with us always and that we are united through him in time and eternity with the Church Universal.

Light is a powerful image in Christianity.

It is the symbol of Christ's risen presence with us, scattering the darkness of our world; it is also a sign of the light that we ourselves have within us, by virtue of the fact that we are made in God's image.

As we pray, let us remember that Christ is with us and when we have said 'Amen' let us call someone who is isolated or vulnerable; buy some provisions for a neighbour who is self-isolating; donate some food to our local foodbank; in short, bear Christ's light to the world.

## Preparing to Worship

- ¶ At 7.00pm, you are invited to place a lighted candle in a prominent window so that it may be seen by others.
- ¶ Settle yourself in a comfortable place, perhaps with an open Bible, a cross or an icon.
- ¶ There are a number of places in this liturgy where hymns or music may be used: you may wish to listen to a recording of *Hail gladdening light* or sing a hymn or chant in its place; you may also like to listen to a recording of the *Nunc dimittis*.
- ¶ Consider reading the psalm and *Nunc dimittis* in a meditative way by observing a breath's pause at the '●'

# The Gathering

*At 7.00pm, a candle is lit and placed in the window.*

Jesus Christ is the light of the world:  
**a light no darkness can quench.**

Even the darkness is not dark for you:  
**and the night shines like the day.**

Let your light scatter the darkness:  
**and fill your church with your glory.**

*cf John 1.5; 8.12; Psalm 139.12; Luke 24.29*

The Lord is here.  
**His Spirit is with us.**

**J**esus said, 'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.'

*Matthew 5:14-16*

Let us pray.

**A**lmighty God, we give you thanks for surrounding us, as daylight fades, with the brightness of the vesper light; and we implore you of your great mercy that, as you enfold us with the radiance of this light, so you would shine into our hearts the brightness of your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**H**ail, gladdening Light, of his pure glory poured  
who is the immortal Father, heavenly, blest,  
holiest of holies, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Now we are come to the sun's hour of rest,  
the lights of evening round us shine,  
we hymn the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit divine.  
Worthiest art thou at all times to be sung  
with undefilèd tongue,  
Son of our God, giver of life, alone:  
therefore in all the world thy glories, Lord, they own.

*Greek, tr: John Keble*

# *The Word of God*

## **Psalm 27. 1; 4-5; 7-9; 13-14**

*The Lord is my light and my salvation.*

**T**he Lord is my light and my salvation;  
whom shall I fear? ●

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid?

One thing I asked of the Lord,  
that will I seek after: ●  
to live in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life, ●  
to behold the beauty of the Lord,  
and to inquire in his temple.

For he will hide me in his shelter  
in the day of trouble; ●  
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;  
he will set me high on a rock.

*The Lord is my light and my salvation.*

Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud,  
be gracious to me and answer me! ●  
'Come,' my heart says, 'seek his face!'  
Your face, Lord, do I seek.  
Do not hide your face from me.

Do not turn your servant away in anger,  
you who have been my help. ●  
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,  
O God of my salvation!

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living. ●  
Wait for the Lord;  
be strong, and let your heart take courage;  
wait for the Lord!

*The Lord is my light and my salvation.*

Glory be to the Father,  
and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, ●  
as it was in the beginning, is now,  
and shall be for ever. Amen.

## John 1.1-5

**I**n the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## Canticle

**N**ow, Lord, you let your servant go in peace: ●  
your word has been fulfilled.

My own eyes have seen the salvation ●  
which you have prepared in the sight of every people;

A light to reveal you to the nations ●  
and the glory of your people Israel.

*Luke 2.29–32*

Glory to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit; ●  
as it was in the beginning is now  
and shall be for ever. Amen.

## Meditation

*From a sermon of Gueric of Igny*

**H**ow can we not fail to remember that venerable old man Simeon who held the child Jesus in his arms and declared him to be 'the light to enlighten the nations'? Indeed, Simeon was himself a bright and shining lamp bearing witness to the Light. Under the guidance of the Spirit which filled him, he came into the temple precisely in order that, 'receiving your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of your temple', he might proclaim Jesus to be that loving kindness and the light of your people. Behold then, the candle alight in Simeon's hands. You must light your own candles by enkindling them at his.

So come to him and be enlightened that you do not so much bear lamps as become them, shining within yourselves and radiating light to your neighbours. May there be a lamp in your heart, in your hand and in your mouth: let the lamp in your heart shine for yourself, the lamp in your hand and mouth shine for your neighbours. The lamp in your heart is a reverence for God inspired by faith; the lamp in your hand is the example of a good life; and the lamp in your mouth are the words of consolation you speak.

We have to shine not only before others by our good works and by what we say, but also before the angels in our prayer, and before God by the intentions of our hearts.

My friends, in order to light all these lamps for yourselves, I beg you to approach the source of light and become enlightened — I mean Jesus himself who shines in Simeon's hands to enlighten your faith, who shines on your works, who inspires your speech, who makes your prayer fervent and purifies the intentions of your heart.

Then, when the lamp of this mortal life is extinguished, there will appear for you who had so many lamps shining within you the light of unquenchable life, and it will shine for you at the evening of your life like the brightness of the noonday sun.

And though you may think your light is quenched in death, you will rise like the daystar and your darkness be made bright as noon. As Scripture says, 'No longer will you need the light of sun to shine upon you by day, or the light of the moon by night; but the Lord will be an everlasting light for you.' For the light of the new Jerusalem is the Lamb.

To him be glory and praise for ever.

# The Prayers of Intercession

## SET A

**L**et us pray to God,  
who alone makes us dwell in safety:

For all who are affected by coronavirus,  
through illness or isolation or anxiety,  
that they may find relief and recovery:

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For those who are guiding our nation,  
and shaping national policies,  
that they may make wise decisions:

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For doctors, nurses and researchers,  
that through their skill and insights  
many will be restored to health:

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For the vulnerable and the fearful,  
for the gravely ill and the dying,  
that they may know your comfort  
and your peace:

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We commend ourselves,  
and all for whom we pray,  
to the mercy and protection of God.

Merciful Father,

**accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.**

**Amen.**

## SET B

**L**et us pray to the Lord,  
who is our refuge and stronghold.

For the health and well-being of our nation,  
that all who are fearful and anxious  
may be at peace and free from worry:

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For the isolated and housebound,  
that we may be alert to their needs,  
and care for them in their vulnerability:

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For our homes and families,  
our schools and young people,  
and all in any kind of need or distress:

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For a blessing on our local community,  
that our neighbourhoods  
may be places of trust and friendship,  
where all are known and cared for:

Lord, hear us,

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We commend ourselves,  
and all for whom we pray,  
to the mercy and protection of God.

Merciful Father,

**accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.**

**Amen.**

## *The Conclusion*

**L**ighten our darkness. Lord, we pray;  
and in your mercy, defend us from all perils and dangers of this night;  
for the love of your only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**

**T**he Lord bless us and keep us,  
the Lord make his face to shine upon us,  
the Lord lift up the light of his countenance to us  
and give us peace.

**Amen.**

**W**e will dwell in God's light,  
rejoice in God's love  
and reflect God's glory.

**Amen.**

*You are invited to leave the candle burning for as long as it is safe to do so.*