

December 20, 2023

Longest Night

PRELUDE: *Softly and Tenderly, Jesus is Calling*

OPENING SONG: *Light Dawns on a Weary World (ELW 726)*

MEDITATION: *Illumination by Deninger*

CANDLE LIGHTING

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Before us sits a candle. In this dark world we need every light of hope to be aflame. We strike a match to ignite our flames as signs of the hope we have in the life and example of Jesus the Christ. May our hearts burn with the desire to heal this world.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Merciful God, you give us the grace that helps in time of need. Surround us with your steadfast love and lighten our burdens. By the power of you Spirit, free us from distress and give us a new mind and heart made whole in the name of the risen Christ. Amen.

SONG OF PRAISE: *'Twas the Moon in Wintertime*

READING FOR THE DAY: Luke 1:46-55

⁴⁶And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

HOMILY

SONG OF THE DAY: *Lo, How a Rose Is Growing* (LBW 58)

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and especially for all who are suffering or are in any affliction.

Merciful God, you sent your Son to be our peace. Help all those who suffer any pain or grief, hopelessness or anxiety. In your great mercy,
hear us, O God.

Mighty God, mercifully grant strength to the weak and comfort to those who suffer, that their sickness and pain may be turned into health. In your great mercy,
hear us, O God.

God of peace and reconciliation, bring an end to the sickness of the world, especially violence, terrorism, war, and their causes. In your great mercy,
hear us, O God.

Holy God, Holy One, your Son prayed that your people may be one. May the gift of baptism be a power for healing the church's brokenness, and bless all efforts for renewal and Christian unity. In your great mercy,
hear us, O God.

Loving God, mend broken relationships and bring peace to our families, our congregation, this community, and the world. In your great mercy,
hear us, O God.

One minute silence for reflection and our own prayers.

Eternal God, we thank you for all the faithful departed. Heal the pain of all who grieve. In your great mercy,
hear us, O God.

O God, we bring these intercessions before you, knowing that you will hear us as you have promised, and will answer according to the mercy shown in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray.

Almighty God, your love never fails, and you can turn the shadow of death into daybreak. Help us to receive your word with believing hearts, so that, confident in your promises, we may have hope and be lifted out of sorrow into joy and peace of your presence; through Jesus Christ the light of the world.

Amen.

MEDITATION SONG: *We Are Bethlehem by Levandoski*

BLESSING

Almighty God, who is a strong tower to all, to whom all things in heaven and on earth bow and obey, be now and evermore your sure defense, and help you to know that the name given to us for health and salvation is the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE