

## **A Monastic Mass in the Spiritual Tradition of Thomas à Kempis**

*Before our mass begins you are encouraged to reflect upon the following words and invite God to visit your inward spirit*

God's visits with the inward spirit are frequent, His communion sweet and full of consolation, His peace great, and His intimacy wonderful indeed.  
- Thomas à Kempis -

Thomas à Kempis was a medieval mystic whose most famous writing was the **Imitation of Christ** which is considered one of the greatest manuals of Christian devotion and often summarized as an intimate instruction on how to love God. The quote above is from the **Imitation of Christ**.

### **The Lighting of Candles**

**Acolyte:** lights sanctuary candles

**Celebrant:** (after the candles are lit)

Almighty 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.

**Celebrant:**

The **Phos Hilaron** is the earliest known Christian hymn recorded outside of the scriptures that is still being used today and is generally sung or recited during the lighting of candles. Let us pray these words together

O Radiant Light,  
O Holy Glory of God  
the immortal blessed Father in heaven,

O Christ Jesus!  
Now as the sunset comes upon us  
and we see the evening lights,  
we praise God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit!  
It is right at all times to sing your praise  
with all the universe,  
O Son of God:  
You are the life of the world.

## **The Lighting of the Incense**

**Acolyte:** lights incense

### **Psalm 141**

**Cantor:** Like incense, may our prayers rise before you O God,  
the lifting of our hands like an evening oblation. (Ps  
141.2)

**All:** Like incense, may our prayers rise before you O God,  
the lifting of our hands like an evening oblation.

**Cantor:** O LORD, I call to you; come quickly to me.  
Hear my voice when I call to you. (v.1)  
Like incense, may my prayer rise before you O God,  
the lifting of my hands like an evening oblation. (v. 2)  
But my eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign LORD;  
in you I take refuge. (v.8)

**All:** Like incense, may our prayers rise before you O God,  
the lifting of our hands like an evening oblation.

## **A brief period of reflective silence follows**

### **Narrator: A Brief Word About Silence**

During our service, you will continue to be silently asked to be silent between prayers, chants, readings of scripture and other

spiritual practices in order to reflect on what was just voiced. Some spiritual teachers have noted that “you can hear the footsteps of God when silence reigns.” So, let silence reign during our silent periods of time together and may you hear the footsteps of God.

### **A period of reflective silence follows**

**Cantor:** Sings once then everyone joins in the meditative petition

My spirit is longing for you, my God;  
My spirit is waiting in hope.  
My spirit is longing for you, my God;  
My spirit is waiting in hope.

### **Narrator: A Seasonal Meditation**

We are now experiencing an increasing period of darkness which began this month and lasts through December. Our days are growing shorter and our nights longer. All around us plants and animals are going inward. Trees will store their energy reserves deep in their roots and plants will produce seeds that will remain dormant till later. As we experience this increasing period of darkness, may the remaining weeks of this season be a time of deep inner reflection in order to later spring forth new life.

### **Vespers**

Let us pray the ancient divine prayer office of Vespers which is a time when the heavens fade from light to darkness and when we transition from day to night. We will use the ancient monastic practice of the antiphon when we chant our Vesper prayers in order to emphasis the fundamental reflection of our prayers by repeating it for emphasis.

**Celebrant:** Let Us Stand

## (Job 12)

### **Antiphon:**

**Cantor:** He reveals the deep things of / dark- \ ness  
and brings deep shadows \ in / to \ the \ light. (v. 22)

### **All:**

"Ask the animals, and they will / teach \ you,  
or the birds of the air, and \ they / will \ tell \ you;  
or speak to the earth, and it will / teach \ you,  
or let the fish of the \ sea / in- \ form \ you.  
Which of all these does / not \ know  
that the hand of the \ LORD / has \ done \ this?  
In his hand is the life of every / crea- \ ture  
and the breath of \ all / hu- \ ma- \ nity.  
(vv. 7 - 10)

**Cantor:** He reveals the deep things of / dark- \ ness  
and brings deep shadows \ in / to \ the \ light. (v. 22)

### **All:**

Does not the ear / test \ words  
as \ the / tongue \ tastes \ food?  
Is not wisdom found among the / a- \ ged?  
Does not long life \ bring / un- \ der- \ standing?  
"To God belong wisdom and / pow- \ er;  
counsel and under- \ stan- / ding \ are \ his.  
He reveals the deep things of / dark- \ ness  
and brings deep shadows \ in- / to \ the \ light.  
(vv. 11 - 13; 22)

**Cantor:** He reveals the deep things of / dark- \ ness  
and brings deep shadows \ in / to \ the \ light. (v. 22)

**Everyone sits and a period of reflective silence follows**

## Psalm 139

**Cantor:** Surely the darkness shall / co- \ ver me,  
and the light around me \ be- \ come / night (v.11)

**All:** Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and the light around me become night,  
even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is as bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light to you. (v.11-12)

**Cantor:** Surely the darkness shall / co- \ ver me,  
and the light around me \ be- \ come / night (v.11)

**All:** For it was you who formed my inward parts;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.  
My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth  
your eyes saw my unformed body. (v.13-15)

**Cantor:** Surely the darkness shall / co- \ ver me,  
and the light around me \ be- \ come / night (v.11)

**All:** All the days ordained for me  
were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.  
How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!  
Were I to count them,  
they would outnumber the grains of sand (v.16-18).

**Cantor:** Surely the darkness shall / co- \ ver me,  
and the light around me \ be- \ come / night (v.11)

**A period of reflective silence follows**

## Centering Prayer

### **Narrator:** The Practice of Centering Prayer

Centering prayer is a popular method of silent contemplative prayer that places a strong emphasis on interior silence. Modern authors of books about centering prayer note that its roots are in the contemplative prayers of the Desert Fathers and Mothers. Guidelines for centering prayer have evolved and focus on four primary activities that you are now encouraged to practice. While centering prayer is encouraged to be a spiritual practice of more than just a few minutes at a time, let us take a few minutes to practice this ancient spiritual tradition.

1. Sit comfortably with your eyes closed, relax, and quiet yourself;
2. Choose and focus on a sacred word that best supports your desire to be in God's presence – your sacred word could be Creator, Father, Mother, Jesus, Christ, Savior, Abba, Spirit, Yahweh, Jehovah, Adonai, Shepherd, Lover, Wisdom, . . . ;
3. Let your sacred word be gently present as your symbol of your desire to be in God's presence and open to God's presence within you;
4. Whenever you become aware of anything (thoughts, noise, feelings, perceptions, images, etc.) do not engage them and simply return to your sacred word.

### **A period of reflective silence follows**

## The Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis

### **Narrator:**

Thomas à Kempis was a medieval mystic whose most famous writing was the **Imitation of Christ** which is considered one of the greatest manuals of Christian devotion and often summarized as an intimate instruction on how to love God. Let us read from Book Three "Internal Consolation" of this devout writing which begins with "The Inward Conversation of Christ with the Faithful Soul." You are invited to read.

## **Reader 1:**

(THE INWARD CONVERSATION OF CHRIST WITH THE FAITHFUL SOUL)

I WILL hear what the Lord God will speak in me."

Blessed is the soul who hears the Lord speaking within her, who receives the word of consolation from His lips. Blessed are the ears that catch the accents of divine whispering, and pay no heed to the murmurings of this world. Blessed indeed are the ears that listen, not to the voice which sounds without, but to the truth which teaches within. Blessed are the eyes which are closed to exterior things and are fixed upon those which are interior. Blessed are they who penetrate inwardly, who try daily to prepare themselves more and more to understand mysteries. Blessed are they who long to give their time to God, and who cut themselves off from the hindrances of the world.

Consider these things, my soul, and close the door of your senses, so that you can hear what the Lord your God speaks within you. "I am your salvation," says your Beloved. "I am your peace and your life. Remain with Me and you will find peace. Dismiss all passing things and seek the eternal. What are all temporal things but snares? And what help will all creatures be able to give you if you are deserted by the Creator?" Leave all these things, therefore, and make yourself pleasing and faithful to your Creator so that you may attain to true happiness.

## **Reader 2:**

(TRUTH SPEAKS INWARDLY WITHOUT THE SOUND OF WORDS)

### **THE DISCIPLE**

SPEAK, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." "I am Thy servant. Give me understanding that I may know Thine ordinances . . . Incline my heart to Thine ordinances . . . Let Thy speech distil as the dew."

The children of Israel once said to Moses: "Speak thou to us and we will hear thee: let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die."

Not so, Lord, not so do I pray. Rather with Samuel the prophet I entreat humbly and earnestly: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Do not let Moses or any of the prophets speak to me; but You speak, O Lord God, Who inspired and enlightened all the prophets; for You alone, without them, can instruct me perfectly, whereas they, without You, can do nothing. They, indeed, utter fine words, but they cannot impart the spirit. They do indeed speak beautifully, but if You remain silent they cannot inflame the heart. They deliver the message; You lay bare the sense. They place before us mysteries, but You unlock their meaning. They proclaim commandments; You help us to keep them. They point out the way; You give strength for the journey. They work only outwardly; You instruct and enlighten our hearts. They water on the outside; You give the increase.

They cry out words; You give understanding to the hearer.

Let not Moses speak to me, therefore, but You, the Lord my God, everlasting truth, speak lest I die and prove barren if I am merely given outward advice and am not inflamed within; lest the word heard and not kept, known and not loved, believed and not obeyed, rise up in judgment against me.

Speak, therefore, Lord, for Your servant listens. "Thou hast the words of eternal life." Speak to me for the comfort of my soul and for the amendment of my life, for Your praise, Your glory, and Your everlasting honor.

### **Reader 3:**

(LISTEN HUMBLY TO THE WORDS OF GOD. MANY DO NOT HEED THEM)

## **THE VOICE OF CHRIST**

MY CHILD, hear My words, words of greatest sweetness surpassing all the knowledge of the philosophers and wise people

of earth. My words are spirit and life, and they are not to be weighed by one's understanding. They are not to be invoked in vanity but are to be heard in silence, and accepted with all humility and with great affection.

### **THE DISCIPLE**

"Happy is the one whom Thou admonishest, O Lord, and teachest out of Thy law, to give one peace from the days of evil," [\[31\]](#) and that one be not desolate on earth.

### **THE VOICE OF CHRIST**

I taught the prophets from the beginning, and even to this day I continue to speak to all people. But many are hardened. Many are deaf to My voice. Most people listen more willingly to the world than to God. They are more ready to follow the appetite of their flesh than the good pleasure of God. The world, which promises small and passing things, is served with great eagerness: I promise great and eternal things and the hearts of people grow dull. Who is there that serves and obeys Me in all things with as great care as that with which the world and its masters are served?

Write My words in your heart and meditate on them earnestly.

### **THE DISCIPLE**

O Lord my God, You are all my good. And who am I that I should dare to speak to You? Remember Your tender mercies and fill my heart with Your grace, You Who will not allow Your works to be in vain. Teach me, Lord, to do Your will. Teach me to live worthily and humbly in Your sight, for You are my wisdom Who know me truly, and Who knew me even before the world was made and before I was born into it.

## **Reader 4:**

(WE MUST WALK BEFORE GOD IN HUMILITY AND TRUTH)

### **THE VOICE OF CHRIST**

MY CHILD, walk before Me in truth, and seek Me always in the simplicity of your heart. He who walks before Me in truth shall be defended from the attacks of evil, and the truth shall free him from seducers and from the slanders of wicked people. For if the truth has made you free, then you shall be free indeed, and you shall not care for the vain words of others.

### **THE DISCIPLE**

O Lord, it is true. I ask that it be with me as You say. Let your truth teach me. Let it guard me, and keep me safe to the end. Let it free me from all evil affection and badly ordered love, and I shall walk with You in great freedom of heart.

## **Reader 5:**

(THE WONDERFUL EFFECT OF DIVINE LOVE)

### **THE DISCIPLE**

I BLESS You, O heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, for having condescended to remember me, a poor creature. Thanks to You, O Father of mercies, God of all consolation, Who with Your comfort sometimes refresh me, who am not worthy of it. I bless You always and glorify You with Your only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, forever and ever.

Ah, Lord God, my holy Lover, when You come into my heart, all that is within me will rejoice. You are my glory and the exultation of my heart. You are my hope and refuge in the day of my tribulation. But because my love is as yet weak and my virtue imperfect, I must be strengthened and comforted by You. Visit me often, therefore, and teach me Your holy discipline. Free me from evil passions and cleanse my heart of all disorderly affection

so that, healed and purified within, I may be fit to love, strong to suffer, and firm to persevere.

If a man loves, he will know the sound of this voice. For this warm affection of soul is a loud voice crying in the ears of God, and it says: "My God, my love, You are all mine and I am all Yours. Give me an increase of love, that I may learn to taste with the inward lips of my heart how sweet it is to love, how sweet to be dissolved in love and bathe in it. Let me be rapt in love. Let me rise above self in great fervor and wonder. Let me sing the hymn of love, and let me follow You, my Love, to the heights. Let my soul exhaust itself in praising You, rejoicing out of love. Let me love You more than myself, and let me not love myself except for Your sake.

## **A period of reflective silence follows**

### **Lectio Divina: A Dialogue with God**

#### **Narrator:**

The practice of Lectio Divina involves dialoguing with God in prayer by hearing scripture as God speaking and responding with related thoughts and words to what God said. Let us hear again some of the words from the **Imitation of Christ** as God speaking to us and let us respond with related thoughts and words.

#### **Celebrant:**

MY CHILD, hear My words, words of greatest sweetness surpassing all the knowledge of the philosophers and wise people of earth. My words are spirit and life, and they are not to be weighed by one's understanding. They are not to be invoked in vanity but are to be heard in silence, and accepted with all humility and with great affection.

**All:**

Dear God, we hear your words of great sweetness and we now hear them in silence and accept them with all humility and with great affection.

**A period of reflective silence follows**

**Celebrant:**

MY CHILD, walk before Me in truth, and seek Me always in the simplicity of your heart.

**All:**

Dear God, we will walk before you in truth and will always seek you in the simplicity of our hearts.

**A period of reflective silence follows**

**Celebrant:**

Write My words in your heart and meditate on them earnestly.

**All:**

Dear God, we will write your words in our hearts and will meditate on them earnestly.

**A period of reflective silence follows**

**Cantor:** sings once before everyone joins in the meditation

O Lord Hear My Prayer  
O Lord Hear My Prayer  
When I Call Answer Me  
O Lord Hear My Prayer  
O Lord Hear My Prayer  
Come and Listen to Me.

-Psalm 143.1ff-

## The Nicene Creed

**Celebrant:** Let us stand and profess our faith together by reciting the Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, light from light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**Cantor:** sings once before everyone joins in the meditation

Bless the Lord, my soul  
And bless God's holy name.  
Bless the Lord, my soul  
Who leads me into life.

-taken from Psalm 103-

**Everyone sits and a period of reflective silence follows**

**Eucharist Begins**

**An Examination of Conscience:  
How Do Things Stand Between Me and God?**

**Narrator:**

The Examination of Conscience is an ancient spiritual practice that was promoted by St. Ignatius of Loyola in order to help us discern and reflect on God's daily activity in our life including today. For St. Ignatius, discernment is rooted in the understanding that God is ever at work in our lives – inviting, directing, guiding and drawing us into the fullness of life – and we need to take time to respond.

**Celebrant:**

Let us ask God to help us examine ourselves by silently asking, reflecting on, and waiting for God to answer our following questions:

**Celebrant:** God, what are you saying to me that I am not hearing?

**A period of reflective silence follows**

**Celebrant:** God, what are you telling me to do that I am not doing?

**A period of reflective silence follows**

**Celebrant:** God, is there anything that I did that I should not have done?

**A period of reflective silence follows**

**Celebrant:** The scriptures encourage us to examine ourselves before Holy Communion. Let us reflect upon the following words of Christ and our desire to fulfill these words

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'"<sup>1</sup>

**A brief period of reflective silence.**

**Celebrant:** Let us pray

**All:** Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

**Cantor:** sings once then everyone joins in the following meditative petition Kyrie eleison/Christe eleison (Lord have mercy/Christ mercy)

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 22.37-39

Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison  
Christe eleison, Christe eleison, Christe eleison, Christe eleison  
Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.

**Celebrant:**

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**All:** Christ has died.  
Christ is risen.  
Christ will come again.

**Celebrant:**

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ: By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.

### **The Breaking of the Bread**

The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread.

A period of silence is kept.

**Celebrant:** Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

**All:** Therefore let us keep the feast

**Celebrant:** The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

***NOTE: Everyone is invited to take communion.***

**Cantor:** sings once before everyone joins in the meditation

Eat this bread, drink this cup,  
Come to me and never be hungry.  
Eat this bread, drink this cup,  
Trust in me and you will not thirst.

### **The Prayer of Thanksgiving**

**Celebrant:** Let us stand and pray

**All:**

Holy, gracious and loving God, you have drawn us to your heart, and nourished us at your table with holy food and drink, the body and Blood of Christ. Now send us forth to be your people in the world, and to proclaim your truth, this day and evermore. Amen.

**Celebrant:**

May the coming weeks be a time of deep inner reflection. May you take time out for periods of silence and listen to the silence. And may you hear the footsteps of God when your silence reigns.

**Celebrant:** Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**Everyone is Invited  
for Light Refreshments Next Door.**

**Afterwards, Everyone is Invited  
to a No-Host Dinner at a Local Restaurant**

**Acknowledgements:**

The Rev. Pat O'Reilly, Celebrant  
Mary Bolas, Cantor  
Sofia Herrera, PhD, Acolyte  
Joe Colletti, PhD, Liturgy