



MAUNDY

THURSDAY

INTRODUCTION

The ancient office of Compline, or Night Prayer, derives its name from a Latin word meaning 'completion' (completorium). It is above all a service of quietness and reflection before rest at the end of the day. It is most effective when the ending is indeed an ending, without additions, conversation or noise. If the service is in church, those present depart in silence.

The service is designed to be used easily by one person. If there is more than one person participating, either everyone present may join in with all the words, or the words may be divided up into different sections. If so, it is wise to work out before starting, who is doing what.

Consider how you have set up your space: check you are going to be free from interruptions. You may wish to light a candle, if it is safe to do so. Some may wish to play some music before the service and at the end. Take time to be quiet before you begin and read the service in an unhurried way. Similarly, when you are asked to pause and reflect, consider allowing yourself a good thirty minutes to do this.

The sections in *red italics* are rubrics: these explain what needs to happen at various points.

NIGHT PRAYER

The eternal God is your refuge,
and underneath are the everlasting arms. *Deuteronomy 33.27*

OPENING SENTENCES

The Lord almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end.
Amen.

Our help is in the name of the Lord
who made heaven and earth.

Pause and reflect on the day that is past and anything else that is on your mind at this moment.

Save us, O Lord, while waking,
and guard us while sleeping,
that awake we may watch with Christ
and asleep may rest in peace.

BIBLE READING

LUKE 22:39-46

³⁹ And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." ⁴¹ And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." ⁴³ And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴ And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. ⁴⁵ And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

**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.**

REFLECTION: BLOOD, SWEAT, AND PRAYERS

IN THE DARK OF THE NIGHT

It had already been a busy evening. Jesus had instituted a new Passover (which we now know as the Lord's Supper), he had demonstrated the humility of his messianic kingship in the washing of the disciples feet, and delivered some hard truths in announcing Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial. Yet, the evening was still not over. After all the busyness of the evening meal Jesus took his disciples with him to a quiet place to pray. Knowing how the events of the next few hours would unfold this was truly the darkest night of Jesus' life, and when faced with such darkness Jesus does the only thing that makes sense to him, he prays.

PRAY, PRAY, PRAY

One way to summarise the teaching that Jesus had done that evening was discipleship, teaching the disciples how they should act once Jesus had departed. This did not stop as he took them to the Mount of Olives - he asked them to pray. Disciples of Jesus must also learn to follow Christ in prayer.

Jesus was very specific about what the disciples should pray for, they should "Pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Lk 22:40). It is easy for us in our position of relative comfort to associate this instruction with everyday temptations such as things we might have given up for Lent like chocolate, or alcohol, or cigarettes. But Jesus is not talking about such things, rather he is speaking about much more serious matters, matters that will confront the disciples imminently, the temptation to fall away from faith in the face of trials and testing.

At a time when Jesus is facing betrayal, arrest, torture, and ultimately a humiliating death, he chooses to spend his last moments equipping the disciples for the trials that lay ahead. Jesus was most certainly a servant king.

TURN TO GOD IN PRAYER

I find it a great encouragement to know that Jesus Christ himself

struggled with the path that God had laid out before him. It reveals to us that Jesus was human, he was not just a mindless follower of God's divine plan but a person with feelings and fears. Jesus brings all those fears to his Father in prayer. For us to come to God in prayer at difficult times is therefore a Christ-like thing. There will always be times in our lives when we feel out of control, when we do not know where to turn or who to turn to. Christ gives us the answer. Turn to God in prayer. It will not be an easy thing to do, Christ himself prays so earnestly that 'his sweat became like great drops of blood' (Lk 22:44). Still we must persevere and perseverance comes from a solid foundation.

NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS

In all our prayers there needs to be the foundation that Christ has given his disciples this Thursday evening, to "pray that [we] may not enter temptation" (Lk 22:40). We must be praying for ourselves and for others to remain faithful, praying to accept and follow God's will, even if we do not understand it. This is the example that Christ sets us. He requests a different fate, a fate that does not involve agony and death, but he always submits to the will of God - "not my will, but yours, be done" (Lk 22:42). When faced with difficulty we often might pray for a change in circumstance but when our prayer is not answered in the way we might expect or want we lose faith, we are tempted to fall away from our faith. Instead we need to remember that God is in control, that 'he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.'

LORD GIVE US STRENGTH

But even with Christ's instruction and example, we will still struggle. We will struggle to pray when we need to and instead will struggle again in a search for a solution within our own power. Just like the disciples though, we will fail, we will be like those who are 'sleeping for sorrow' (Lk 22:45). This reminds us of one of the great consequences of this night of sorrow, in the death and resurrection of Christ we now have one 'who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us (Rom. 8:34). We may not have an angel

from heaven to strengthen us (Lk 22:43) but we have something better - Jesus Christ himself. We may struggle to pray, we may even fail to pray for ourselves and for others, but we have the one who taught us to pray interceding for us. This is the one who when faced with agony and death did not attempt to avoid his fate under his own power but instead prayed to God and followed his will. Let us all seek to do likewise.

PRAYERS

Merciful God,
we entrust to your unfailing and tender care this night
those who are ill or in pain,
knowing that whenever danger threatens
your everlasting arms are there to hold us safe.
Comfort and heal them,
and restore them to health and strength;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Be present, O merciful God,
and protect us through the silent hours of this night,
so that we who are wearied
by the changes and chances of this fleeting world,
may rest upon your eternal changelessness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Visit this place, O Lord, we pray,
and drive far from it the snares of the enemy;
may your holy angels dwell with us in peace,
and may your blessing be always upon us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

THE CONCLUSION

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.