THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

**Christmas Day**

O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in eternity appointed a time for the sending of the holy Child Jesus, and did by thy Spirit overshadow the Virgin, and thus sent our Savior, as true God begotten of you from eternity, and true man, born of a woman, accept the thanks of your grateful people for your love. We praise you, we glorify you, we give thanks to you for the appearing of your Son Jesus Christ and for the blessed promise that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. We give thanks for the revelation of yourself in him, that to know him is to know you, to love him is to love you, to serve him is to serve you, and to hear him is to hear you.

Help each of us to enter into the true joys of this day and to welcome the Savior into our hearts. Implant within us such an understanding of this supreme visitation that in fullness of heart we may give you continual glory and honor and thanksgiving. Open our hearts to receive in faith him whom you appointed the Lord of life and under whose feet you have put all things.

Grant also, O Father, that the whole earth may come to the obedience of the Manger Child and to know him as Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. We pray that people everywhere, from pole to pole and from east to west, may acknowledge Mary's Child as Lord and Savior, the incarnate God. Let the light of this truth reach the hardest of hearts and the most stubborn of wills; let it shatter the wretched idolatries and the brittle ideologies of humanity; and let it pierce the darkness of all who dwell in the shadow and fear of death.

Grant that the glad tidings of the true Christmas may be borne into each home this day, and that all children and parents may know the greatest gift of all, the Child of Bethlehem. Teach all to subdue pleasure in earthly gifts before the wonder of the heavenly gift of Jesus.

Look with compassion on all who are in any want or need this day. We lift up for your compassion the lonely and the forsaken, the sick and the troubled, the sorrowing and the dying. Bring to their remembrance with renewed power the comfort of Christmas, the Child who is Immanuel, God with us. Grant them faith that you are the Deliverer of your people, their Helper in every necessity, the Health of the sick, and the Hope of the dying. Give them the assurance that in Christ you are with all who call upon you.

All this we pray in the Name of Jesus, in whom alone is hope of salvation. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)

MARTYR

**St. Stephen**

December 26

Merciful God, heavenly Father, who by your Son Jesus called us to an inheritance incorruptible and full of glory and promised us in him the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life, we thank you for the nourishment of your Word. Grant through your Holy Spirit that it may minister to our soul's need and uphold us in all trials and necessities. We especially thank you for the lives of all your faithful witnesses in every age, who in tribulation and danger trusted in you, and did not deny their faith though the hazards and persecutions were great. We especially thank you today for the example of your martyr, St. Stephen, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to you, O God, who judges righteously.

Grant unto us a like spirit in all things, to be filled with faith and the Holy Ghost so that our words and works may be endowed with power. Supply us with grace and wisdom so that through us all may come to know you and your Gospel of peace. Fill us with all the fullness of Christ so that we may forgive those who would harm us, and pray for those who would despitefully use us. May we be of such mind and heart that our obedience to your Word and truth may never falter even in our last hour.

We pray now, O Father in heaven, for all your children. Bestow upon them everywhere an understanding of your love and power, and a spirit of peace and concord. Let your Name be honored in our homes and in our communities; let your truth and justice prevail in

commerce and court; and let your righteousness reign throughout the entire fabric of our society. Defend our land from all its enemies and endow those in authority with a right perception of duty and a willingness to perform the same. Save us from all evil, keep us in the faith even unto our end, and receive us at last into your Kingdom in eternal glory. We ask all these things in the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)

APOSTLE, EVANGELIST

**St. John**

December 27

O almighty and everlasting God, who by your Word created and upholds all things that are in heaven and on earth, we give thanks for the revelation you have given of yourself and of your will and purpose. We praise you that by your Spirit your prophets and scholars were moved to speak and write the things you revealed to them for our learning and edification, for our warning and comfort, for our reproof, and for our doctrine, so that we might have hope.

We give thanks for all your blessings, but especially for the calling of the holy apostle and evangelist John, and for his witness in word and deed. Help us to continue steadfast in his doctrine that our understanding may be enlightened and our will perfected. Grant that through the writings of the beloved disciple, to whom you granted wondrous visions of your glory, every thought may be brought into the obedience of Christ, the incarnate Word, and that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and thus possess life through his Name. Inspire us to see and know him as the Word made flesh, the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, the Resurrection and the Life, the Good Shepherd, and the Great High Priest, and to see in him your love, O Father, who gave your only-begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

For your people we pray, heavenly Father, even as our Lord did pray, that they may be one as you and your Son are one. Heal all schisms that divide your church, and bring all into the unity of the Spirit and of faith in accordance with your will. Grant grace and peace to all lands and nations, and bless all who dwell in our country. Give us rulers who govern in justice and righteousness, and citizens who acknowledge you in grace and in commandment. We beseech your most special favor upon the sorrowing and the sick, that you would deliver them out of all their trials. Comfort the aged, counsel the young, and keep us all within your watchful care.

These things we ask in the Name of the only Savior of humanity, Jesus Christ, who is for us now and always the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)

MARTYRS

**The Holy Innocents**

December 28

O God the Father everlasting, who manifested yourself in the flesh in the person of your Son Jesus, who was sent to a wicked and perverse world, we give thanks to you for the great love wherewith you loved us and for the redemption you worked for us in your holy Child Jesus. We, your unworthy servants, acknowledge our transgressions and we perceive the great wickedness of the world, whose evil is so deep as to take the lives of those children whom we remember before you this day. Help us to see how great is the evil of this world and to seek after righteousness and all those things which pertain to our salvation.

Heavenly Father, we pray that you defend and save your people everywhere. Most especially we pray today for all who are persecuted for proclaiming your Name and your truth. Eliminate every evil counsel and purpose which would hinder the hallowing of your Name and prevent the coming of your kingdom. By your almighty wisdom and power, overthrow all who hate your Word and hurt your people. Break down all who would exalt themselves above your glory, and who are wise in their own conceit. Let no flesh glory in your presence. Cast down vain imaginings of human power and grandeur and pull down the strongholds of that false wisdom which denies honor to you.

Then, Father of all mercy, grant strength and faith, wisdom and courage, grace and every blessing to those who are oppressed for Christ's sake. Reveal to them the deep things of the Spirit to support and sustain them. Give them a full measure of the fullness of Christ. Show them that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of humankind; and the weakness of God stronger than the strength of humans. Give them the victory which overcomes the world, and the faith that transcends all adversity.

Hear our prayer for all children and grant that in Christ their holy angels may keep them from all harm. Protect them from neglect and from overindulgence, from false teachers and all who would destroy their faith and bring them all in your own time into your everlasting kingdom. All these things we beseech you in the Name of him, your Son Jesus, who in his nativity sanctified all childhood. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER

**Christmas**

O Lord God, Father in heaven, who in the fullness of time sent forth your Son to be the Light of the world and to gather for you out of all the kindreds of the earth a redeemed people, we give you praise and thanksgiving, we bless and hallow your Name that you have so graciously provided for us and for our salvation. We thank you that through faith in your Son Jesus Christ we have been adopted as your children, that we may call you, in spirit and in truth, Abba, Father, assured that you are indeed our loving Father and that we are your own children.

O Father most loving, grant that we who are under the yoke of sin, may in Christ be redeemed and regenerated both in body and soul, and that we may ever be your obedient servants. Empower us by your Spirit to repent our sins and find a zeal for good works, and faithfully to do your will with a glad heart and a pure mind.

We beseech you, dear Father, to show us thy mercy, deliver us from all evil, and rescue us from the due reward of our sins. Shield us in the hour of temptation and make us to will and do only those things that please you. Grasp us with your fatherly hand and lead us from the feverish ways of the world to green pastures and still waters. Bestow on us a true faith and a holy love, that the Child who you sent for the great testing of humanity may be set for our rising rather than our falling.

Heavenly Father, we implore you to let your grace rest upon us, that we may wax strong in the Spirit, be filled with wisdom, and grow in all that which finds favor in your sight. Let the brightness of your glory shine upon all who feel the need of your almighty aid. Illuminate hearts filled with darkness and homes overshadowed with sorrow or suffering. Give the light of truth to all in authority in our own land and elsewhere and make all our schools fountains of your divine light in a world that lies in the shades of strife, superstition, and ignorance.

Establish the reign of the Prince of Peace over the nations of the earth. Visit with your mercies your whole creation and every commonwealth of peoples, and, that all may be saved and none lost, bring them to the obedience of that holy Child whom you sent for the redemption of all humankind, your Son Jesus, the Word made flesh. Let the light of his life: his word, doctrine, and precept; his miracles, signs, and wonders; his birth, ministry, and character; his Passion, death, and resurrection, be that light of divine truth which shall brighten every land.

For our sick, our wounded, our hurt, our troubled, our fallen, and our absent fellow believers we pray. Grant to them whatsoever they may need: soundness of body, strength of faith, or security of hope; and grant them all in Christ assurance of salvation.

Hear us, O Father, in these our petitions, and direct and govern our hearts that we may be preserved in the one, holy, Christian faith unto everlasting life. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)

NEW YEAR'S DAY

**The Name of Jesus**

O God, almighty and ever-living Lord, who in your unsearchable wisdom and infinite grace sent your Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and made him subject to the Law, that by his perfect obedience and sacrificial suffering he might condemn sin in the flesh, grant to us the circumcision of the heart so that we may walk, not after the flesh, but after the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you, Father, for the Name which was given to your holy Child, a sign for all ages that you alone are the Source of all redemption and salvation for the multitudes of earth. We praise you that you set him at your own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. Help us ever to hallow the Name of Jesus by our obedience to his teaching and example.

We offer you our thanks, O God, for the blessings of this past year and the divine provision you made for our needs. For family and friends, for home and harvest, for food and clothing, for health of mind and body, for labor and leisure, for law and government, for peace and order, for our preservation in the faith, and for the hallowed times of worship and communion with you, we give thanks. Forgive us for all things wherein we have sinned. Heal the wounds we have caused in others. Grant us remission for our failures to do what we ought to have done. Deliver us from the evil consequences of our errors, our omissions, our mistakes, and all our transgressions.

And now, O Father in heaven, let your hand rest in benediction upon this new year, to the end that we may increasingly discover the exceeding riches of your grace in Christ Jesus, that in sorrow or joy the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened, and that in prosperity or trial we may know the working of your mighty power and the hope of our calling. Help us that whatsoever we do in word or deed we may do it to your glory.

Be the Shepherd of our youth and the Guardian of all children, the Health of the sick, and the Staff of the aged. Grant that in whatever befalls us we may see your loving hand and, in Christ, possess the sure confidence that all things work together for good to those who love you. Be the Defender of your people everywhere, and the unfailing Watchman of our own land. Prosper us in the things that make for peace and righteousness and protect us from every evil. All these things we ask in the one Name whereby we must be saved, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER

**Christmas**

O Lord God, Father in heaven, who in the sending of your Son Jesus Christ did, in a marvelous manner, demonstrate your love to us and show forth your great kindness. We thank you for this unspeakable gift and for the promise that through his Name whosoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins.

We beseech you to bestow upon us the fullness of his grace, that we may perceive your glory and truth in him. Help us to receive him into our hearts in faith, so that, believing in him as your perfect revelation, and trusting him as our only and perfect Savior, we may have power to become your children and heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Grant by your Holy Spirit that we may be guided by the light of Jesus Christ in all wisdom, counsel, and understanding, that our way may be cleansed, and that we may walk in obedience to his commandments, teachings, and example.

Bless, O God, your church and your people and endow them with power and zeal. Strengthen them by casting out all unrighteousness, and by prospering all holiness. Keep the feet of your saints, that they, rejoicing in your salvation, may exalt your Name and show forth your honor and praise.

Extend your dominion, O Judge of all the earth, over all lands and nations, and give righteous wisdom to all who rule, so that nations may be governed in peace, justice, and mercy. In all homes, give parents grace and wisdom to rear their children in the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of all wisdom. In all schools, grant to teachers such knowledge as will direct them to the truth as it is in Christ our Lord. In all hospitals and harbors of the afflicted, give strength and understanding to those who help and heal. In all places of industry and commerce, lead all people to a clear understanding, that they may serve you whatever their employment or position.

Be with all who travel, with all in peril of body or soul, with all who are imprisoned, and with all who face temptation, and grant to them a sure sense of your presence.

In these and in all other things in which we stand in need, give, O Father, your help and mercy. We pray in the Name of your beloved Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

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