THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

**Christmas Eve**

Blessed God and Father, thou Fountain of all wisdom and grace, who hast in ages past promised unto the fathers by the prophets the deliverance of thy people from condemnation, in deepest humility we give thee our thanks and praise for the remembrance of thy covenant and the fulfillment of thy promise in the gift of thy Son Jesus Christ. In spirit we stand in holy awe and reverence before the manger of the Christ Child. The Dayspring from on high has visited us, and who can search out the limits of this mercy? That God, the Son of God, should take our mortal form for mortals' sake, who can examine this mystery? That light and life should be given to those who abide in the darkness of evil, who can know what divine counsels decreed so great a thing for unworthy sinners like us? O God, how unsearchable are thy judgments, and thy ways past finding out. We bow in reverence and wonder.

For the giving of this thy Son most beloved we thank thee, O Father. Yea, we praise, we laud and magnify thee forever. We bless thee for the establishment of thy kingdom here upon this stained and weary earth, even among us who deserve only that thou shouldst hide thy face because of our iniquities.

As we assemble to worship thee and to contemplate the mysteries of the incarnation, wherein the Son of the Most High took upon himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men, grant us a sense of gratitude and joy, that life, hope, and faith may be renewed in each of us, and that each one may find in this Babe of Bethlehem the way of salvation, the remission of sins, the deliverance from every evil power, and the hope of life everlasting.

Grant that the incarnate Savior may rule in the hearts of all men everywhere. Extend the dominion of the Prince of Peace to all the nations of the earth. Give growth in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ to thy church, that even as the great snows cover the mountains, the waters fill the ocean chasms, and the clouds cover the vast plains so it may abound in love, joy, and peace, and in faith and every good work. To this end help us, O God, to proclaim the Good News of our Savior's birth in church, in home, in school, in shop, and in market place; use each of us, young and old, according to our talents and abilities. Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will to men! This we pray in the Name of the Christ Child, Jesus our Lord and King. Amen.

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

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

**Christmas Day**

O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in eternity didst appoint a time for the sending of thy holy Child Jesus, and didst by thy Spirit overshadow the Virgin, and thus didst send our Savior, as true God begotten of thee from eternity, and true man, born of a woman, accept the thanks of thy grateful people for thy love. We praise thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for the appearing of thy 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 thyself in him, that to know him is to know thee, to love him is to love thee, to serve him is to serve thee, and to hear him is to hear thee.

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 under- standing of this supreme visitation that in fullness of heart we may give thee continual glory and honor and thanksgiving. Open our hearts to receive in faith him whom thou hast appointed the Lord of life and under whose feet thou hast 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 Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. We pray that men everywhere, from pole to pole and from east to west, may acknowl- edge 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 men; 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 thy 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 thou art the Deliverer of thy people, their Helper in every necessity, the Health of the sick, and the Hope of the dying. Give them the assurance that in Christ thou art nigh to all who call upon thee.

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

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 thy Son Jesus hast called us to an inheritance incorruptible and full of glory and hast promised us in him the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life, we thank thee for the nourishment of thy Word. Grant through thy Holy Spirit that it may minister to our soul's need and uphold us in all trials and necessities. Especially do we thank thee for the lives of all thy faithful witnesses in every age, who in tribulation and danger trusted in thee, and denied not the faith though the hazards and persecutions were great. Especially do we thank thee this day for the example of thy martyr, St. Stephen, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to thee, O God, who judgest 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 men may come to know thee and thy 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 thy Word and truth may never falter even in our last hour.

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

commerce and court; and let thy 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 unto thyself in eternal glory. We ask all these things in the Name of Jesus. Amen.

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 thy Word hast created and dost uphold all things that are in heaven and on earth, we give thee thanks for the revelation thou hast given of thyself and of thy will and purpose. We praise thee that by thy Spirit holy men were moved to speak and write the things thou didst reveal unto 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 unto thee our thanks for all thy 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 thou didst grant wondrous visions of thy glory, every thought may be brought into captivity to 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 thy love, O Father, who didst give thine only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

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

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

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 didst manifest thyself in the flesh in the person of thy Son Jesus, whom thou didst send to a wicked and perverse world, we give thanks to thee for the great love where- with thou hast loved us and for the redemption thou hast worked for us in thy holy Child Jesus. We, thine 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 thee 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 thou wouldst defend and save thy people everywhere. Most especially do we pray this day for all who are persecuted for thy Name and for thy truth's sake. Bring to naught every evil counsel and purpose which would hinder the hallowing of thy Name and prevent the coming of thy kingdom. By thine almighty wisdom and power overthrow all who hate thy Word and hurt thy people. Break down all who would exalt themselves above thy glory, and who are wise in their own conceit. Let no flesh glory in thy pres- ence. Cast down vain imaginings of human power and grandeur, and pull down the strongholds of that false wisdom which denies honor to thee.

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 unto them the deep things of the Spirit to sup- port 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 men; and the weakness of God stronger than the strength of men. 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 thine own time into thy everlasting kingdom. All these things we beseech thee in the Name of him, even thy Son Jesus, who in his nativity sanctified all childhood. Amen.

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 didst send forth thy Son to be the Light of the world and to gather for thee out of all the kindreds of the earth a redeemed people, we give thee praise and thanksgiving, we bless and hallow thy Name that thou hast so graciously provided for us and for our salvation. We thank thee that through faith in thy Son Jesus Christ we have received the adoption of sons, that we may call thee, in spirit and in truth, Abba, Father, assured that thou art most truly our loving Father and that we are thine 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 thy obedient servants. Empower us by thy Spirit to perform the works meet for repentance, and faith- fully to do thy will with a glad heart and a pure mind.

We beseech thee, 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 thee. Grasp us with thy 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 whom thou didst send for the great testing of men may be set for our rising rather than our falling.

Heavenly Father, we implore thee to let thy 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 thy sight. Let the brightness of thy glory shine upon all who feel the need of thine 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 thy 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 thy mercies thy whole creation and every common- wealth of peoples, and, that all may be saved and none lost, bring them to the obedience of that holy Child whom thou didst send for the redemption of all mankind, even thy 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 unto 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.

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 thine unsearchable wisdom and infinite grace didst send thy Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and didst make him subject to the Law, that by his perfect obedience and sacrificial suffering he might condemn sin in the flesh, grant unto 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 thee, O Father, for the Name which was given thy holy Child, a sign for all ages that thou only art the Source of all redemption and salvation for the multitudes of earth. We praise thee that thou hast set him at thine 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 thee our thanks, O God, for the blessings of this past year and the divine provision thou didst make for our needs. For family and friends, for home and harvest, for food and raiment, 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 thee, we thank thee. 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 thy hand rest in benediction upon this new year, to the end that we may increasingly discover the exceeding riches of thy grace in Christ Jesus, that in sorrow or joy the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened, and that in pros- perity or trial we may know the working of thy mighty power and the hope of our calling. Help us that whatsoever we do in word or deed we may do it to thy glory.

Be thou the Shepherd of our youth and the Guardian of all chil- dren, the Health of the sick and the Staff of the aged. Grant that in whatever befalls us we may see thy loving hand and, in Christ, possess the sure confidence that all things work together for good to them that love thee. Be thou the Defender of thy 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.

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 thy Son Jesus Christ didst in a marvelous manner commend thy love to us and show forth thy great kindness, we thank thee for this unspeakable gift and for the promise that through his Name whosoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins.

We beseech thee to bestow upon us the fullness of his grace, that we may perceive thy glory and truth in him. Help us to receive him into our hearts in faith, so that, believing in him as thy perfect revelation, and trusting him as our only and perfect Savior, we may have power to become thy sons and daughters and heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Grant by thy 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, we pray thee, O God, thy church and thy people and endow them with power and zeal. Strengthen them by casting out all un- righteousness, and by prospering all holiness. Keep the feet of thy saints, that they, rejoicing in thy salvation, may exalt thy Name and show forth thy honor and praise.

Extend thy dominion, O Judge of all the earth, over all lands and nations, and give righteous wisdom to all who rule, so that men 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, under thee, help and heal. In all places of industry and commerce, lead men to a clear under- standing, that they may serve thee whatever their employment or position.

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

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

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﻿**The Epiphany**

January 6

Heavenly Father, eternal God, whose alone and forever is the power, and the kingdom, and the glory, and to whom only belongs authority over all the earth and universe, over all forces and energies, over all suns and stars, and over all intelligences and knowledge, we give thee thanksgiving and praise.

We thank thee that by the leading of a star thou didst bring to the feet of our Lord the wise men from the East to manifest thy Light to the Gentiles. Lead the nations of the earth to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, and grant wisdom to all rulers of men, that they may serve him in love and fear. Prosper and bless thy Word and the preaching of the Gospel, that multitudes may come to faith in Jesus Christ and that he may be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. Endue all ministers, missionaries, catechists, and Christian workers with heavenly power and grace, that their labor may be abundantly and fruitfully blessed. Grant all who hear thy Word faith to believe it, strength to obey it, and courage to profess it in word and deed. Give to thy Son the nations for his inheritance and overcome and confound all enemies of his truth. Overthrow all powers of darkness that bind men in the chains of superstition and ignorance, and all forces of denial and unbelief that assault men's minds. Grant help to thy servants who here and in distant lands wage a holy war, m until at last every knee shall bow and every tongue proclaim that Christ is Lord to thy glory, O Father.

We beseech thee to behold thy people as they are gathered here before thee. Lead us to bring to thy Son the treasures of our time and talent and likewise yield to his service the whole of our lives, conforming our minds, our wills, and our hearts to his obedience. Grant that we may ever walk in the light which is in Jesus, and that steadfastly following in the path set before us we may at last receive the crown of life.

For our sick we pray that thou wouldst look upon them in mercy and show them the way out of all their trials. Comfort with thy presence the aged, the lonely, and the forsaken. Shepherd the young. Console the sorrowing. Heal the broken-hearted. Forgive us all our sins and grant us newness of life in Jesus Christ, in whose Name we bring these and all our petitions. Amen.

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