

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

With the Spirit of Christ shining upon us, let us boldly pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

God of generations, you instilled in Anna and Simeon faith, dreams, and the welcome of a child. Bless elders who embody faith and hope; bless the newly baptized. Energize us to share faith from generation to generation. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God of creation, in you the sparrow finds a home and we find lush valleys and living water. Bless the birds of the air, the animals of the valley, and renew our stewardship of this bountiful creation. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God of the nations, strengthen our resolve to care for all children and strive for peace among nations. Refine our nation where we have failed to root out racism (*especially as we honor Black History Month*) and guide us in truth-telling and reconciliation. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God of hope, many long to see your presence revealed amid challenging circumstances. We hold in prayer all longing for sustainable housing, secure employment, access to medical care, and health and wellness (*especially*). God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God of the people, you are made known in caring ministries. Bless those who serve as communion servers, homebound visitors, baptismal sponsors, confirmation mentors, and as prayer support. Reveal yourself in the neighborly care we give and receive. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God of life, we thank you for Jesus' life and for his death that has destroyed death. We remember the dearly departed (*especially*), as they dwell with you in your holy courts now and forever. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We entrust our prayers to you, O God, in the sure and certain hope that your promise is revealed among the people. **Amen.**

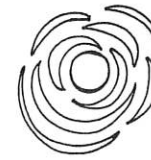
Preparing for Next Week

Monday (commemoration of Ansgar, Bishop of Hamburg, missionary to Denmark and Sweden, 865) 1 Kings 17:8-16. **Tuesday** Psalm 56. **Wednesday** (commemoration of The Martyrs of Japan, 1597) Luke 19:41-44. **Thursday** Psalm 138. **Friday** Acts 9:26-31. **Saturday** Judges 3:7-11. **Fifth Sunday after Epiphany** Isaiah 6:1-8 [9-13]; Psalm 138; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Luke 5:1-11.

CELEBRATE February 2, 2025 (Presentation of Our Lord)

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Celebrate

Presentation of Our Lord
February 2, 2025

The Presentation of Our Lord is referred to in some corners of the church as Candlemas because of an ancient tradition of blessing all the candles to be used in the church in the coming year at the mass celebrated on that day. It was a way of underscoring the truth of Simeon's confession that this baby Jesus was "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" and a light for glory to Israel. Let the light of every candle in church be a little epiphany of the love of God for all people in the person of God's Son, Jesus, the light of the world.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and ever-living God, your only-begotten Son was presented this day in the temple. May we be presented to you with clean and pure hearts by the same Jesus Christ, our great high priest, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading

Malachi 3:1-4

This reading concludes a larger section (2:17—3:5) in which the prophet speaks of the coming of the God of justice. Malachi looks for that day when the wondrous power of God will purify the priestly descendants of Levi who minister in the temple at Jerusalem.

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ²But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; ³he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.



How dear to me ¹ is your dwelling,
O ¹ LORD of hosts!

²**My soul has a desire and longing for the courts ¹ of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the ¹ living God.**

³Even the sparrow has found a home,
and the swallow a nest where she may ¹ lay her young,
by the side of your altars, O LORD of hosts, my king ¹ and my God.

⁴**Happy are they who dwell ¹ in your house!
They will always be ¹ praising you. R**

⁵Happy are the people whose strength ¹ is in you,
whose hearts are set on the ¹ pilgrims' way.

⁶**Those who go through the balsam valley will find it a ¹ place of springs,
for the early rains have covered it with ¹ pools of water.**

⁷They will climb from ¹ height to height,
and the God of gods will be ¹ seen in Zion.

⁸**LORD God of hosts, ¹ hear my prayer;
give ear, O ¹ God of Jacob. R**

⁹Behold our defend- ¹ er, O God;
and look upon the face of ¹ your anointed.

¹⁰**For one day in your courts is better than a ¹ thousand elsewhere.
I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God
than dwell in the tents ¹ of the wicked.**

¹¹For the LORD God is both sun and shield,
bestowing ¹ grace and glory;
no good thing will the LORD withhold from those who walk
¹ with integrity.

¹²**O ¹ LORD of hosts,
happy are they who put their ¹ trust in you! R**

or Psalm 24:7-10; refrain, Ps. 24:7 [not printed]

Jesus shared human nature fully so that his death might be for all humans a liberation from slavery to death's power. Here the writer uses the image of priestly service in the temple as a way of describing the life and saving death of the Lord Jesus. He is the high priest who offers his life on behalf of his brothers and sisters.

Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, [Jesus] himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. ¹⁶For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the

descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

Gospel

Luke 2:22-40

This story is a study in contrasts: the infant Jesus with the aged prophets; the joy of birth with the ominous words of Simeon to Mary; the faithful fulfilling of the law with the presentation of the one who will release its hold over us. Through it all, we see the light of God's salvation revealed to the world.

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, [Mary and Joseph] brought [Jesus] up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹"Master, now you are dismissing
your servant in peace,
according to your word;

³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹which you have prepared in the
presence of all peoples

³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people
Israel."

³³And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.