

Scripture Readings for Silent Meditation

Preliminary: *Take some deep breaths to help still your mind and emotions. Breathe in and out slowly. As you breathe in, say in your heart, "Lord." As you breathe out say "Jesus." Now in His presence, ask Him to bring to the surface of your heart anything which this past year has brought you true joy or peace or reassurance. Let Him hold your heart in His wounded hands and just be with Him. (Pause). Now ask Him to bring to the surface anything which has caused you real pain, or sorrow, or shame. Feel His wounded hands envelope your heart with healing power. (Pause).*

Keeping all of that before you, listen to him speak the following words to you:

1. "Know the shortness of your life and so gain wisdom of heart" (cf. Psalm 89:12).

Were you ready to go to God this past year, if he had called you? If wisdom is to be ready for God, where have the lights and shades been in your relationship with God this past year?

2. "But there is one thing, my dear friend, that you must never forget: that with Me, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like a day" (cf. 2 Peter 3:8).

Jesus is telling us that He is very patient with us, to give us time to respond to Him as we ought. Have you tried His patience in 2020? Are there long-term sins (as actions or as attitudes) which you have left undisturbed in yourself? Is His patience your chance to change or an excuse not to?

3. "Stand at the crossroads and look, ask for the ancient paths: which was the good way? Take it and you will find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16).

Tonight we stand on the crossroads. 2021 can be more of the same, or a chance to up our game. The good way is God's way. Formulate two practical aims for 2021: one, to get more real with Jesus; two, to let go of something that is holding you back from greater agape in your life. Give your soul thus more of a chance to rest.

THURSDAY AGAPE

EVENING PRAYER FIRST VESPERS OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

Introduction (All stand)

Priest: O God, come to our aid.

People: O Lord, make haste to help us.

Priest: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

People: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Alleluia.

Hymn

*What child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?*

*Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?*

This, this is Christ the King,

Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:

Haste, haste to bring Him laud,

The babe, the son of Mary.

*Why lies He in such mean estate,
Where ox and donkeys are feeding?*

*Good Christians, fear, for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.*

*Nails, spears shall pierce him through,
The cross he bore for me, for you.*

*Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
the Babe, the Son of Mary.*

Psalms and Canticle (All sit)

Psalm 112 (113) Praise of the Lord's name

"He put down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly" (Lk 1:52).

Priest: O wonderful exchange! The Creator of human nature took on a human body and was born of the Virgin. He became man without having a human father and has bestowed on us his divine nature.

Women: Praise, O servants of the Lord,
praise the name of the Lord!
May the name of the Lord be blessed
both now and for evermore!
From the rising of the sun to its setting
praised be the name of the Lord!

Men: High above all nations is the Lord,
above the heavens his glory.
Who is like the Lord, our God,
who has risen on high to his throne
yet stoops from the heights to look down,
to look down upon heaven and earth?

Women: From the dust he lifts up the lowly,
from his misery he raises the poor
to set him in the company of princes,
yes, with the princes of his people.
To the childless wife he gives a home
and gladdens her heart with children.

Men: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

Women: as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

All: O wonderful exchange! The Creator of human nature took on a human body and was born of the Virgin. He became man without having a human father and has bestowed on us his divine nature.

Psalm 147 (147B)
God, the foundation of Jerusalem

“Come, and I will show you the bride that the Lamb has chosen” (Rev 21:9).

Priest: Lord Jesus, you revealed the meaning of human living;
may we never fail to give thanks for all you have given us.
All: Lord, give peace to all people.

Priest: You made Mary, your Mother, full of grace;
enrich with your blessings the life of every person.
All: Lord, give peace to all people.

Priest: You proclaimed the gospel to the world;
may your word in all its power penetrate into the hearts of mankind.
All: Lord, give peace to all people.

Priest: You became through Mary the brother of every person;
teach us to love one another.
All: Lord, give peace to all people.

Priest: You came like the dawn of a new day;
show to the dead the radiance of your presence.
All: Lord, give peace to all people.

Our Father

Priest: God our Father, since you gave mankind a saviour through Blessed Mary, virgin and mother, grant that we may feel the power of her intercession, when she pleads for us with Jesus Christ, your Son, the author of life, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. *All:* **Amen.**

Priest: The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. *All:* **Amen.**

He looks on his servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.

Men: The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!
His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him.

Women: He puts forth his arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.
He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.

Men: He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.

Women: He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his sons for ever.

Men: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

Women: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world
without end. Amen.

*All: God loved us so much that he sent his own Son in a mortal nature like ours: he
was born of a woman, he was born subject to the Law, alleluia.*

Prayers and intercessions

Priest: Blessed be the Lord Jesus, our bond of peace with one another.
He came to make the Jews and Gentiles one people. Let us therefore
pray:

All: Lord, give peace to all people.

*Priest: You were born of the Virgin in a mysterious manner of which no man can speak;
you fulfilled the scriptures; like rain falling gently on the earth you came hither to save
the human race. We praise you: you are our God.*

Men: O praise the Lord, Jerusalem!
Sion, praise your God!

Women: He has strengthened the bars of your gates
he has blessed the children within you.
He established peace on your borders,
he feeds you with finest wheat.

Men: He sends out his word to the earth
and swiftly runs his command.
He showers down snow white as wool,
he scatters hoar-frost like ashes.

Women: He hurls down hailstones like crumbs.
The waters are frozen at his touch;
he sends forth his word and it melts them:
at the breath of his mouth the waters flow.

Men: He makes his word known to Jacob,
to Israel his laws and decrees.
He has not dealt thus with other nations;
he has not taught them his decrees.

Women: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

Men: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without
end. Amen.

*All: You were born of the Virgin in a mysterious manner of which no man can speak;
you fulfilled the scriptures; like rain falling gently on the earth you came hither to save
the human race. We praise you: you are our God.*

Canticle

Ephesians 1

God the Saviour

Priest: Moses saw the thorn bush that was on fire yet was not burnt up. In it we see a sign of your virginity, which all must honour. Mother of God, pray for us.

Women: Blessed be the God and Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in Christ
with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Men: He chose us in him
before the foundation of the world,
that we should be holy
and blameless before him.

Women: He destined us in love
to be his sons through Jesus Christ,
according to the purpose of his will,
to the praise of his glorious grace
which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Men: In him we have redemption through his blood,
the forgiveness of our trespasses,
according to the riches of his grace
which he lavished upon us.

Women: He has made known to us
in all wisdom and insight
the mystery of his will,
according to his purpose
which he set forth in Christ.

Men: His purpose he set forth in Christ
as a plan for the fullness of time,

to unite all things in him,
things in heaven and things on earth.

Women: Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,

Men: as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

All: Moses saw the thorn bush that was on fire yet was not burnt up. In it we see a sign of your virginity, which all must honour. Mother of God, pray for us.

Short Reading

Galatians 4:4-5

When the appointed time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law and to enable us to be adopted as sons.

Short Responory

Priest: The Word became flesh. Alleluia, alleluia.

All: The Word became flesh. Alleluia, alleluia.

Priest: And he lived among us. Alleluia, alleluia.

All: The Word became flesh. Alleluia, alleluia.

Priest: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

All: The Word became flesh. Alleluia, alleluia.

Canticle (All stand)

Magnificat

My soul rejoices in the Lord

Priest: God loved us so much that he sent his own Son in a mortal nature like ours: he was born of a woman, he was born subject to the Law, alleluia.

Women: My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.