



The Longest Night Taize

A Service of Solace & Strength

Episcopal Parish of St. Paul



Invocation

One: Now is the time of watching and waiting

All: The time of pregnant expectation of new life.

One: Now is the season of hope unfolding

All: The dark winter season when hope awaits birth

One: Let us come before God with receptive and willing spirits

All: May our souls magnify God's holy name!

Sing: In the Bleak Midwinter

*In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.*

Collect for Solace

God of Mercy, in this season of waiting, hear our prayer for peace. Hear our call for healing, for ourselves, and our families, and the loved ones of the victims of all violence and injustice, and all who live with the pain of loss and loneliness.

We ask for strength and solace, courage and conviction, pardon and peace. We ask these things in the name of the One who comes on wings of reconciliation and love, the One who shares our life in joy and in sorrow, in death and in new birth, the One whose promise is nothing less than everlasting peace. Amen.

Sing: In the Bleak Midwinter

*Our God, Heaven cannot hold this, nor the earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when God comes to reign.
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
The Lord our God Almighty, Jesus Christ.*

Psalm 121

One: I will lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?

Many: **My help comes from God who made heaven and earth.**

One: God will not suffer your foot to be moved.

The one who keeps you will not slumber.

Many: **Behold the one who keeps the people shall not slumber or sleep.**

One: The holy one is your keeper. The Holy one is your shade on your right hand.

Many: **The sun shall not hurt you by day nor the moon by night.**

One: Our God shall preserve you from all evil and shall preserve your soul.
Many: **Our God shall preserve your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and for evermore.**

Sing: In the Bleak Midwinter

*What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise One, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.*

A Reading for Comfort

Jazz Meditation *(about twelve minutes)*

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

One: This first candle we light to remember those whom we have loved
and lost. We pause to remember a name, a face, a voice, a memory that
binds us in this season.

(Pause while the first candle is lit)

We remember the people who have graced our lives
and gone back to the arms of God.

All: May God's eternal love surround us.

One: This second candle we light to redeem the pain of our own losses; the
loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health, the loss of courage,
the loss of peace, the loss of faith.

(Pause while the second candle is lit)

We pause to gather up the pain of our losses and offer them to God, asking
that from God's hands we receive the gift of peace.

All: Refresh, restore, renew us O God, and lead us into your future.

One: This third candle we light to remember our own gifts. We pause and remember the things for which we are thankful, for which our hearts swell with gratitude, despite any pain or fear.

(Pause while the third candle is lit)

We give thanks for all the love and support we have known.

All: Let us remember that dawn always defeats the darkness.

One: This fourth candle we light to remember the story of Christmas, the story of a love that surpasses all understanding, a love that enters this world through the courage and faith of a marginalized teenaged girl, is delivered in the humble stench of a dark, dark stable, and lasts forever in the promise of a loving God who is etched on our hearts and shares the pain of our flesh.

(Pause while the third candle is lit)

We remember that God who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no pain no suffering no distress , and no despair; nothing but peace and light.

All: Let us remember the One who shows us the way, who brings the truth, who bears the light, who bestows the love.

Sing:

*O come O Come Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Bring Peace, Bring Peace, Emmanuel,
Shall come to thee O Israel.*

Prayers of the Faithful

One: In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask God for all that we need; for ourselves, for our loved ones, and for our world.
God hear our prayer.

All: And in your mercy answer.

One: For our families and friends and all who support us
through our dark times and light.
God, hear our prayer.

All: And in your mercy answer.

One: For all whom we have loved and lost. For all the losses
Of our fragile lives, may we be renewed by your Easter promise.
God, hear our prayer.

All: And in your mercy answer.

One: For our circle of friends and families,
that they may know love and peace, health and happiness
in the cradle of your care.
God, hear our prayer.

All: And in your mercy answer.

One: God of healing and mercy, compassion and love,
listen to the prayers of your faithful people.
Grant to us all, especially we who are bereaved and bereft this
Christmas season. God, hear our prayer.

All: And in your mercy answer. Amen.

Sing: In the Bleak Midwinter

*In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.*

The Peace

Holy Communion

May God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us adore and exult our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

O eternal Wisdom,

We praise you and give you thanks,

because the beauty of death could not contain you.

You broke forth from the comfort of the grave;

before you the stone was moved, and the tomb of our world was opened wide.

You were raised in power and revealed yourself to us as a beloved stranger,

offering for the rituals of the dead the terror of new life and of desire fulfilled.

Therefore, with the woman who gave you birth,

the men and women who befriended you and fed you,

who argued with you and touched you,

with the woman who anointed you for death;

and with all your beloveds throughout the ages,

we praise you saying:

Holy, holy, holy

God of all power and might,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory

Come and deliver us, come and deliver us,

come and deliver us,

God most high.

Blessed is our brother Jesus, who walks with us on the road of our uncertainty, and is known again in the breaking of the bread; who, on the night he was handed over, took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said: ' This is my body which is given for you. Do this to remember me.'

In the same way, also, he took the cup after supper, saying: ' This cup is the New Covenant. Do this whenever you drink it to remember me.'

Come now Spirit of God, breathe on these things and make us one body in your love. Open our hearts, unbind our eyes, and name us here; touch and awaken all that is buried in us, that we need not cling to our fear and pain, but go forth with power to release resurrection in the world.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Creator in heaven, hallowed be your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.

Amen.

This living bread is broken for the life of the world!

Let us keep the feast!

These are the gifts of God for the people of God.

Pass the bread and wine with these words:

This is the bread of love.

This is the cup of compassion.

Post Communion Prayer

O Gracious God, when we turn from this table of love,
Help us to awaken and embrace in our lives
your deep care and generosity of spirit;
that we might live into your likeness
with gladness and singleness of heart.
We pray in the name of the One, Holy and Living God.
Amen.

The Blessing

The blessing of the God of Sarah and Hagar,
As of Abraham,
The blessing of the child born of Mary,
The blessing of the Holy Spirit
Who broods over us
As a mother, her children,
Be with us and those we love this night and forever. Amen.

Sing:

*O come O Come Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Bring Peace, Bring Peace, Emmanuel,
Shall come to thee O Israel.*

The Dismissal