

Advent Prayer Service

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Order 1: A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans (Rom. 13:11-12)

You know the time in which we are living. It is now the hour for you to wake from sleep, for our salvation is closer than when we first accepted the faith. The night is far spent; the day draws near. Let us cast off deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

(Pause)

Let us pause for a moment to reflect on our own deeds of darkness, for the times when we failed to recognize the light dwelling within us, when we failed to recognize the light we could bring to others by our words, our actions, and our prayers.

(Pause)

Let us cast off deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

(Play first verse of [redacted])

Order 3: Even for us today, Christmas is a time of memory and expectation. We are celebrating our birth. We acknowledge our incompleteness yet we live because Jesus lives. But each of us honors Christmas for a particular reason. Some of those reasons are hidden in the secret of our hearts. We come with memories. We carry the blessings and sufferings of our past. The hopes and fears of all our years come together in this celebration. In the dark streets of Bethlehem, we will discover healing for our painful memories. We also bring our dreams. Each of us has expectations. We desire good for those we love, we want peace on earth, we seek happiness in our lives. These hopes come true in Christmas. Christmas is only the beginning. Aren't we fortunate to pause here in December and know that our fears are groundless and our hopes alive? That is why it is strange that we imagine the first Christmas in the dark. It is not night. It is the dawn.

ader 4. A reading from the Gospel of Luke (Lk. 1:78-79)

All this is the work of the kindness of our God;
he, the Dayspring, shall visit us in his mercy
to shine on those who sit in darkness and in the
shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of
peace.

(pause)
Jesus, you are our light. Help us to be the warmth of your
love to one another. Shine in us always.
To the following prayers we respond: Christ be our light.

ader 5: This Advent we pray for all those who suffer in the darkness of
poverty, sickness, loneliness, and insecurity that they may find
new hope. Christ be our light.

This advent we pray for all those who help illumine our paths and
enlighten our minds--our advisors and classmates, professors and
priests, family and friends. Christ be our light.

This Advent we pray for all of us as we continue our work, that we
will more consciously try to bear witness to the Light who is Jesus.
Christ be our light.

ader 6: We each have our own light to bear, our own gifts and talents which
make us unique. We come from different backgrounds and are studying
in different disciplines. Let us each take one of the different
candles as a symbol of our own uniquenesses and as a reminder that
we are all called to bear witness to the same Lord, Christ our light.
(light candles from large candle in center of room)

ader 7: Throughout the Bible, fire has served as a sy^mbol of the presence of
God. From the seraph with the flaming sword^m at the entrance to the
Garden of Eden, to the burning bush from which the Lord called Moses
and the pillar of fire with which God led His people out of Egypt in
the Exodus, to the flames of a thousand sacrifices on the temple altars
in Jerusalem, and finally to the tongues of flame which crowned the
heads of Christ's faithful followers on the day of Pentecost, fire
has always served God's people as a reminder that we have God with us.
Let the flames of these bright days--from burning the midnight oil as
we study for exams and finish our papers or to this weekend's Grand
Illumination--be a constant reminder of the warm and enlightening
presence of God in our midst, an assurance that in Jesus, God himself
has joined us to him and loves us even in our incompleteness as we
await his final coming.

May we be signs of his presence among all men and bearers of joy.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in
us the fire of your love.

(Play "O Come All Ye Faithful")