

# **CELEBRATION**

**A Sourcebook for Christian Worship**

**NEW EDITION**

**Lydia N. Niguidula**

REPRINTED 2005

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# **FOREWORD1**

Liturgical renewal has always been a part of our educational work at the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP). It is a sad commentary that traditional worship has become uninteresting, irrelevant and alienating for many church goers. If worship is the organizing core of a faithful believer's life, it must pulsate with vibrance and reflect his/her deepest aspirations.

This is what the author attempts to do in this Celebration Guide. She tries to reclaim the essence and purpose of worship so that relating to the Creator is expressed in a transformative way. Only when liturgy is life-changing is it meaningful.

**Ms. Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes**  
**General Secretary**  
**National Council of Churches in the Philippines**

# FOREWORD 2

When I first came to the Philippines to assume the pastorate of Silliman University Church in 1970, I brought with me several books of worship which I had used during my previous pastorates in Hawaii and California. Soon it became apparent, however, that none of these books of worship was adequate for the Philippine Church setting, and almost instinctively I began to make little "cultural" adjustments in the use of these books.

When Rev. Lydia Niguidula joined the team ministry of the Silliman University Church in 1971, we embarked on a more or less systematic attempt at making the worship life of our church relevant to our situation, utilizing the great tradition of the Church and Scriptures as well as contemporary Filipino experience. That this attempt met the needs of the evangelical churches in the Philippines is attested to by the fact that these materials were eagerly sought after by pastors and laymen from all over the Philippines who visited Silliman Church.

I am happy that Ms. Niguidula has been able to devote a full year to compiling and writing this expanded book of worship which is probably the first of its kind in the Philippines. It should be read from the very beginning, for the explanatory portions are as helpful as the worship services themselves and should not be overlooked. I enthusiastically commend *Celebration: A Sourcebook for Christian Worship* to all evangelical pastors and lay leaders and trust that it will find wide acceptance and usefulness.

**Harry Y. Pak**  
**Project Adviser**  
**Silliman University**  
**November 1975**

# PREFACE

That it is impossible to produce a book of worship that can be used in all the denominations of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines is apparent, but there certainly are definite fundamental elements in Christian worship and resource materials that are acceptable to all. Hence, the rituals here will appear "traditional" to many. Indeed, they are to a very large extent quite "traditional," if by this is meant being faithful to the tradition of the Scriptures as well as to the early Christian Church. While it is true that the ritual should evolve from one's setting in life, nevertheless, the great traditions in worship which the Christian Church has inherited from the past transcend any culture, age and denomination and ought to be preserved. There ought to be, in fact, an honest attempt to study and understand them. Those who have done so confess that, in the end, their appreciation of the tradition increased with an increasing understanding of the heritage.

Although this book is written within the tradition of the Protestant Evangelical Church (the writer-compiler is a member of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines), it is hoped that this volume will be found useful by all churches—in part by some churches, and in its entirety by most.

Each section in this book is introduced with a brief historical background and biblical foundation where these are possible. This is to help the users of this book become better acquainted with the background of the various Christian rites and thus acquire a deeper understanding of worship itself. Such knowledge and understanding should definitely help the readers in their attempt to make worship more relevant and pertinent to their particular situations.

I am indeed grateful to many people, a majority of whom I know only by name, whose prayers and other worship materials I have used here. I thank Mrs. Rizalina Villagante, Dr. Elena G. Maquiso, Mrs. Carmen U. Pak, and Rev. Harry Y. Pak for the prayers and other resources they have written and are incorporated in this volume. I am also deeply grateful for the influence and help of Ms. Elinor Galusha through the book, *Lift Up Your Hearts*, United Church Press, 1968; James L. Christensen through the book, *Contemporary Worship Services*, Flemming H. Revell Company, 1961; and to the Executive Committee of the Consultation on Church Union in the U.S.A. through its book, *An Order of Worship*, Forward Movement Publications, 1968.

Appreciation and thanks also to my ecumenical women friends for their special contribution of a creative and cosmic liturgies.

To the many contributors whose works have been marked with an asterisk (\*) because they are unknown to me, I acknowledge my indebtedness. I shall appreciate knowing who they are and shall acknowledge them properly. Many and special thanks to the Women's Desk—Program Unit on Ecumenical Education and Nurture of the NCCP, for facilitating and funding the revision of this book into an inclusive one, as far as it was practicable. The effort was largely inspired by the passion for inclusivity and articulation of women's experiences.

I also thank the N.C.C.P. committee members — Rev. Gil Abesamis (IEMELIF), Fr. Warlito Baldomero (P.I.C.), Rev. Tomas Calisterio (Baptist), Fr. Robert Longid (P.E.C.), Ptr. Levi Mariano (UNIDA), Rev. David Rodriguez (United Methodist), Ms. Pats Salvador (Youth), and Rev. Hermogenes Cera, Jr. (ex-officio); and second, the Silliman University committee members — Rev. Leumen Alonso, Mr. Adlai Amor, Ms. Laura Julian, Dr. Elena G. Maquiso, Rev. Ricardo Ursos, Mrs. Rizalina B. Villagante, and Dr. and Mrs. Harry Y. Pak.

Special thanks go to Dr. Pak, Silliman Church pastor, who encouraged me in the production of this book and was also the project adviser appointed by Dr. Angel C. Alcala, vice president for Research, Extension and Development; and to Mrs. Carmen U. Pak, who served as editor, research consultant, critic, and contributor.

There are many more who contributed their time and creative effort to this volume whom I am deeply grateful to, but whose names I cannot enumerate here.

May this volume, which so many people have helped produce, enrich the worship life of the Christians in our land and those beyond our shores.

**Lydia N. Niguidula**

**UCCP**

**July 2004**

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# **DEDICATION**

Dedicated to Women and Men  
who are transforming themselves  
and their faith communities

## Chapter I

# TOWARD A FULLER UNDERSTANDING OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

### A. THE MEANING OF WORSHIP

WORSHIP is a person's response to an awareness of the presence of God. The response may be in praise and thanksgiving, in utter contrition, or in selfless commitment to the cause of the One worshipped. Worship always has this two-fold action: first, an awareness or consciousness of a revelation of God or of God's presence, and second, a corresponding response or reaction of the worshipper to such an awareness. Where one of these aspects is absent, worship has not really taken place.

What this God-awareness means may seem hard for the modern sophisticated person to grasp. But members of today's generation, at least to a certain extent, do understand the presence or absence of meaning or significance in their individual and corporate lives. At times, it may be a sense of fulfillment or an uncanny sense of depth in an experience. This is God-awareness or "cosmic disclosure." As Ian Ramsey says, a cosmic disclosure is a situation, which has come alive both subjectively and objectively, where a plain, flat situation restricted to the data of sense experience, has taken on depth or ... a new dimension.'

This disclosure or God-consciousness, because it carries the element of mystery with it, is accepted by the Christian as *transcendent*.

Worship, viewed in this manner, may be said to be a natural daily experience. There are, in fact, numerous hallowed moments in human life, wherever she/he is whatever her/his station in life may be. indeed, the experience-in-depth or the experience of the "Holy" is not confined within a particular time or place, nor is it the product of the creative planning of a worship director. Therefore, it can be assumed that God's revelation of the Godself or God's presence may be felt in any aspect of human existence. This may invade one in solitude or it may come while one is in association with other persons.

### B. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WORSHIP RITES

WHAT, then, of those deliberate attempts of religious leaders to plan and direct worship? These are what usually are known as *worship rites, worship rituals, celebrations of worship, services of worship, or liturgies*. These are public worship rites intended for specific groups at specific times and places. In these rites, participants may safely assume that God is present. Christians believe that God is present in all aspects of life and that this Presence may be experienced by anyone. But whether the people become aware of this Presence or not is another matter. And still another matter is the question of whether the people will respond to such an awareness or not. In all other aspects of life, as Wilfred Bailey has observed, a person is found faithful in her/his response at times and unfaithful at others. But all of life holds the potential of an experience of the "Holy." All of life has possibilities of an encounter with the Eternal. This is our human hope. This is the essence of one's faith. On this hope and on this faith lies the possibility of the human experience of God; and from the experience, comes her/his faithful response.

The *worship rite* then is the form by which a person response to an experience of God, or through which God may be seen as active in life. Evelyn Underhill defines this as "an agreed pattern of ceremonial movements, sounds and verbal formulas, creating a framework within which corporate, religious action can take place." This is also known as one's *service* to God which derives its meaning from the Greek word, *leitourgia*. This includes the people's response to God in worship, bringing into it joys, pains, hopes, and fears of all their work and all of life. In the service of worship or the liturgy, then, life is acknowledged in its fullness and wholeness. In the service of worship,

the whole community gathers together as one body of God's people and in their corporate acts, they present their individual and varied needs and concerns, or offer their thankfulness to and in adoration of God.

The worship rite is here understood as much more than form or pattern: it is a *symbol*. As symbol, its most appropriate description is *celebration*. Celebration always points beyond itself; it does not exist for itself alone. Celebration is also a conscious or a deliberate effort of a group of persons to come together, to commemorate, or to observe some significant event in their common life. *Celebration and worship* have certain characteristics in common: a group gathering-which may be the significant link among the participants: and a general feeling of genuine *camaraderie* or wholesome fellowship. The worship rite then, as a form of Christian celebration, brings together a community of persons to affirm God in their common life with all its joy and sadness, pain and pleasure.

However, a most controversial question in the Christian church is this matter of meaningful form or ritual. Each generation has sought to discover the form of worship most relevant in its time and culture. Though none of them have been perfect, form is important because a person must worship with form.

What form, then, ought to be used? On one hand, a worshipping person likes the familiar pattern. On the other hand, something in that person craves for the new and different. Bart Thompson warned in his day, "When this or that form has outlived its usefulness, let it be changed or discarded: no liturgy is worth being idolized." No form then is absolute, and each generation or each culture must define for itself what is truly meaningful for its members. However, there are definitely basic parts that ought to run through the differing forms. Although the early Christian churches showed diversity in their liturgical forms, the record in Acts 2:42 summarizes aspects common to all of them:

*They spent their time in learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers. (TEO)*

For today, these parts mean: the Scriptures read and preached about, the sharing of one another's blessings through the offertory, the celebration of the Lord's or Holy Supper, and the prayers.

Present-day Christian churches ought to have a basic understanding of their heritage in worship and of the elements that have guided men and women through centuries of religious experience. Then, on one hand, they would have a fresh understanding of their religious background; on the other, they would enrich their past with the exciting present practices. Thus, contemporary Christian worship will be truly rooted in the Gospel and related to the soil.

Are the public worship rites to be viewed simply as possibilities for worship? Yes and no! Yes, in the sense that Wilfred Bailey observed, that God is surely going to meet God's people whether they are at worship or not, whether they are in church or not. One may certainly hope that God would use a person's fumbling efforts in worship rites to encounter the people. And God does! God comes! God is faithful in constantly trying to meet the people. And it is precisely this potential for God's encountering persons wherein lies the value and the validity of any human-made ritual. Oliver Powell says: True worship implies the acceptance of the fact that whatever form of worship we use the service of morning prayer in a cathedral, or the freest, most informal order of service in an open country church - it is at best a clogged channel through which, we pray, God's Holy Spirit may come to visit us.<sup>4</sup>

Yes, indeed, the worship rite holds within it the possibility of genuine worship. But, no, also in that it is not its only reason for existence. Of much more value is the fact that in the rite, life ought to be seen in the perspective of God and in the context of the Holy. As Underhill suggests, "[Christian worship] stands for the total orientation of life towards God."<sup>5</sup> One may never truly experience God in an act of worship, but if in that moment one sees a past event in one's life as God's action and accepts it, then the rite has justified its function. If, for another, the moment of worship becomes a moment of accepting God's hand in a future plan, then truly the worship rite has been worth participating in. In other words, the worship ritual ought to be an opportunity wherein God's presence maybe experienced right then and there, as well as a means whereby God may be acknowledged as Participant in all of life. As Bailey so eloquently describes it: "Liturgy is indeed concerned with what the worshipper experiences during the service, but of much greater importance is the concern that worship witness beyond itself to the whole of life."<sup>6</sup>

## C. RATIONALE FOR CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

THE WORSHIP of God is the chief aim of all humans and the public worship of God is the most central aspect of a Church's life. For Christians, worship always begins with God. God initiates and humans respond in the God-human encounter, which is the essence of worship.

To talk about God and the priority of God in one's life in a world that has become person-centered or materially-oriented is a difficult task. But that is because a man or a woman, who has been erroneously made to believe that God is only "up there" and distant from human affairs, refuses to acknowledge God as present in the day-to-day world. And yet, Filipinos have always believed that God is participant in all of life! It is now only a matter of recovering this belief in Christian context. Ironically, worship has the responsibility of bringing a person to an awareness of God and as present in life.

There are always two elements which must come together in creative encounter in order that worship may take place: the *object of worship*—a deity or a revered person—and the *subject of worship or the worshipper*.

For the Christian, any encounter with the Deity is always an encounter with God, the Creator and Who is the God and Father of Jesus Christ. God is the Object of Christian worship. This God is manifested in and through Jesus Christ who was Himself also a Man from Nazareth. It is through Jesus Christ that a person, the subject, response to God. In fact, as Roger Hazelton has said, it is through Christ that a relationship between God and human is maintained. Furthermore, Christian worship acknowledges the fact of the Holy Spirit. If a person response to God's calling or to an awareness of God's presence, it is primarily the prompting of the Holy Spirit. "For what makes the service a real act of worship," says Oscar Cullman, "is the Holy Spirit."<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Raymond Abba affirms that "true worship can spring only from the activity of the Holy Spirit."<sup>8</sup> Thus, the *first element of worship* for the Christian is the God Whom Jesus Christ acknowledges as Savior and Parent. Worship, therefore, is imperative, and Christians must worship because they cannot help but respond to an awareness of God in Jesus Christ.

Christian worship or liturgy is based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In that Gospel, it is clear that a person is offered a life of joy and hope in spite of the meaninglessness and despair that may accompany it. The Christian Gospel is not only about the Man who uttered, "Consider the lilies of the field ..." but also about the Man who cried at Golgotha, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" Therefore, in Christian worship one does not simply focus on the "nice" things of life, removed from their bitter and cruel aspects. What happens *during* the worship service is as important as what happens after it. For the essence of worship is not how a person encounters God or that one has met God, but what that person does about such an encounter or meeting. This is why, as Underhill says, "We [ought to] take this strange thing *Worship* seriously, and give it the status it deserves ..."<sup>9</sup> For a person's worship determines the quality and the pattern of one's life.

## D. GUIDELINES FOR CONTEMPORIZING WORSHIP

The writer's experience in a good many "experimental" or "creative" worship services in the past so many years had indeed sharpened the following insights:

First, the *content* of worship must be consistent with the Good News of God in Jesus Christ. Likewise, the *form* through which this message of God's love in Jesus Christ is to be channeled must in no way deviate from such message. The worship service must therefore proclaim no other god but *God in Jesus Christ*. God, not the human being, is central in contemporary worship as in all worship.

Second, it is always helpful to know how the ancestors of the Christian faith worshipped and how they acquired worship patterns. In other words, "doing what comes naturally" ought not to be the only criterion for new forms of worship. Rather, worship forms ought to have roots in the Scriptures and the Christians' worthy past.

Third, there are elements or parts of worship that have passed the tests of time and culture. A knowledge of their functions in worship is necessary for those who would contemporize worship. While the elements remain the same, their expressions may certainly change according to contemporary forms. There are many ways by which the Gospel may be preached, and just as many ways by which sincere prayer may be offered. Praise and thanksgiving may be expressed in forms other than song or the spoken word. Similarly, there are many ways by

which the *penitential act* may be expressed. All these forms, if meaningful, may be explored for use in worship services.

Fourth, the language of worship is crucial in conveying meaning. Each generation cultivates its own unique signs and symbols as well as language forms that are meaningful in their time. Very often the language of the worship service is unfamiliar to the worshipper and one has to literally and painstakingly unscramble the words to get at the meaning. Neither should God's Word be obscured by expressions that may sound intelligent and sophisticated, but which ordinary worshippers cannot comprehend nor appreciate.

Fifth, there are no religious or sacred *things* as such to limit the materials for use in worship. Anything and everything may be a channel of God's grace. Hence, anything may be used in worship as long as it *proclaims* the message of the God of love.

And finally, a sincere understanding of the people is absolutely necessary. Those who plan worship services must know the people's joys, frustrations, dreams, and needs in life. The ritual that will speak to the people is that which speaks to their needs. Better yet, the people in general ought to be involved in the planning of the service: writing of prayers, choosing of hymns, and even in suggesting themes or the focus of the sermon. If this can happen, the worship will truly be the work of the people: their *leitourgia*.

With contemporary worship, the possibilities are limitless! it is, in fact, impossible to capture in print contemporary worship which maintains its acceptability in the varied situations of the life of churches and still remain contemporary. What this book offers are simply guides and models of worship rites, which may become springboards for other creative and more truly indigenous worship. For this reason, many traditional as well as current materials have been incorporated if only to point a way to contemporizing worship.

# Chapter 2

## REGULAR RITES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

### A. THE LORD'S DAY SERVICE OF THE WORD (Sunday Liturgy) HISTORICAL/BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

It is generally acknowledged that the first Christians appropriated the first day of the week (Sunday) for their "Lord's Day" and set it apart as their day of worship. It also was the day when Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. However, they derived the pattern of their weekly worship from the synagogue rites of Judaism out of which they had come. The synagogue rites, in turn, were a carry-over from the Temple worship of their Hebrew ancestors. The rite, as early Christians experienced it, included (1) the recitation of the Shema or "Hear, O Israel ..." (Dt. 6:4-9), (2) the prayers or the benedictions, (3) the singing of psalms; (4) scripture readings, which, in the early days, meant readings from the Law and the Prophets; and (5) instructions derived from the Scripture reading. After the Christians set up their own worship rites, they quite naturally followed a certain ritual, incorporating into it a reading from an epistle as received from the apostles and later, from their bishops. Additions, such as the "free proclamation of the Spirit, singing hymns, recitation of the Decalogue, confession of sin, doxologies, and Amen" all came in due time.

Another aspect of early Christian worship was the so-called "breaking of bread," a name given to a meal they shared together as a Christian community. This meal took place during their gatherings at each other's homes, a custom carried over from Jewish practice, and was reminiscent of Jesus' last supper with His disciples. This was sometimes known as the "agape meal" or "love feast." As may be inferred from sources such as 1 Corinthians 11:7-35, Luke 22:14-20 and Matthew 26:26-30, the essential elements of the meal gathering were: the taking of the elements during the offering, the blessing and thanksgiving for them, the breaking of the bread and the pouring of the cup, the distribution of the same to the community, the conversations around the table, and the singing of hymns. Later, there was added the *confession of faith or the recitation of the creed* in this liturgy.

Eventually, the two aspects of early Christian worship were merged into one so that a normal "Lord's Day" service would include two parts: the *Liturgy of the Word* which is the rite derived from the synagogue worship, and the *liturgy of the Upper Room or the Liturgy of the Lord's Supper* which is a reenactment of the Last Supper.

Prior to the Reformation, there was a long period in which the people did not participate in the Lord's Supper. The Reformers, therefore, found it difficult to recover the weekly celebration of this Holy Supper for the congregation as a whole. Hence, for the Protestant Christian churches, compromises had to be made in this connection, ranging from a weekly celebration to once a month, and in some denominations, once every quarter. For the Philippine evangelical churches, the tradition is that of the once-a-month Holy Communion. Hence, the regular weekly worship service for evangelical churches would mean a Lord's Day Service without the Lord's Supper. For the "high" churches, the celebration of the *mass or the Eucharist* (as it is also called), is held every week and hence, for them it is a regular weekly rite.

The phrase, "Lord's Day" is used here instead of "Sunday" because it seems obvious that, in this country, as in most of the world, Sunday is no longer set aside as "the Lord's Day" even by Christians. While Sunday continues to be the most appropriate day for Christian worship, it may be necessary for churches or congregations to discover other times during the week when they can come together regularly for this important aspect of their common life together. For many rural farming areas, it might be more meaningful to meet on a Wednesday evening or a Saturday evening, or in fishing areas at dawn of any day. But there ought to be a regular gathering of God's people for worship!



As has been mentioned earlier, worship begins with God's revealing of the Godself. As the worshipper becomes aware of this, she/he may feel guilty and remember her/his failure to heed God's will. A confession of sin brings to her/him an assurance that somehow frees the person from guilt feelings and is able to pick her/his life up once again and to speak God's Name. With this posture and renewed attention, she/he then is able to listen to God's Word and will do so more openly and sincerely.

## **MOVEMENT OF WORSHIP**

The experience of Isaiah in the Temple (Isa. 6:1-13) is a classic example of this movement in worship, and may be taken as a pattern for the *Liturgy of the Word*. In fact, a study of the weekly worship rites of the various denominations that have influenced Philippine Protestant churches reveals this common pattern running through them.

Briefly outlined, this pattern may be set forth as comprising five basic parts in the order of worship:

- Praise and Adoration of God
- Confession of Sin by the people and Assurance of God's Pardon by the Minister
- Intercession for God's People and the Sharing of Concerns
- Proclamation of the Word of God or the Preaching of the Word
- Dedication of Oneself to God or The Act of Commitment

The Liturgy of the Word, which was appropriated from the Temple and the synagogue worship, was further enriched by the experiences of the monastics beginning in the fourth century. The daily "offices" or daily services in the monasteries included the singing or chanting of psalms, Scripture readings, singing of canticles and offering of prayers. *Litanies* (which come from a Greek word meaning a *series of prayers or supplications* spoken by a minister and responded to by the congregation) also became popular during this time, and they were at times used in places of ordinary prayers. It is apparent that the weekly gathering for worship became more elaborate through the incorporation of certain practices of the monasteries. As Iliion Jones writes: In the case of all the Western rites, the expansion of the liturgies was due to the addition of responses and versicles, both spoken and sung; numerous collects, bidding prayers, and litanies inserted here and there; ceremonials, symbolic actions, censuring ...<sup>2</sup>

Singing and music by the choirs and the congregation in general soon became normal parts of the worship rites of the Christians. Among these are the numerous canticles, hymns, choral responses, doxologies, and other musical additions.

The following is an outline of the common pattern of the *Liturgy of the Word* in most churches.

## **OUTLINE 1 OF THE LORD'S DAY SERVICE**

### ***PRAISE AND ADORATION OF GOD***

- SILENT PREPARATION
- INTROIT (*by the choir or singers*)
- CALL TO WORSHIP
- INVOCATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
- HYMN OF PRAISE TO GOD (*by all*)
- A PSALTER OR A CREED
- A CANTICLE OR DOXOLOGY

### ***CONFESSION OF SIN AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON***

- CALL TO CONFESSION
- PRAYER OF CONFESSION (*by all*)

KYRIE ELEISON (*sang by the choir or all*)  
ASSURANCE OF GOD'S PARDON (*by the minister*)  
A CANTICLE (*choir or congregation*)

**INTERCESSION FOR GOD'S PEOPLE**

SHARING OF THE CHURCH'S CONCERNS  
PASTORAL PRAYER OR MORNING PRAYER  
THE LORD'S PRAYER (*by all*)  
GLORIA PATRI (*sang by all*)

**PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD OF GOD**

HYMN OF PROCLAMATION  
\*READING OF SCRIPTURES (*standing, if from the Gospels*)  
ANTHEM OR "GLORIA PATRI" (*if not used above*)  
THE SERMON

**DEDICATION OF LIVES AND OFFERINGS**

CALL TO DEDICATION AND OFFERING  
OFFERTORY ANTHEM OR HYMN OF OFFERING (*while offerings are received*)  
PRESENTATION OF OFFERINGS OF LIFE AND LABOR  
\*DOXOLOGY (*if not used above*)  
\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING  
\*HYMN OF DEDICATION AND/OR CONSECRATION  
\*BENEDICTION  
\*ASCRIPTION OF GLORY (*led by the choir*)  
CHORAL OR CONGREGATIONAL AMEN

**OUTLINE 2 OF THE LORD'S DAY SERVICE**

**THE PREPARATION**

PRELUDE OR ENTRANCE MUSIC (*people greeting one another as they enter*)  
SILENT PRAYERS  
OPENING SENTENCES (*minister or liturgist/leader standing*)  
Words of Welcome from the liturgist/minister/elder  
Greetings from the Minister or Elder  
Call to Worship

**THE CHURCH ACKNOWLEDGES GOD'S ACTION**

\*HYMN OF PRAISE (*all standing*)  
\*INVOCATION (*all standing*)  
CALL TO PENITENCE  
PRAYER OF CONFESSION (*all kneeling or sitting*)  
ASSURANCE OF GOD'S PARDON (*minister*)  
\*HYMN OF PROCLAMATION (*all standing*)  
SCRIPTURE READING (*if from the Gospels, all stand*)

SERMON

**THE CHURCH RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD**

INTERCESSION FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

Right Hand of Fellowship or Passing of the Peace  
Sharing of Concerns  
General Prayer or Pastoral Prayer (*minister or pastor*)  
The Lord's Prayer (*by all*)

DEDICATION OF LIVES AND MEANS

Call to Offering (*liturgist*)  
Presentation of Selves and Offering  
Prayer of Dedication or Blessing of Persons and Offerings (*all standing*)

\*HYMN OF COMMITMENT OR CHALLENGE (*all standing*)

\*BENEDICTION (*all standing*)

SILENT PRAYERS (*all seated*)

POSTLUDE OR EXIT MUSIC

**A SAMPLE ORDER OF WORSHIP**

**AN ORDER OF THE LORD'S DAY SERVICE**

**THE PREPARATION**

PRELUDE

SILENT MEDITATION

*If the church uses printed orders of worship, then a prayer or a short meditation on the morning's theme may be printed here.*

**PRAISE AND ADORATION OF GOD**

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: How great is Your Name, O Creator, our God, through all the earth!

People: Your majesty is praised above the heavens; And on the lips of children and of adults You have found praise to foil Your enemy, to silence the foe and the rebel.

Leader: When I see the heavens, the work of Your hands, the moon and the stars which You arranged, what is the human being that You should keep him/her in mind, or mortal beings that You care for them?

People: Yet You have made them a little less than God; with glory and honor You crowned them; You give them power over the works of Your hand, and put all things under people's feet.

Unison: How great is Your Name, O Creator, our God, through all the earth!

(Ps. 8)

*Or*

Leader: We come to worship, not because it is a duty,

People: But because it is a delight;

Leader: Not because a minister calls us,

People: But because God called us;

Leader: Not to display to the world our fine garb,

People: But to witness to the world our faith in God;

Leader: Not to smirk at others because of our goodness,

People: But to search together for God's righteousness;

Leader: Not to listen as others are condemned,

People: But to be reminded how we have sinned;

Leader: Not to take away whatever God will give us,

People: But to go away fitted for Divine service;

Unison: We would, indeed, encounter the God Who searches for us. (1)

*or*

Leader: Who will go up to the mountain of God? Who will see God's place?

People: Everyone who is pure of heart and set in the right,  
They will see the Holy Face of God.

Leader: Lift up your heads, O you ancient doors,  
Open up, you gates, and ring!

Unison: For the Creator, Who is God of all has come to Your doors! Let us sing songs of glory to our God! (Ps. 24-3-4a, 7)

#### INVOCATION (*leader/liturgist/unison*)

O God our Creator, You are the Source of all that we have and the Creator of all that we are: we praise You and bless You for what You *are*. Be with us now as we gather in Your Name. Help us in our feeble attempts to feel Your Presence and be filled with Your Spirit. In Christ's Name. Amen.

*Or*

Almighty God, our Parent and Creator, we pray that as Your Church gathers again in fellowship with one another, Your presence and power may be felt among us through the Holy Spirit. For we gather in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, Who with You and the Holy Spirit, reigns over us as one God. Amen.

*Or*

We bow in shuddering awe before the incredible mysteriousness of life that confronts us this day and in this place. We are humbled by the universe that overwhelms us; by beauty that enthralls us; a Providence that has provided for us; and a love demonstration that melts us. O God, how marvelous and majestic and inexplicable are Your ways in all the earth! We worship You. Amen! (2)

#### THE CONGREGATION GATHERS

THE HYMN OF PRAISE (*congregation standing*)

A PSALTER OR AN AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (*congregation standing*)

*If a reading from the Book of Psalms or a Statement of Faith be preferred for use, this is the place where one or both may be placed. (Please see pages 258-261). The Doxology may fittingly be sung after the Affirmation.*

#### **THE CONFESSION OF SIN AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

CALL TO CONFESSION (*pastor/liturgist*)

Let us confess our sins to Almighty God:

It is clear that none of us has been fully faithful to God and neighbor. In light of this, and in accord with our Savior's instruction, let us make our common confession together, praying also for God's gracious forgiveness.\*

*or*

Let us each look at ourselves in our separation from God, our neighbors and even ourselves. Let us examine ourselves in silence.

*(pause for silent prayer)*

Let us now humbly confess our sins to Almighty God.

Let us pray together:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION *(congregation in unison, kneeling if possible)*

O God, our Parent and Creator, we remember all the failures of the past week. Forgive us for any promises we broke, or any resolutions we failed to keep. Forgive us for any friends we failed or any person we have hurt. Forgive us for any carelessness in our work, or any neglect of duty. Forgive us for any mean, ungenerous or dishonorable deed we have done; for any false, impure or any angry word we have uttered. Grant us grace to show how sorry we are for our failures, and from now on to walk more closely with you.\* In Christ's Name. Amen.

*Or*

O God, our Heavenly Parent and Creator,  
we have sinned against You in thought, word and deed:  
We have not loved You with all our hearts;  
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. Have mercy upon us, we beseech You;  
Cleanse us from our sins, And help us to overcome our faults;  
Through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (3)

*or*

O God our Holy Parent, we ask forgiveness for everything that is wrong in our lives:  
If we have a grievance against anyone,  
If we are jealous of somebody,  
If we are resentful and bitter about anything:  
In the Name of Jesus Christ,  
Forgive us and help us.

If we have hurt or offended others or treated other persons unfairly:  
In the Name of Jesus Christ, forgive us and help us.

If we have gone back on our word  
Or forgotten to keep our promises;  
If we have been dishonest or deceitful:  
In the Name of Jesus Christ,  
Forgive us and help us. (4)

All: Dear Heavenly Parent; we ask Your forgiveness for our sins against You and against all Your children. Forgive us those sins which we know only too well; those which we would not know; and those which only You, O God, can ever know. Forgive us for being self-centered, for only by looking out from ourselves can we truly see ourselves and can we truly see Your love. Too often we judge others; forgive us, O God, and help us to be patient and understanding. Keep our faith strong, that we may ever turn to You in times of trouble, in the Name of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen (5)

KYRIE ELEISON (*congregation still kneeling or sitting*)

*Here the Kyrie or a choral supplication or a short hymn of penitence may be sung by all.*

ASSURANCE OF PARDON OR ABSOLUTION

Minister: "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him in truth." (Ps.145:18) "And the mercy of the Lord is everlasting." These are faithful words and they assure us of freedom from the shackles of our sin. Take this assurance to heart and live as new men and women. "The Lord be with you!"

*or*

Minister: You are accepted as you now are, timid in your love but aware of your timidity; afraid really to trust those with whom you worship, yet willing to try. Thus God, the only One, without whose forgiveness you cannot be reborn to new courage and trust and love, sees directly through your eyes into your hearts. God's unqualified Word to us is this: "I love you, now and always." Amen. (6)

*or*

Leader/Pastor: We know through Jesus Christ that when we are open to receive forgiveness, the Holy God has long since waited to bestow it. Take this forgiveness seriously, live as free men and women, and let renewed obedience be the mark of your thanksgiving. The peace of God be with you.\*

A CANTICLE (*may be sung here*)

#### **THE INTERCESSION FOR GOD'S PEACE**

GENERAL PRAYER/PASTORAL PRAYER/THE CHURCH AT PRAYER

The minister or the worship leader or someone appointed shall lead the people in prayers of petition and intercession, or the minister may offer a pastoral prayer.

THE LORD'S PRAYER (*by all*)

CHORAL RESPONSE

The choral response, if used, need not only supplement the prayer just said, but may also be a canticle which praises God for giving the people the opportunity to come to God in prayer and to receive the assurance that God listens.

CHURCH CONCERNS

At this time, announcements pertaining to the church's ministry, or the strengthening of the ties of the fellowship, may be made a part of the worship service. The presence of visitors may also be acknowledged at this point.

#### **THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD OF GOD**

HYMN OF PROCLAMATION OR CHORAL PROCLAMATION BY THE CHOIR

The hymn or anthem sung here may be about the Word of God or from the Scriptures, or about the Holy Spirit and God's work in the proclamation of the Word, or else it may be related to the sermon theme.

THE READING OF SCRIPTURES

\*GLORIA PATRI (*may be sung here, congregation standing*)

If there are readings from both the Old and the New Testaments, they may be set apart by a choral or congregational response which may be another canticle praising God for the Word or a stanza of a hymn on Scripture.

THE SERMON

## **THE DEDICATION OF LIVES AND LABOR**

### CALL TO OFFERING (*leader*)

Our words must be followed by our deeds. Let us symbolize the giving of ourselves by the giving of our gifts.

*or*

Having heard the Word of God proclaimed and interpreted, let us offer God Almighty our lives and our gifts.

### OFFERTORY

*Here may be sung by the choir or the congregation an anthem or a hymn on the themes that speak about service, discipleship or dedication.*

### \*DOXOLOGY OR ANOTHER CANTICLE (*may be sung here*)

### \*PRAYER OF DEDICATION (*congregation standing*)

What we bring before You are our monies, O God, a portion of our life's earnings. With them we offer our well-meaning purposes, our vague desires, our confusion about life, our understanding of Your will, or even our sinful selves. Make them worthy of Your blessing for we offer them with humble and grateful hearts. In Christ's Name. Amen

*or*

We gladly give back to You, O Almighty God, what You have entrusted to us. Gladly we offer to You ourselves for Your blessing. Use us and our gifts, dear God and Parent, in the work of proclaiming Your love to all peoples. Through Christ our Savior. Amen.

*or*

Take our gifts from our hearts and bless them by the Spirit of Christ, that men and women may know Your love is alive, and find hope. Protect from temptation all who handle these dedicated funds. Hasten the day when Christ's Spirit shall reign in the hearts of all people.\*

### HYMN OF DEDICATION OR COMMITMENT (*standing*)

*This hymn shall carry the message of dedication, consecration or commitment of lives to God and God's service. It would even be better if it can further carry out the message of the sermon.*

### BENEDICTION (*congregation standing*)

Go now, remembering what we have done here. Go, remembering what God has done here. You are a forgiven people, eternally loved, and charged to be obedient and responsible wherever you are. Go into the world to be God's people. May God's peace and joy be with you all, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen. (7)

*or*

Minister: Here you have heard the Word of God proclaimed; Here you have sung praises to the Creator God;  
Here you have witnessed to God's Love at work among God's people!  
Now, go out into the world of work and play,  
Proclaiming God's Word to others,  
Singing praises with others,  
And witnessing to God's love for all.  
Through Christ our Sovereign Savior! Amen.

Leader: Glory be to God Who can keep you from falling and bring you safe to God's glorious Presence, innocent and happy! To God, the only God, Who saves us through Jesus Christ our Savior, be the glory, majesty, authority, and power, which He had before time began, and continues now and forever.

All: Amen!

### A MOMENT OF SILENT MEDITATION (*all sit*)

### POSTLUDE

## B. THE LORD'S DAY SERVICE WITH THE HOLY SUPPER

The celebration of the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist is a practice based largely on the Last Meal that Jesus shared with His disciples prior to the crucifixion. It is the only uniquely Christian aspect of Christian worship. Whether the Last Supper that Jesus ate with His disciples was or was not a Passover meal, He followed the usual custom of Jewish piety as He did at other meals with His disciples. Hence, "thanksgiving" and "blessing" were prominent in them. But Jesus gave new meaning to the old familiar elements of the bread and the cup. They were, henceforward, to be the pledge of God's Presence, until the perfection of the fellowship in the Heavenly Feast. As the Jews at the Passover meal recalled the mighty acts of God in delivering them from slavery in Egypt and gave thanks to Him, so Christians, remembering their redemption as a present reality, also give thanks to God.

The primary sources of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23ff, Mk. 14:22ff, Mt. 26:26ff, Lk. 22:15ff) include the following acts: Jesus took the bread and then the cup, He gave thanks to God (or blessed the elements), He broke the bread, and then gave (or distributed) it to His disciples. One way of understanding the significance of this sacrament is to focus on the *action words* used in connection with the elements, the role of which was to recall the *sacrificial death of Christ* as an event.

Jesus first took the bread and the wine from the offerings of the people. As was customary, this was an act in which everyone shared and thus was established the *Offertory*. The ordinary things of life, such as food and drink, are shared and are used by Christ. The second action is the *Thanksgiving* in which these gifts are acknowledged and offered to God for use for divine purpose. Thus, in the process, the ordinary things of life are made *sacred*. In many traditions, this thanksgiving is called the *Prayer of Consecration*. Then follows the Breaking of the Bread and the Pouring of the Cup, which underline a fact of human life—that only as they are *readied* do they increase in value. The loaf of bread has to be broken in order to be eaten or used. Finally, climaxing the Taking, Blessing and Breaking is the act of *Giving*. Giving is the highest expression of a person's new life and vitality and, hence, it fills one with joy.

Throughout the centuries and all over the world, there have been at least five (5) major accepted meanings of the Lord's Supper for Christians: first, it is a *Fellowship Meal* in which Christians, partaking of the Supper together with Christians everywhere else, reenact their unity with others through the sacrament as well as with their Savior Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 10:17, the one bread or loaf, of which all partake, is a *Memorial Feast* in remembrance of Jesus Christ and his passion, death and resurrection, both as a historical fact and as a symbolic act of redemption. The Eucharist proclaims the significance of the Cross, the *institution of the new covenant* in the blood shed by Christ, and is the *pledge of the people's share in its benefits*. Third, it is also a *manifestation of the Coming Kingdom*, for as Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper with its accompaniments of joy, peace, love, and genuine concern for one another, they show forth Christ's coming again. It is a foretaste of a final reunion with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom, as well as an expression and the promise of fellowship among Christians. (In the second and third meanings are embodied both a looking back and a looking forward in Christian hope). Fourth, it is a *Eucharistic Offering* or an offering of thanksgiving for what God has done in and through Jesus Christ—a celebration of God's action in behalf of persons and the present reality of human redemption. Fifth, it is also a *Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God*, issuing forth in a life of service offered to and for others.

All five meanings are equally important and ought to permeate each celebration of the Lord's Supper. These meanings may be made quite explicit in the spoken Word or sermon which ought to accompany each celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Christians today need to recapture the mood of joy and celebration in the Lord's Supper. The New Testament teaches that the *gift* of the Lord's Supper is the *real presence of the Risen Savior*. In the early Church, the remembrance of Christ's earthly death also brought rejoicing in His living, risen presence at the breaking of the bread. The joy of knowing the presence of Christ at the Eucharist was for the early Christians a foretaste of the final reunion in the Kingdom of God. And so it is!

With the emphasis on *joy*, the celebration of the Lord's Supper may then be "freed" to incorporate more contemporary modes. For instance, there are many ways by which the Bread and the Wine may be offered in the



offertory, in much the same way that there are many ways of setting the Table. Sometimes, the elements are brought in before the congregation gathers and then "uncovered with splendor" at the appointed time before the congregation. At other times, the whole act of preparing the Table may be shown and even participated in by the people as they come and bring

their offerings of bread, wine and other gifts. Then there are a number of ways by which the congregation may partake of the elements. Some come forward to kneel at the rails, and are served. Some sit around the Communion Table and are likewise served, or they may serve each other. Some stand in line and receive the elements standing. Still others sit in the pews and wait to be served by the church elders: while in some instances, a single loaf of bread and still a single cup or bottle of wine are passed around and each participant either helps himself/herself or feeds his/her neighbor. And so on.

The Lord's Supper indeed opens up many possibilities for contemporizing as well as "indigenizing" the process. In fact, it is through the celebration of the Eucharist or Holy Supper or the Mass that many different denominations are being brought together. The Holy Communion has also been called a *Sacrament of Unity*. For this reason, there is included here the order of the Lord's Supper as it has been worked out by the Executive Committee of the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) in the United States. It is hoped that it will serve as a pattern for ecumenical Communion services.

## **ORDER 1 THE LORD'S DAY SERVICE WITH THE HOLY SUPPER (8)**

### **I. THE LITURGY OF THE WORD**

THE GREETING (*al l standing*)

Minister: Grace to you and peace from God Who is, Who was, and Who is to come, and from Jesus Christ, the Faithful Witness, the First Born of the dead: to Him Who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and made us a Kingdom of priests to God and the Heavenly Father.

People: To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever! Amen.

*After the Greeting may follow:*

Minister: The Lord be with you. People: And also with you.

Minister: Let us pray:

Almighty God, to You all hearts are open, all desires known, and from You no secrets are hid. Cleanse and inform our hearts and minds by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, that we may truly love you and worthily praise Your Holy Name, through Jesus Christ, our Sovereign Lord.

People: Amen.

#### ***AN ACT OF PRAISE***

A hymn or psalm of praise or one of the following ancient canticles of the church may be sung:

#### ***Gloria in Excelsis***

Glory to God in heaven:  
Peace and grace to God's people on earth.  
We praise You for Your great glory,  
We worship You, we give You thanks, Loving God, heavenly King,  
Almighty God, Heavenly Parent Lord Jesus Christ, Lamb of God,  
Creator God, only Son of the Heavenly Father!  
You take away the sin of the world:  
Have mercy on us.

You sit at the right hand of the Almighty God:

Hear our prayer.

You alone are the Holy One,  
You alone are the Savior,  
You alone are the Most High,

Jesus Christ,  
With the Holy Spirit  
In the glory of the Creator God. Amen.

***Te Deum Laudamus***

We praise You, O God; we acclaim You as the Sovereign Lord.  
All creation worship You, everlasting Creator.  
To You the angels and all the powers of heaven sing;  
To You cherubims and seraphims continually cry out joyfully:  
"Holy, holy, holy Creator God Almighty,  
Heaven and earth are full of Your power and glory.  
The glorious band of apostles praise You.  
The worthy company of prophets praise You.  
The martyr-hosts in white array praise You.  
The Holy Church throughout the world worships You!"

"Our Parent of infinite mystery,  
True and only Son,  
And Holy Spirit, the Advocate.  
That You may be reconciled to Him anew,  
Through our Savior Jesus Christ."

*Then the minister will invite the people:*

Let us humbly confess our sins to God, our heavenly Parent and Creator.

THE CONFESSION OF SIN (*all kneeling*)

Minister and People: Have mercy upon us, O God,  
According to Your loving kindness.  
According to Your abundant mercy  
Blot out our transgressions.  
Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity,  
And cleanse us from our sin.  
Create in us a clean heart, O God,  
And renew in us a right spirit.  
Cast us not away from Your presence,  
And take not Your Holy Spirit from us.  
Restore to us the joy of Your salvation,  
And uphold us with a willing Spirit.  
Through Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our Savior. Amen.

*or*

Most Holy and Merciful Creator God:  
We confess to You and to one another,  
and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth,  
that we have sinned against You by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved You with our whole hearts and minds and strength,  
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves,  
We have not had in us the mind of Christ,  
We have grieved Your Holy Spirit.  
You alone know how often we have sinned and grieved You,  
by wasting Your gifts,  
by wandering from Your ways,  
by forgetting Your Love.

Forgive us, we pray You, most merciful Father, and free us from our sin.

Renew in us again the grace and strength of Your Holy Spirit,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ, Your Son our Savior. Amen.

#### A DECLARATION OF PARDON (*all standing*)

Minister: God shows Divine love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. If any one is in Christ, she/he is a new creation; the old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, Who through Christ reconciled us to the Godself.

If any one does sin, we have an Advocate with the Creator, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Almighty God, our heavenly Creator, Who of divine great mercy has promised forgiveness of sins to all those who turn to You with true repentance and sincere faith: have mercy upon us. Pardon and deliver us from all our sins. Confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and bring us to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

*or*

Minister: Almighty God have mercy upon you, forgive you all your sins, and bring you to everlasting life. Amen.

People: Almighty God have mercy upon you, forgive you all your sins, and bring you to everlasting life. Amen.

*A Doxology or a Response of Praise may be sung or said here, led by the singers or the choir*

#### THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

*Persons appointed may read:*

An Old Testament Lesson

A Psalm is Sang (*by all*)

A New Testament Lesson

*After each lesson, a hymn, psalm, anthem, or responsive reading by the congregation/choir may be sung or said, Then the minister appointed shall read a lesson from the Gospel.*

The Gospel (*all standing*)

#### THE WORD PROCLAIMED

*At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Preached Word, there may follow:*

An Invitation to Christian Discipleship

The Ministration of Baptism and/or Reception of New Members into the Church

A Hymn on Discipleship or Church Membership

The Apostles' or Nicene Creed, or some authorized

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (*by all standing*)

## The Passing of Peace

*Minister and People shall exchange the greeting of Peace*

*Minister: "The Peace of God be always with you."*

*People: "And also with you."*

## The Prayers

*The minister or a person appointed shall lead the people in the following petitions and intercessions with the people standing or kneeling; or the minister may offer at her/his discretion a Pastoral Prayer:*

In Peace, in the peace of God from above, let us pray to our God. For the peace of the whole world; and for the peace, unity and faithful service of the churches of God in this and every land.

All: *Hear us, O God.*

For all Christian people, their ministers and teachers, that by word and example, they may bring many to faith and obedience in Christ.

All: *Hear us, O God.*

For those in authority among the nations (and especially for the President, the Cabinet and the Supreme Court of the Philippines), that they may govern with justice and promote peace and unity among all people.

All: *Hear us, O God.*

For all on whose labor we depend, especially those whose duty bring them into danger, that they may have courage and strength to serve the common good.

All: *Hear us, O God.*

For those who seek out knowledge, and guide our thought; for those who help us laugh and play, that truth and beauty may give joy to daily life.

All: *Hear us, O God.*

For all who suffer: the poor and the lonely, the sick and afflicted, the tempted and the bereaved; for prisoners and those who are oppressed, or persecuted—that they may be strengthened and delivered.

All: *Hear us, O God.*

For those who are enemies of the Gospel of Christ and who wrong their fellow humans that they may see the Truth and be reconciled to You.

All: *Hear us, O God.*

For the dying, that they may rise to eternal life; and for the departed, that they may rest in peace.

All: *Hear us, O God.*

*Here may be given opportunity for members of the congregation to ask the people of their prayers for any special needs. The minister may then proceed after concluding the prayer.*

Let us commit ourselves, one with another and to our God.

All: *God, help us and guide us.*

Let us offer to our God Divine kindred love with the help of the Holy Spirit, and for each one of us the grace of holy life.

All: *God, help us and guide us.*

Let us remember before God Divine, all who are near and dear to us, those present and those absent, that we may truly love and serve one another in the bond of Christ.

All: *God, help us and guide us.*

Let us pray for our community (and nation), that in all things we may be honest and just, and free from prejudice, bitterness, strife, and fear.

All: *God help us and guide us.*

Let us recall in thanksgiving those who have died in the faith. May God give them the crown of life in the day of resurrection, and judge them worthy to be with the righteous to enter into the joy of their Savior.

All: *God, we give You thanks for them!*

Let us give thanks for all God's servants and witnesses of times past.

*Here may be read as listed some of the patriarchs, prophets or heroes of the faith that are significant to the congregation who respond after the reading of the list.*

All: *God, we give You thanks and praise for them!*

The minister may conclude:

Heavenly God/Parent, You have promised to hear what we ask in the Name of Your Son. We humbly pray that You, accept and fulfill our petitions, not as we ask in our ignorance and unworthiness, nor as we deserve in our sinfulness, but as You know and love us in Your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

All: Amen.

## **II. THE LITURGY OF THE HOLY SUPPER**

### **THE OFFERTORY** *(all standing)*

Minister: Beloved in Christ, the Gospels tell us that on the first day of the week, the same day on which our Lord rose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples in the place where they were gathered, and was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Come then to the joyful feast of the Lord. Let us prepare His Table with the offerings of our life and labor.

*During the offertory, a hymn, psalm or anthem may be sung by all or the choir; or the Minister or some person appointed may read appropriate sentences from the Scriptures. Representatives of the congregation will receive and bring to the Table the gifts of Bread and Wine, and other offerings of the people. At the presentation, a Doxology may be sung.*

Minister: O God, Yours is the greatness and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the Majesty;

People: For all that is in heaven and in earth are Yours.

Minister: Yours is the Kingdom, O God.

People: And You are exalted as Head above all, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

*or*

Minister: You are worthy, our Savior and God, to receive glory and honor and power;

People: For You have created all things, and by Your will they do exist and indeed exist happily! In Jesus Christ's Most Holy Name! Amen.

*Or the minister may offer a brief prayer, or the following:*

Heavenly Parent, may the Savior Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, be present with us as He was among His disciples, and make Himself known to us in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup. To You be praise and glory with Your Son our Savior, and the Holy Spirit, now and forever!

All: Amen.

THE THANKSGIVING (*all standing*)

Minister: May God be with you.

People: And with you also.

Minister: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to our God.

Minister: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is truly right to do so.

Minister: We give You thanks, Holy Parent, Almighty and Eternal God, always and everywhere, through Jesus Christ, Your Son our Savior by Whom You made the world and all things living and beautiful.

We bless You for Your continued love and care for every creature. We praise You for creating us in Your image, and calling us to be Your people. Though we rebelled against Your love, You did not abandon us, but sent to us prophets and teachers to lead us into the way of salvation.

Above all, we give You thanks for the gift of Jesus, Your only Son, Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. In the fullness of time He took upon himself our nature; and by the obedience of His life, His suffering upon the Cross and His resurrection from the dead, He has delivered us from the way of sin and death.

We praise You that He now reigns with You in glory and ever lives to pray for us. We thank You for the Holy Spirit Who leads us into truth, defends us in adversity, and unites us out of every people in one Holy Church.

Therefore, with the whole company of saints in heaven and on earth, we worship and glorify You, God most Holy, and we sing with joy.

Minister and People: (*standing*)

"Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts,  
heaven and earth are full of Your glory.  
Glory be to You, O Lord most High."

*The people may kneel, as the minister prays:*

"Holy Father, most glorious and gracious God, we give You thanks that our Savior Jesus Christ, before He suffered, gave us this memorial of His sacrifice, until His coming again. For in the night when He was betrayed, He took bread. And when He had given thanks to You, He broke it, and gave it to His disciples, and said: "Take, eat: This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way also after supper, He took the cup. And when He had given You thanks, He gave it to them and said: "Drink this, all of you: This is my blood of the New Covenant, which is poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Minister and People: "His death, O God, we proclaim.

His resurrection we declare.

His coming we await.

Glory be to You, O God!"

Minister: Heavenly Parent, show forth among us the presence of Your life-giving Word and Holy Spirit, to sanctify these gifts and Your whole Church through these holy mysteries. Grant that all who share in the Communion of the Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ may be one in Him, and remain faithful in love and hope until that perfect feast with Him in joy in His eternal Kingdom.

Minister and People: Gracious God, accept with favor this our sacrifice of praise which we now present with these Holy gifts. We offer to You ourselves, giving You thanks for calling us to Your service as Your own people, through the perfect offering of Your Son Jesus our Savior;

Holy Spirit, all honor and glory be to You, God Almighty, now and forever. Amen.

Minister: As our Savior Christ has taught us, we dare to say:

Minister and People: Praying together: "The Lord's Prayer"

### **Silent Moment**

#### **THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD**

*After a period of silence, the minister shall break the bread and pour the wine in preparation for the Holy Communion, during which time the following may be said or sung:*

Minister: The bread which we break, is it not a sharing in the Body of Christ?

People: Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of one bread.

Minister: The wine which we drink, is it not a sharing in the Blood of Christ?

People: The cup which we bless is the communion in the Blood of Christ.

#### **THE HOLY COMMUNION**

Minister: Alleluia, Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us!

People: Therefore let us keep the Feast. Alleluia!

Minister: Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of our God!

People: Hosanna in the Highest!

Minister (*holding up the Communion elements*): The gifts of God for the people of God.

*Then shall be said, either to the whole congregation or to each individual communicant, by the minister who gives the bread:*

"The Body of Christ, the bread of heaven." Amen.

*And the minister who gives the wine:*

"The Blood of Christ, the cup of salvation." Amen.

*During Communion, silence may be kept, or hymns, psalms, and anthems may be sung.*

#### **AN ACT OF PRAISE**

*A hymn, psalm, doxology or this canticle may be sung, all standing:*

"The Nunc Dimittis" (*the minister*)

"Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace  
According to Your Word.  
For our eyes have seen Your salvation,  
Which You have prepared before the face of all  
To be a light for the Gentiles,  
And the glory of Your people Israel!"

*And the minister and people may say this Prayer of Thanksgiving together:*

ALMIGHTY and Everlasting God, we give You thanks for receiving our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and for feeding us with the spiritual food of the body and blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. Strengthen us ever with Your Holy Spirit, that we may serve You in faith and love, by word and deed, until we come to the joy of Your

Eternal Kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Savior, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

### **THE DISMISSAL**

*Then shall the People, standing, be sent forth to their life and witness in the world, as follows:*

Minister: Depart in peace. In the Name of our Savior.

People: We will serve our God in gladness.

All: Thanks be to God!

Minister: And may God Almighty, the Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit bless you, now and always. Amen.

or

Minister: Go out into the world in peace. Be strong and of good courage. Hold fast to what is good. Love and serve our God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

or

Minister: The Peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ, our Savior. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

People: Amen.

Minister: Go in peace, to love and serve our Savior.

People: Thanks be to God! Amen!

## **ORDER 2 THE LORD'S DAY SERVICE WITH THE HOLY SUPPER**

### **I. THE LITURGY OF THE WORD**

#### ***THE PREPARATION***

PRELUDE OR ENTRANCE MUSIC

SILENT MEDITATION OR PRAYER

CHORAL INTROIT

#### ***THE ACT OF PRAISE***

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader/Liturgist: O sing a new song to the Lord:  
Sing to the Lord all the earth.  
O sing to the Lord, bless His name:  
Proclaim His help from day to day.  
(Psalms 96:1-2)

People: Once again we are gathered here together in the Lord. We therefore pray and praise Him and listen to His Word.

Leader/Liturgist: The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ  
has called us His children, and so we are;



through Christ we call him "Father."  
Let us give honor to His Name:

All: Power and glory belong to the Sovereign God,  
And to God's Name be glory forever!  
Amen and Amen!

Leader/Liturgist: What shall we render to our God for all God's benefits toward us?

People: We will give the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the Savior.

Leader/Liturgist: Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast.

People: O taste and see that our God is good.  
Blessed is the one who trusts in God!

\*ACCLAMATION: "GLORIA IN EXCELSIS" (*congregation standing*)

*or a brief hymn of praise or acclamation may be sung instead.*

INVOCATION (*congregation still standing*)

Minister/Liturgist/Unison: Here we are again, O God, gathered in Your House according to our custom. We pray, as always, that You would make us feel Your Presence that we may truly worship You and You alone. Surprise us, dear God, and touch us with Your Spirit that we may rise from this hour renewed in love, strengthened in hope, and illumined in faith. Through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

or

O God, Who has called us to come apart and rest awhile, Who can give refreshment of body and soul through Your presence, be with us here. Be with us now. Open our minds and enlarge our spirits, that we may be able to receive the inflowing of Your grace. Quiet our thoughts and calm our anxieties, that in this hour we may find new purpose. Build in us a firm confidence that despite all, we may mount up like eagles into Your mighty fortress. Kindle our hearts. Shame us. Empower us. Sustain us, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

\*HYMN OF PRAISE OR ADORATION

### ***THE ACT OF PENITENCE***

CALL TO REPENTANCE

*Congregation may sit or kneel.*

Minister (*standing*): Beloved in Christ, we have come together to hear God's most Holy Word, and to receive the Body and Blood of our Savior. Let us therefore examine ourselves in silence, seeking God's grace that we may draw near to God, with repentance and faith.

*Pause for individual silent prayer*

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, and love your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life—following the commandments of God and walking henceforth in God's holy ways—make your humble confession to Almighty God, that you may be reconciled anew to Him through our Sovereign Jesus Christ. (9)

or

The proof of God's amazing love is this: that it was while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. It is through the same Jesus, because we trust in Him, that we dare with confidence to approach God. Let us admit our guilt before God and our fellow human beings.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (*unison – all kneeling*)

O Holy God, we confess that we have sinned against You and our neighbor. We have walked in darkness rather than in light; we have named the Name of Christ, but have not departed from iniquity. Have mercy upon us, we beseech You. For the sake of Jesus Christ, forgive all our sins; cleanse us by Your Holy Spirit: quicken our consciousness; and enable us to forgive others; that we may henceforth serve You in newness of life, to the glory of Your Holy Name. Amen. (10)

*or*

God our Creator, we have fallen short of what have been expected of us — whether it be in our thinking, our speaking or doing: we have loved only ourselves, neglecting our neighbor. And yet You have not forsaken nor condemned us. Forgive us for the shallowness of our promises. Take away from us our self-centeredness that we may be able to live up to the example of Your Son Jesus Christ, through Whom we pray. Amen.

#### ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS OR OF GOD'S MERCY

Minister (*standing*): Christ said, "He who saves his life shall lose it, but he who loses his life for my sake shall find it."

People: In dying to our false imaginations and vain strivings, and centering our lives in that power beyond ourselves, we are given new possibilities for living.

Minister: Indeed, that which is greater than us accepts us.

People: Which means that, whatever we have done or will do, nothing can change the fact that we have been received in this world, and that even now we can dare to be who we are.

Minister: We are valued as we are. Life is good as it is given. The future is open. And this is the one objective and everlasting truth: in Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven. May we receive this gift and live.

All: Amen.

*or*

Minister: The Savior God knows that we are men and women in need of forgiveness. Our God is merciful and sets us free.

People: Sets us free to begin anew and to sing a new song. God's work be praised!

All: Amen!

A DOXOLOGY OR A CANTICLE (*with all standing*)

or AN ANTHEM OF PRAISE (*by the choir or singers*)

#### **THE ACT OF INTERCESSION**

THE SHARING OF CHURCH CONCERNS

THE EXCHANGE OF GREETINGS OF PEACE OR PASSING OF THE PEACE

*The minister; clasping the right hand of a member near her/him shall say: "The Peace of God be with you!" and the response will be: "And also with you." and so on, until all shall have received and passed on the "peace."*

THE CHURCH AT PRAYER OR THE PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER (*by all*)

PRAYER RESPONSE (*sung by the choir or congregation*)

#### **THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD OF GOD**

THE READING OF SCRIPTURES

A HYMN OR AN ANTHEM (choir, singers or congregation)

THE SERMON OR COMMUNION MEDITATION

A SILENT PRAYER OF CONTEMPLATION

## II. THE LITURGY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

THE OFFERTORY

Minister: Luke, the Evangelist, records that on the evening of the first day of the week, the same day on which our Savior rose from the dead, when He was at Table with His disciples, He took bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them, and their eyes were opened and they knew Him.

Beloved, this is the joyful feast of the people of God. Come from the East and the West, from the North and South, and gather about the Table of the Lord.\*

*or*

This is the joyful feast of the people of God! Come to this sacred table, not because you must but because you may; come not to testify that you are righteous, but that you sincerely love our Savior Jesus Christ, and desire to be His true disciples. Come not because you are strong, but because you are weak. Come, because in your frailty and sin, you stand in constant need of heaven's mercy and grace.\*

*Silent moment of contemplation*

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING OF MONEY AND THE BREAD AND WINE

*The call to offering*

AN OFFERING HYMN OR THE DOXOLOGY

*This may be sung as the offerings are received and brought forward. The congregation shall stand during the presentation.*

THE OFFERTORY PRAYER

Minister/Liturgist: Our Gracious God, we offer these gifts from our labor. We bring this money, part of our earnings. May it help advance the work of Your Church, not only within its walls, but also in the larger community.

We bring these elements for the common meal we are about to partake. They represent the fruit of the land You have loaned us to use. They remind us of our common need to nourish our bodies and to share with those who lack these necessities. They also symbolize the sanctity of common things which You can transform into a sacrament, a visible sign of an inward grace. Purify these tokens, O God, for our use now in the sharing of these bread/camote/banana and wine/juice in this Sacred Meal in remembrance of Your Son Who shared His life with us. Through Him, Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

*or*

What is seen, O God, are a few tokens: bread and some wine (juice). What we intend with these tokens is the offering of ourselves and all that we have. Whatever wisdom and learning, or whatever talents and worldly goods we have, are Yours from the beginning and are offered here for Your blessing.

You promised to be present in the common meal of bread and wine, so hallow also our lives and the things of this world by Your presence. Grant that our days may be refreshed with meaning and purpose. We ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Savior.\* Amen.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE ELEMENTS

Minister: Let us now in faith set aside this bread and this wine for holy use as symbols of the Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Parent, may the Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, be present with us as He was among His disciples, and make Himself known to us in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup. To You be praise and glory with Your Son, our Savior and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

People: Amen. (11)

*or*

Minister: God our Creator, Maker of heaven and earth, pour out Your glory on this our sacrifice of praise. Send now Your Holy Spirit upon us and our celebration. Consecrate this Bread and this Cup set apart as our offering of thanks to You for Your love and mercy, that with the Holy Spirit these may be the means by which we recall with penitence and thanksgiving Your sacrifice through Your Son our Savior. Grant us the sincerity to offer You ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to You. Blessed are You, O Lord, our God. Amen.

#### THANKSGIVING OR EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

*Here may be included "The Great Thanksgiving of God's People" as well as the specific concerns of the local community. If a creed has not been offered earlier in the service, this Thanksgiving Prayer ought to contain some of the doctrines of the Church for which a worshipping community may give thanks.*

*The following may be used. The congregation shall stand.*

Minister: We give You thanks and praise, our God, for all that You have done for the world. We must not take even our existence for granted: for it is Your love which has given us Life.

*Here particular thanksgiving messages may be added as appropriate.*

We praise You and thank You, Almighty Parent, because You are our God, our Creator and our Sustainer. Blessed are You, O God, that You have given us this day and this hour. Blessed are You, O God in all the things You have made in plants and in animals and in people—the wonders of Your hand. Blessed are You, God, for the food we eat, for bread, for wine, and for laughter in Your presence. Blessed are You, O God, that You have given us eyes to see Your goodness in the things You have made, ears to hear Your word, hands that we may touch and bless and understand. We give You thanks that, having made all things, You care for them and love them. We praise You through Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

*or*

Minister: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Minister: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

Minister: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right that we should.

Minister: We give You thanks, O God, through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Whom in this, the last of all periods of time, You sent to save and redeem us and to tell us what You wanted of us. He is Your Word, inseparable from You. You made all things through Him and You were well-pleased with Him.

People: You sent Him from heaven to a virgin's womb; He lay in that womb and took flesh, and You were presented with a Son, born of the Holy Spirit and of the virgin. He did what You wanted Him to

do, for when He suffered, acquiring thereby a people for You. He stretched out His hands to free from suffering those who believed in You.

Minister: And when He was handed over to undergo the suffering He Himself had chosen, thereby to destroy death, to break the chains the devil held us in, to crush hell beneath His feet, to give light to the just, to make a covenant and manifest His resurrection, then, He took bread, gave thanks, and said to His apostles: "Take this and eat it, this is my Body that is broken for you."

In the same way He took the chalice, saying: "This is my Blood that is to be shed for you. When you do this, you will be commemorating Me."

All: Calling then this death and resurrection to mind, we offer You the bread and chalice, and we thank You for enabling us to stand before You and serve You.

Minister: We ask You to send down Your Holy Spirit on this Offering the Holy Church makes to You: to unite all who receive the Holy Communion, and to fill them with the Holy Spirit for the strengthening of their faith in the Truth.

All: And, may we all give You praise and glory through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen. (12)

A HYMN OF COMMUNION (*the congregation may be seated*)

#### THE HOLY COMMUNION

*The minister, taking the bread in her/his hands and breaking it, shall say:*

The bread which we break is the communion with the Body of Christ.

*Then, the Minister shall lift the cup or pour the wine into the cup, saying:*

The cup of blessing which we bless is the communion in the Blood of Christ.

*or*

*The Minister may recall the origin of the Lord's Supper through the reading of the Words of Institution, breaking the Bread and lifting or pouring the Cup at the appropriate moments in the reading. Any of the following texts may be used:*

Matthew 26:26-29

Mark 14:22-25

Luke 22:19-20; 18

1 Corinthians 11:23b-26

#### THE SHARING OR THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE BREAD AND THE CUP

Minister: And now, ministering in Christ's Name,  
I give you this Bread and this Cup.  
Come, for all things are now ready.

*or*

Minister: Holy things for the holy!  
One only is Holy,  
One only is the Lord, Our Savior,  
Jesus Christ, to the glory of our Creator God!  
Come, and receive the Body and Blood of Christ. (13)

*The bread and cup are distributed in the manner to which the people are accustomed. This is an opportune time for quiet meditation, preferably without background music at times, especially for congregations used to it. On other occasions, contemporary songs of communion may be sung by the choir to be joined in by the congregation when they are ready*

## **THE ACT OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION**

### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION

Minister/Liturgist/Unison: Almighty and Everlasting God, we give You thanks for feeding us with the spiritual food of the Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. With the broken bread, which we have partaken, we have eaten an invisible loaf, given each day no larger than our need. This is the broken bread of Your humiliation, purging us of pride and pretense. With such broken bread we depart from the Table of One Whose life was broken that ours might be mended; to shine at last with His spirit at the doing of Your will on earth where all things are incomplete until Your blessings rest upon them.\*

*or*

God, our Creator, we put back into Your hand all that You have given us, rededicating to Your service all the powers of our minds and bodies, all our worldly goods, all our influence with others. All these, O God, are Yours to use as You will. All these are Yours, O Christ. All these are Yours, O Holy Spirit. Speak in our words today, think in our thoughts, and work in all our deeds. And seeing that it is Your gracious will to make even such weak human instruments as what we are, in the fulfillment of Your mighty purpose for the world. Let our lives today be the channels through which some little portion of Your divine love and pity may reach the lives around us. And to Your Name be all the glory and the praise, even unto the end. Amen. (14)

### HYMN OF DEDICATION OR FELLOWSHIP (*congregation standing*)

#### **THE COMMISSIONING**

### BENEDICTION (*congregation standing*)

Minister: God sends you from the gathered Church to be scattered and let loose in a world that is often resistant to Him. In your varied occupations, may you make your world God's world, a world that is "new in Christ." And may God's Spirit go and abide with you, now and always.

All: In Christ Jesus' Name, Amen. (15)

*or*

Minister: Go now, remembering what we have done here, responding and responsible wherever you are. You can never be the same again! Go, to be God's people wherever life takes you, and may the God Almighty be with you; and may peace and joy forever accompany you. (16)

### ASCRPTION OF GLORY (*congregation standing*)

Minister: And now, to God be glory, worship and praise, now and always!

All: Amen!

Minister: Indeed, to God be the glory, honor, majesty, and praise!

All: Amen, and Amen!

### CONGREGATIONAL OR CHORAL AMEN

### MOMENTS OF SILENT MEDITATION (*congregation seated*)

### POSTLUDE OR EXIT MUSIC

## **ORDER 3 THE LORD'S DAY SERVICE WITH THE HOLY SUPPER**

### PRELUDE

### SCRIPTURE SENTENCES

Minister/Liturgist: Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, she/he will live forever. And the bread that I will give her/him is my flesh, which I give up so that the world may live." (Jh. 6:51)

"Listen! I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into his/her house and eat with her/him, and she/he will eat with me." (Rev. 3:20)

HYMN OF PRAISE (*congregation standing*)

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Minister: Friends, if you sincerely turn your backs on your sins; if you want to live in love and peace with everyone; and if you desire to lead a new life doing God's will from now on, then prepare to come forward in faith to receive this sacrament. Now let us make our peace with God, confident of Divine forgiveness, by joining in this prayer of confession: (17)

General Prayer of Confession: (*congregation kneeling, if possible*)

O God, Whom Jesus called "Father," we admit that we have ignored many opportunities to do the loving thing. We are sorry that we have thought, said and done such foolishness. Now we turn away from our mistakes. We are sick at heart, O God, when we think of them! Forgive us for not knowing what we do. Please forgive us! In the Name of Jesus Christ, forgive us! Grant that we may so love and serve You all our days, that others will praise You. Through Christ, our Savior. Amen. (18)

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Minister: God our Creator has promised to forgive all who turn to Him in faith. Even now God forgives us, and sets us free to live new lives in Jesus Christ our Savior. Henceforth, we may live, not in fear or dread, but secure in Christ's power and love. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ! Therefore, let us rejoice in the Christ our Savior! (19)

Congregational Response

SCRIPTURE LESSON

COMMUNION MEDITATION

THE OFFERTORY

Call to Offering

Minister/Liturgist: Dear friends, this is the banquet that our Savior prepared for those who love Him. Let us offer to Him our gifts.

Presentation of Offerings

Offering Hymn/Doxology (*congregation standing*)

*Offerings of money are brought forward together with the bread and wine.*

*Offertory Prayer (together)*

Be pleased to accept, O Holy Parent,  
Almighty and Eternal God, these offerings of bread and wine and money,  
which we, Your unworthy but willing servants,  
make to You on behalf of Your holy Church, for all believers and unbelievers,  
living and dead, that it may preserve us for everlasting life in union with You;  
and be for us a Source of strength to joyfully carry out the work which  
You have given us to accomplish in this world.  
We ask this in the Name of our Savior Jesus Christ,  
Whose Body and Blood these offerings are to symbolize,

Who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit as God forever. Amen. (20)

All (*singing, if possible*): "Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts, Heaven and earth are full of thy glory: Glory be to thee, O Lord most high." Amen.

#### THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Minister: Jesus went forth in God's Name to save the world. We remember in this Sacrament His life and death. We call on Him to live in us and with all people. We look forward to being with Christ forever. This, according to Scripture, was His intention. He wanted all people to receive these symbols of Godly love. At the dinner table, on the very night he was betrayed, he told his disciples: "I have wanted so much to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer... Take and eat this bread: this is my Body given for you. Drink this, all of you, for this is my Blood poured out for you. Do this, whenever you want, in memory of me, until I come again."

We use these symbols then of His Body and Blood, in memory of His life and death, in the faith that he is risen to be with us; and in the hope that we will be with Him to the end of time. Let us pray that as we receive this sacrament, Jesus Christ will become a living reality in our lives and in our life together. (21)

#### COMMUNION PRAYER (*all*)

We do not come to this Table, O God, counting on our own goodness. For we know that we have missed the mark of our high calling. We trust only in Your love. We would gladly eat the leftovers from Your Table, but we rejoice that Your love is so great that You invite us to come as guests. Grant that we may receive this Sacrament as a turning point in our lives. May we grow to be like You, as You become the Center of our living. Amen. (22)

#### COMMUNION HYMN (*congregation may be seated.*)

#### SERVING THE BREAD AND WINE

Minister (*lifting the bread and breaking it*): Jesus said, "This is my body which is given for you. Take, eat and remember me." (*The bread is distributed.*)

Minister (*lifting the cup*): Jesus said, "This cup is the blood of my new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Drink it, all of you, and remember me." (*The cup is distributed.*)

#### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION (*by all*)

O God, Heavenly Parent, please accept our offering of praise and thanksgiving. We thank You that in Jesus Christ we find forgiveness for all that is past, and a new future of meaning and purpose. Here and now, our Savior, we offer ourselves to be filled with Your grace and goodness. Though none of us deserve it, lead us to a new life together. In Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. (23)

#### HYMN OF FELLOWSHIP (*congregation standing*)

#### BENEDICTION (*congregation standing*)

Minister: Live joyfully and gratefully be the strength of this heavenly food, sharing in the death and resurrection of our Savior. Fill the world with the Spirit of Christ, and in all things—in the very midst of human affairs—become a witness of Jesus Christ. And may the Almighty God bless you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (24)

All: Amen.

#### CONGREGATIONAL AMEN (sung with the choir)

#### POSTLUDE



## C. THE AGAPE MEAL

The Jewish tradition of a *chaburah* (or brotherhood or fraternity meal) was apparently appropriated by the early Christians as their fellowship or *agape* (love) feast. The practice that spread far and wide among Christian communities is evidenced in Jude 12, 21 Peter 2:13 and I Corinthians 11. The meal appears to have been held in homes and took place regularly on the first day of the week. At these feasts, families (with both male and female members in attendance) obviously brought their own food and shared these with all who were present. At times, some of these communal meals were "provided by well-to-do members of the community for the poor or for widows."

The basic characteristics of the agape meals or love feasts were expressions of brotherhood or fraternity as early Christians sought one another's company in common fellowship. (Later, these fellowships will include both male and female). As Iliion Jones suggests, the people planned these meals "To give expression to their sense of brotherhood and for the purpose of having needed fellowship with those of like minds and interests."<sup>5</sup>

There is also reason to believe that these meals were partaken as part of the Lord's Supper until about the second century when the fellowship meals were held separately. The word "agape" became the accepted term for what was left of the Supper after the Eucharist was separated from it. The agape did not require the presence of the bishop and could be presided over by anyone. Eventually it was discontinued because it became impractical for many people to come together for this type of meal and because of abuses in the meal itself.

The agape meals may well be revived by Christians today, especially in rural Philippines where the congregations are small, and where many church members have to walk many kilometers to and from the places of worship. While there are certain admonitions against abuses in this practice, as witnessed by Paul's letter to the Corinthians, nevertheless, the basic ingredients of the agape have much to contribute toward the building up of small communities. Philippine rural folks, fortunately, are still quite church-community-oriented and do faithfully set aside Sundays for church gatherings. Their worship might well be in the context of agape meals. There is no need to recapture the joy of sharing among rural Christian Filipinos—it has never been lost! And the truly sacramental aspects of the agape may be expressed in the common meals they share together, because they also are still truly God-oriented.

The agape meal suggested here may be separate from or is a part of the Lord's Supper celebration. In places where there are no pastors, the church elder or deacon may preside over and serve the agape meal. These meals may also be shared at closing meals of conferences or assemblies of church organizations. The House Church (which will be discussed in the next section) may also be the setting for the agape meal.

The prayers given here are either paraphrases of, or patterned after, the early Christian prayers. This is to give the users a flavor of early Christian prayers. The users of these rites are also encouraged to write out their own prayers or invite participants to give extempore' prayers in the liturgies.

## THE CELEBRATION OF AN AGAPE MEAL

### THE CHURCH GATHERS

#### THE PREPARATION

*This may mean the literal preparation of the place of gathering where the hosts and early comers prepare for the service. The central table is set to receive the offerings, seats are arranged to emphasize fellowship, if desired; and worship symbols may be placed at the center of the room or at one visible corner or side.*

#### THE OPENING WORDS

*These may be words of welcome spoken by the head of the host family, if held in a home; or by an appointed leader for the service in the church building.*

#### THE CALL TO WORSHIP

We come together once again to celebrate our oneness with one another and with Christ. Through this fellowship meal, we do remember Christ's passion, death and resurrection; and we also taste the joy of the coming Kingdom as we embrace each one in loving concern.

"Listen!" Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into his/her house and eat with her/him, and she/he will eat with me." (Rev. 3:20)

or

"Listen!" Jesus said: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, she/he will live forever. And the bread which I will give her/him is my flesh, which I give up so that the world may live." On. 6:511

#### THE OFFERTORY

Liturgist: Let us now offer to God our offerings of ourselves through the offerings of the substance and fruits of our labors.

*The offerings of money or in kind, and the meals to be shared are brought forward, and individuals or families who come forward to bring them may kneel or stand in front in thanksgiving and dedication.*

#### THE HYMN OF OFFERING OR OFFERTORY ANTHEM

*This may be sung while the offerings are brought forward, or after everyone has brought her/his offerings to the Table.*

#### THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING *(congregation standing)*

Leader: We give You thanks, O God, for the life and knowledge You sent us through Jesus, Your Son.

People: Glory to You throughout the ages!

Leader: We give You thanks, O God, for the holy vine of Your servant, David, which You made known to us through Jesus, Your Child. People: Glory to You throughout the ages!

Leader: As the elements of this broken bread, once scattered over the mountains were gathered together and made one, so may Your Church be built up from the ends of the earth, and gathered into Your Kingdom.

People: Glory and power are Yours through Jesus Christ and ever will be! Amen! (25)

#### THE BLESSING OF THE FOOD

Leader *(lifting the platter of rice)*: Blessed are You, O Creator God, Eternal King,  
Who brings forth grains from the fields! *(sends the platter around for distribution)*

Leader *(lifting the plate of meat)*: Blessed are You, O Creator God, Eternal King,  
Who brings forth beasts from the fields! *(sends plate around for distribution)*

Leader *(lifting the plate of sea food)*: Blessed are You, O Creator God, Eternal King,  
Who brings forth fish from the sea! *(sends plate around for distribution)*

Leader *(lifting the plate of vegetables)*: Blessed are You, O Creator God, Eternal King,  
Who brings forth vegetables from the earth! *(sends plate around for distribution)*

Leader *(lifting the pitcher or glass of juice or plate of fruits)*: Blessed are You, O Creator God, Eternal King,  
Who brings forth fruits from the trees! *(sends plate around for distribution)*

Unison/Leader: We praise You, O God, for all these gifts and for all the blessings You gave us when You adorned the whole creation with such a variety of living things, through Your Child, Jesus Christ, our Savior, through whom Your glory will come to You throughout the unending succession of ages!  
Amen.\*

#### SHARING OF THE AGAPE MEAL

*The community proceeds as in a regular meal, although conversations may be directed by the leaders by opening topics relevant to their community life, the issues of the day and their mutual ministry in and through them. Or readings from the Bible and devotional materials may be made at intervals during the meal. This is also the place where a brief sermon or meditation may be given, if time permits.*

### THE HOLY COMMUNION

If a minister is present, the Agape Meal may continue into a Celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Minister (*picking up the bread and breaking it*): The Savior Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, gave thanks to God, and said: This is my body, which is for you. Do this in memory of me. The bread which we now break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?"

People: Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of one bread. (*The bread is shared and all partake, either as they are served, individually or together*).

Minister (*lifting the cup*): "In the same way also, Jesus took the cup and said, "This cup is God's new covenant sealed with my blood. Whenever you drink of it, do it in memory of me. The cup which we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?"

People: "The cup which we bless is the communion in the blood of Christ."

*The cups are distributed and all partake in the manner followed as in the partaking of the bread.*

### THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (*after the meal, all standing*)

Unison/Minister/Leader: Blessed are You, O Creator God, Eternal King, Who feeds the whole earth with Your goodness, with grace, with loving kindness and with tender mercy. You give food to all flesh, for Your loving kindness endures forever. Through Your goodness, food has not failed us. O may it not fail us forever, for Your great Name's sake, since You nourish and sustain all living things and do good to all, and provide food for all Your creatures whom You have created!

Minister: Blessed are You, O Sovereign God, Who gives food to all. Blessed are You, O Creator God, Eternal King, Who created the world by Your grace and its inhabitants by Your mercy, and saved humankind by Your compassion and gave great grace to mortals!

All: We glorify You through Your Son our Savior, Jesus Christ, through Whom to You be glory and might and honor with the Holy Spirit now and forever, world without end. Amen.\*

### THE HYMN OF FELLOWSHIP OR DEDICATION

### THE OFFERING FOR THE POOR

*A second offering may be received which may be specified in its use, as for the poor or the sick or those in prison.*

### THE BENEDICTION

Minister or each one to her/his neighbor: "May the love of God unite us; the joy of God inspire us; the peace of God enfold us; the courage of God sustain us; and may the blessing of God, the Creator, Son and Holy Spirit, rest upon us evermore. Amen." Or Minister: "We have gathered together and we know God is here. We have heard God's Word proclaimed to us in song and words. Now, let us go out into the world of work, study and play, remembering what we have done here and what we have heard here. Let us go forth, telling the world who we are and show them where we are going, because we are in Christ. And wherever we go, we go with Jesus Christ Who taught us the way, the truth and the life. Amen.\*"

### SILENT MOMENT FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION

### THE COMMUNITY DISPERSES

## D. THE HOUSE CHURCH WEEKLY SERVICE

The earliest worship rites of the small Christian communities were held with simplicity and intimacy in the homes of members. Zealous faith and the warmth of fellowship marked those weekly gatherings, which, as reported in the Book of Acts, included "learning the apostles' teachings, taking part in the fellowship, sharing in the breaking of the bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:43)

Regarding this, Justin also reports the following:

"The writings of the apostles and prophets were read, as far as time allows. When the reader stops, the person presiding comments on the admirable models thus set before them; she/he explains the lesson ... Then, we all rise together and offer a prayer; and ... when we have finished our prayer, the bread, wine and water are brought in. The president prays and gives thanks ... And the blessed elements are distributed."<sup>6</sup>

This rite may still serve as a pattern for a simple Lord's Day service in small congregations. In many towns and barrios, where there are no church buildings or where the houses of worship are no longer accessible to many of the members, the home of a member may be the setting for the weekly gathering of the members. It is in such settings where the warmth of fellowship in house churches may be revived and experienced. The simple rites of the early Church may be used also in small churches, specially in circuit or cooperative parishes. Here, lay leadership may certainly be used.

### AN ORDER OF A HOUSE CHURCH SERVICE

#### THE GREETINGS

*These greetings may be read from letters of the bishop, moderator or superintendent, or the circuit pastor of the local congregation. In the absence of these letters, excerpts from any of the letters in the New Testament may be used, especially those that speak to local needs or spontaneous greetings from one another may be shared.*

THE INVOCATION (leader) O God, Creator and Redeemer of us all, You have promised that wherever two or three gather together in Your Name, You are there in their midst. Thank You for this assurance. Help us now to feel Your presence among us at this hour, and to rejoice in Your Spirit, even as we rejoice in one another's company. In Christ's Name, Amen.

THE HYMN OF PRAISE OR AFFIRMATION OF FELLOWSHIP (congregation standing)

LESSONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES Reading from the Old Testament A Doxology or a Canticle is sang (congregation standing) Reading from the New Testament (all rise if from the Gospels)

THE HYMN OF ILLUMINATION OR HYMN OF PRAYER (congregation may stand)

THE SERMON OR MEDITATION

"GLORIA PATRI" OR ANOTHER CANTICLE (congregation standing)

THE SHARING OF THE COMMON LIFE Announcements Introduction of Guests Sharing the Concerns and Needs of Members and Friends

THE CHURCH AT PRAYER This may be the usual pastoral or general prayer. In the house church setting, it may be extempore' prayers from as many members or worshippers as may wish to share in it, or it may be a prayer prepared by the assigned leader. The following are examples.

Morning Prayer Daily, O God, we bow our heads and seek the words with which to pray. Daily we close our eyes and await visions for our task. Daily we fold our hands and humbly expect Your guidance. Daily we bend our knees and remember Your mercy. Daily we open our lips and rejoice in Your blessings. Today we bow our heads, close our eyes, fold our hands, bend our knees and open our lips that we may be blessed by You through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

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#### THE INVOCATION (*leader*)

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#### THE HYMN OF PRAISE OR AFFIRMATION OF FELLOWSHIP (*congregation standing*)

#### LESSONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Reading from the Old Testament  
A Doxology or a Canticle is sang (*congregation standing*)  
Reading from the New Testament (*all rise if from the Gospels*)

#### THE HYMN OF ILLUMINATION OR HYMN OF PRAYER (*congregation may stand*)

#### THE SERMON OR MEDITATION

"GLORIA PATRI" OR ANOTHER CANTICLE (*congregation standing*)

#### THE SHARING OF THE COMMON LIFE

Announcements  
Introduction of Guests  
Sharing the Concerns and Needs of Members and Friends

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### *Morning Prayer*

Daily, O God, we bow our heads and seek the words with which to pray. Daily we close our eyes and await visions for our task. Daily we fold our hands and humbly expect Your guidance. Daily we bend our knees and remember Your mercy. Daily we open our lips and rejoice in Your blessings. Today we bow our heads, close our eyes, fold our hands, bend our knees and open our lips that we may be blessed by You through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

*or*

### ***Evening Prayer***

We offer You our thanks, O Creator God, for all the little things of life that we so often take for granted, but without which we cannot live. For the air we breathe, the water that cleanses and refreshes, the sun that warms, the whole wide earth in which we thrive, and daily blessings of food, shelter and clothing. But more than all these things, we see Your Hand of love and compassion blessing our lives through many ways, through friends and family and love itself among us; through thoughts and feelings that transcend barriers of unconcern; or through our faith in Christ by which we are able to follow Your leading to a fuller, richer life. Be with us now as we meet in the evening of another day. Fill us with hope that we may rise to nobler heights of existence in the morning, glorifying You our God and our Creator. Amen.

### LORD'S PRAYER (*by all*)

### CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (*congregation seated*)

### OFFERTORY

#### *Call for the Offering (liturgist)*

Remember this: The person who plants few seeds will have a small crop; the one who plants many seeds will have a large crop.

Each one should give then, as she/he has decided: not with regret or out of a sense of duty; for God loves the one who gives gladly (2 Cor. 9:6-7)

*Here the offerings of food, cash or contributions in kind are received, as in the manner of the agape meal.*

### THE HYMN OF OFFERING (*congregation standing*)

*As the offerings are received or brought forward, the food to be shared in the meal is also brought forward. Those who wish to offer prayers of thanksgiving or dedication may come forward to kneel or to stand in offering this.*

### *Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving (leader)*

Blessed are You, O God, Creator of the Universe, Who gives us grain from the earth, fruits from the trees, fowls from the air, and beasts from the fields; and Who endows each of us with strength and wisdom that we may harness all these to good use. And now, O God, bless us who offer these gifts to You; and bless our gifts, too. Amen.

### THE INVITATION TO THE CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY COMMUNION OR THE HOLY SUPPER

Leader: Sustaining and Providing God, You have set a Table before us and have called us to feast with You.

All: Prepare us in mind and spirit, that we may place in readiness this celebration in Your Name and bring honor to Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.\*

### THE ACT OF PENITENCE

Leader: Before we can truly enjoy this joyful feast of our Savior, let us cleanse ourselves of our guilt by confessing our sins to our Creator God.

All (*kneeling, if possible*): Creator God, we have done wrong; by not caring when we should have cared; by our indifference to the cry of need; and by hating and ignoring our neighbors. We have rejected the way of Your Son, and no longer deserve to be called Your children. O God, we cannot help ourselves; forgive us and help us, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. (26)

*A brief moment of individual silent prayer*

Leader (*standing*): May the Loving God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and fill us with the Holy Spirit, that through Him, we may fulfill the Holy will, and that we may obtain everlasting life. In Christ's Name. Amen.

A COMMUNION HYMN

THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION

*Any of the following may be read here:*

Luke 24:28-42

John 6:25-29

I Corinthians 10:16-22

THE SHARING IN THE FELLOWSHIP MEAL

*If the community desires conversation concerning the faith, the leader may lead them in the discussion of the sermon or some insights gleaned from the letter read to them. Or they may talk about the present concerns of the church, or listen to some Scripture readings to glean from them lessons appropriate for the present situations.*

\*A HYMN OF FELLOWSHIP OR COMMITMENT

*(congregation standing)*

\*THE BENEDICTION (*leader, minister/preacher or in unison*)

And now, may God, the Source of patience and encouragement, enable us to have the same point of view among ourselves by following the example of Christ Jesus, so that all of us together, with one voice, may praise the God and Parent of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 15:5-6)

*or*

May God our Creator make our love for one another and for all people grow more and more and become as great as the Savior's love for us. In this way, may He make our hearts strong, and so, we will be perfect and holy in the presence of our God and Creator when our Savior Jesus comes with all who belong to Him,\* in whose Name, we pray. Amen.

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

THE CONGREGATIONAL AMEN

# Chapter 3

## OCCASIONAL RITES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

### A. CREATION OR NEW LIFE RITES

The Christian rite most commonly used as a means for the initial commitment into the life of the Church is *baptism*. Many congregations practice infant baptism and justify their action by Scriptural texts such as Acts 16 where it says a whole household was baptized, which presumably included children. The command in Matthew 28:19 to "go ... baptize ..." is also used as a basis for this sacred act to include children. Other congregations which adhere only to adult baptism have equally good reasons for doing so. Jesus himself was baptized as an adult and so were most of the first Christians.

Whatever the practice, adult or infant baptism, it is considered the *sacrament of initiation* into the Christian community. The person to be baptized, whether infant, youth or adult, is said to be "claimed by God" and receives the sign of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church, and the new Sovereign of one's life. And whether the act is symbolized by immersion in a body of water, or by sprinkling or pouring water on the candidate's head, or simply the pastor's touching the head with water, the baptismal rite is most meaningfully administered in the presence of the congregation into which the person is received as a new member. Indeed, as much as possible, this ought to take place during a regular worship service. If this rite has to be held elsewhere, the presence of the community of faith may be symbolized by the presence of one or more elders or deacons and other church members.

#### 1. THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM OF INFANTS

The importance of family and kinship ties is one of the primary values of the Filipino. One way of strengthening this tie is through the symbolism of *co-parenthood* actualized by the presence of sponsors or godparents during the baptism of infants and youth. This high value placed on sponsors could be utilized in the nurture of children in Christian love and faith, as well as in extending supportive care to the family. Parents then ought to exercise special care in choosing as sponsors or godparents those who will seriously and effectively help them in bringing up their children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord."

The significant parts (27) of a Baptismal Rite are:

##### 1. Address to the Gathered Community

*This is to explain the meaning of the act of baptism in the light of its Biblical and Church traditions, and of local church practices.*

##### 2. An Affirmation of Faith

*This is a statement or statements made by the person to be baptized, or the parents-in case of infant baptism-or, preferably, by the whole congregation affirming the essence of their Christian faith. It may be a creed or responses made to the minister's questions.*

##### 3. The Vows of the Person to be Baptized

*Here the person to be baptized or her/his parents and sponsors publicly make promises of faithfulness to the Christian life and faith to guide the baptismal candidate.*

##### 4. The Vows of the Community of Faith

*The congregation as a whole, or through the sponsors or godparents, promise to accept their love and care for the person being baptized, and to help nurture her/him in the faith in and through their life together in the faith community*



## 5. The Prayer of Supplication

*This seeks God's help for the persons involved in carrying out the vows they have just made.*

## 6. The Act of Baptism

*The person to be baptized is given a name and baptized in the Name of God the Parent/Creator, the Son and the Holy Spirit through the act of sprinkling, pouring or touching water on the head, or by complete immersion in water.*

## 7. Welcome to the newly baptized

## 8. The Prayer of Dedication and Blessing

*This seeks God's blessing and guidance for the baptized and the whole community gathered after their dedication to God's grace and service.*

### AN ORDER OF THE SERVICE FOR INFANT BAPTISM

*At the designated place in the order of worship, the minister shall stand in front of the congregation with a church elder by her/his side and shall invite the parents and sponsors to bring forward the child or children to be baptized.*

ADDRESS (by the minister)

"My friends, we are about to celebrate one of our church's sacraments, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Let us hear the words of Jesus Christ once again when He said, 'Go forth and make all nations my disciples; baptize people everywhere in the Name of the Creator, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. And be assured, I am with you always, to the end of time.'"

*(to the Parents)*

"You have brought your child here desiring for her/him Christian baptism. Let us be reminded that there are essentially two basic meanings behind the baptism of infants. In the first place, by this act, we acknowledge once again that God is the Source of all our love. Thus, as parents we acknowledge God's loving work of creation and offer unto the Creator the gratitude of our hearts for the happiness and hope which has come into our lives by the presence of this child. Furthermore, we acknowledge that God's loving initiative precedes our awareness of it. Thus, long before we first became aware of God's loving concern for our lives, that love had always been undergirding all that we are and all that we do. In baptizing this child, then, we are declaring publicly that even though she/he may not be consciously aware of God's love, God's loving care has been, and is surrounding her/his growing life. In the second place, by this act we bring this child into a new environment — the environment of a loving, sharing community whose Sovereign is Christ Jesus. The Church IS this community, for we are those who have experienced the love shown to us through Christ. Thus, we try to live a life of concerned love toward one another. In baptizing this infant, we, as members of the household of God, pledge to God and declare that we will surround this child with that love we ourselves have known through Christ."

Jesus said "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belong the Kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child shall not enter And he took them up in his arms and blessed them.

### AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Minister: Let us unite our hearts and voices in the affirmation of our common faith.

*The Apostle's Creed of the Nicene Creed or some contemporary statement of faith may be said or read together by all here. See pages 227-230.*

### Vows (28)

In bringing this child now to be baptized, do you confess your faith *(to the parents)* in Jesus Christ as the Savior and Lord of all of your life?

Answer: We do.

Do you accept for yourselves and for your child the covenant of grace, being assured that God loves your child and desires that, by prayer and example, you bring her/him up in the nurture of the Savior and in the ways of the community of God's people, the Church?

Answer: We do.

Will you promise to provide for your child instruction in the teachings of the Bible, in the truths of the Christian faith, in prayer and in all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe for her/his soul's good?

Answer: We will, with God's help.

*(to the sponsors or godparents)*

Do you, who stand here as sponsors, solemnly promise to use your special relationship and influence that the child committed to your special care may be taught aright and be brought up faithfully endeavoring to live as pleasing in God's sight?

Answer: We do.

*(to the congregation)*

Do you, members of this congregation, receive this child into the love and care of this congregation and promise to walk with her/him in the joys, tasks and suffering that God sets before the people?

Answer *(standing)*: We do.

#### PRAYER *(congregation standing)*

Let us pray:

Do not let this be simply a social occasion, O God. Touch the hearts of those present who associate Christianity only with superficiality and have become accustomed to religious exercises devoid of integrity or real meaning. [A child] is being baptized into Your own life and death, O Christ. Someone is being made a part of the community of Your own Body. Do not let this baptism be shunted off into a small corner of a big church.

Make us all realize that we are profoundly involved in this event because [the child's name] is being [dedicated] to a lifetime of discipleship and ministry in Your Spirit and Name. Amen. (29)

#### THE ACT OF BAPTISM

Minister: What is the Christian name of this child?

Parents: *name of child?*

Minister: *(name of child)*, I baptize you in the Name of our Creator God Almighty, and of the Son, Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit. And now, may the blessing of God the Creator, Son and Holy Spirit, descend upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

#### PRESENTATION TO THE CONGREGATION

*The minister shall request the baptismal party to face the congregation.*

Members of the household of faith, I commend to your love and care this child, /name/whom we this day recognize as a member of the family of God. With God's help, may we so order our lives after the example of Christ's love, that this child, surrounded by steadfast caring, may be established in faith, confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to Christ's discipleship.

Let us pray:

O God, grant that this child (*name the child*) as she/he grows in years may also grow in grace and the knowledge of the Savior Jesus Christ; and that by the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit, she/he may ever be a true child of God, loving and serving You faithfully all her/his days. (30)

So guide and uphold the parents and sponsors of this child (*name the child*) that by loving care, wise counsel and holy example, they may lead her/him into that life of faith, whose strength is righteousness and whose fruit is everlasting joy and peace; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

*or*

*Congregation:*

It is good to give thanks to You, O God, for You make us glad by Your deeds. You have loved us with a steadfast love, and we bless Your Name. Today, we offer our praise and thanks to You in behalf of this child, \_\_\_\_\_, who is assured of Your love even before she/he is consciously aware of You. We ask that Your loving care may ever surround her/his growing life, that she/he may grow as Jesus grew, in wisdom, in stature and in grace before all people and before You. Enable her/him by the power of the Holy Spirit, to become a trusting and obedient follower of Jesus Christ. By Your grace, help her/his father, mother, godparents, and us, the members of this Church, to keep the promises we have made before You today. In the Name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, we pray. Amen.

## **2. THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM OF ADULTS**

In churches where infant baptism is not practiced, baptism is postponed until the teen years or even later. This ritual is significant when the person concerned has, on his/her own, decided on this rite of entrance into the church. Therefore, it is necessary that the candidate/s be encouraged to undergo conscientious training and instruction in church membership prior to their baptism.

Since this is an event marking the full membership of the candidate in a congregation or the Body of Christ, thus bestowing upon her/him full privileges of a member such as, participation in the Lord's Supper, it would be best to plan to have this service prior to the celebration of The Lord's Supper. And, like the Infant Baptism, it is most meaningful if held as part of a regular church service.

In the case of youth baptism, the presence of parents in the rite and even of sponsors, if desired, is meaningful since the youth will continue for some time yet to rely on the parents' or adult guidance and counsel. The participation and presence of the parents in this act are, therefore, encouraged.

## **AN ORDER OF SERVICE FOR ADULT BAPTISM (31)**

ADDRESS TO THE CONGREGATION (*the minister*)

Friends, we are about to receive by baptism into the fellowship of this Church, (name/s of candidate/s) who has/have received instruction in Church Membership. Let us remember that in baptism we enter into union with Christ and experience with Him death and resurrection through our own dying to self-centered lives and rising again as New Persons-for-others. Furthermore, in the use of water, we symbolize the washing away of our past offenses and are offered to use a clean slate on which to start life over again, empowered and enabled through the Holy Spirit. Also, through this act, we are initiated into the community of Christians, God's own people on earth. Therefore, we enter into this act joyfully, thoughtfully, and humbly. Let us now listen to our candidate(s).

DECLARATION OF FAITH

*A Creed or a Statement of Faith which the candidate herself/himself or another may have prepared. See pages 227-230.*

CONFESSION OF VOWS

To the Candidate's:

Minister: Your presence here today is an indication that you wish to live a new life—a life in Christ—and be joined with this community of Christ's followers. Do you confess publicly your faith in Jesus Christ and desire to be baptized into the community of God's people?

Response: I do.

Minister: Do you promise, with God's help, to live as a new person, faithfully endeavoring in and working for the good of all your fellow human beings?

Response: I do.

To the Parents and Sponsors of Youth Candidates, if present:

Minister: Do you promise to continue to pattern your life/lives after Jesus Christ that you may be for these young people examples of Christian love and responsibility?

Response: We do.

To the Congregation:

Minister: Do you, the members of this congregation, receive this person's into the love and care of this congregation and promise to walk with her/him in the joys, tasks and sufferings that God sets before you as God's people?

Response: *(standing)* We do.

PRAYER *(by all)*

O God, sustain us all as we strive to fulfill the promises we have just made in Your Church. Bind us to one another in joy and caring, that together we may grow in faithfulness to You and to the tasks You have given us to do. In Christ Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

THE BAPTISM

What is your given name?

*(name)*, I baptize you in the Name of the Creator God, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And may the blessings of the Triune God, be upon you now and always. Amen.

PRAYER

O God, we praise You, we give thanks to You, we sing for joy, that another person has joined and been joined to Your Church. Bless and guide her/him in the days ahead that her/his membership with us in Your Church may bear the fruit of faithfulness and love. Keep us all faithful to the trust and the tasks that are ours in Your Church and in Your world. Bind us together in Your love and care with this new member and with all Your children everywhere, that we may live out the fullness of life You promise to all humankind. In the Name of Jesus Christ, our Sovereign and Savior, we pray. Amen.

BLESSING *(by the minister)*

Now to God Who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or conceive, by the power of the Holy Spirit which is at work among us, to this God be Glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus from generation to generation. Amen.

## AN ALTERNATE ORDER OF SERVICE FOR ADULT BAPTISM (32)

### ADDRESS TO THE CONGREGATION

Minister: Friends, we are about to receive by baptism into the fellowship of this Church (*name/s of candidate/s*), who has/have received instructions in church membership. Let us now attend to this act prayerfully.

Let us be reminded that in baptism, we enter into union with Christ and experience with Him death and resurrection through our own dying to self-centered lives and rising again a New Person-for-others. Furthermore, in the use of water, we symbolize the washing away of our past offenses and offer a clean slate upon which to write the story of our new life over again, guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Through this act also, we are initiated into the community of Christians, the Church, God's own people on earth.

Will you now declare before God and this congregation your understanding of our statement of belief?

Candidate's: I believe that God loves the world so much that He gave His only Son. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I believe that Jesus Christ calls us to be His followers and thus share with Him sonship to, or being children of, God. I believe that the Church is the Community of Christ's followers and that when I accept Jesus Christ, I must become a part of that Community. I believe that as a part of that Community, the Body of Christ, I shall strive with other followers to do God's will as revealed in the Holy Bible and in the events of daily life.

Minister to the Parents and Sponsors: You have heard the confession of belief and promises of these people entrusted to your care. Have you anything to say?

Parents and Sponsors: We shall try to live as Jesus Christ would have us live so as to make our lives living examples of Christian obedience. So help us, God.

Minister to the Congregation: You have heard and witnessed the confessions and promises of these our loved ones in front of you. Do you wish to assume your responsibilities as members of this congregation?

Congregation (rising): Yes, and we heartily welcome into the fellowship of this Church (*name/s of candidates*) and now promise to uphold her/him/them through our love and understanding, and help guide her/him/them in the ways of Jesus Christ. God, our Creator, helping us.

### THE BAPTISM

*Minister to the person/s to be baptized:*

What is your given name? (*The name is given.*)

\_\_\_\_\_, I baptize you in the Name of God, the Creator, and of the Son, our Savior, and of the Holy Spirit. And may the blessings of God our Creator, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you now and always. Amen.

We thank You O God, especially today for calling (*name of candidate*) by baptism into the membership of the church. May she/he never cease to wonder at what You have done for her/ him. Help her/him to continue firmly in the Christian faith, to bear witness to Your love, and to let the Spirit mold her/his character and conduct.

We ask that You make the baptism of all of us real and complete, so that we may live together in the joy and the power of the Holy Spirit, and at the last, live forever in Your Presence; through Jesus Christ our Sovereign Lord and Savior. Amen.\*

### BLESSING

May the God Who gives us peace make you completely God's, and keep your whole being—spirit soul, and body—free from all fault, until the coming again of our Savior Jesus Christ.

The grace of our Savior Jesus Christ be with you now and always. Amen. (1 Thess. 5:23, 28)

### 3. THE DEDICATION OF INFANTS

In churches where baptism is reserved for adults, there has grown through the years a practice of dedicating children in the Church. It is probable that this practice had its origin in the presentation of the Infant Jesus by His parents in the Temple as told in Luke 2:22-24. Another possible basis of the practice is found in the Old Testament, specifically 1 Samuel 1:21-2:10, which tells of the dedication in the Temple of the child, Samuel, by his mother, Hannah.

In the presentation of Jesus, three actions took place: first, the priest, Simeon, took the child in his arms; second, he blessed God; and, third, he blessed the parents, reminding them of the preciousness of the child as a gift of God. This presentation of Jesus was in obedience to the Jewish practice, of which one other aspect was the circumcision of the male child on the eighth day after birth, at which time he received his name.

Hannah's presentation of her son was in fulfillment of her promise to offer him to the Lord, for having heard her petition for a child. This particular event was accompanied by an offering of a sacrifice, symbolizing the mother's thanksgiving. The sacrifice was followed by a prayer and a song of praise by Hannah.

There are then several elements from biblical sources that might be incorporated in a *Dedication Rite for a Child*: the presentation of the child to God or dedication to God, the blessing of the child and her/his parents, the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise, and possibly the child's receiving her/his name. The Dedication Rite of an infant in the Church is essentially an act of, and primarily, for the parents.

The following are important parts to be considered in a Dedication Service of an Infant:

#### ADDRESS TO THE CONGREGATION *(by the minister)*

*Here is explained the meaning of the event and the biblical bases are read which may include the above-mentioned texts and/or Matthew 18:6, 10, 14 or Mark 8:36-37. The child to be dedicated, together with his/her parents and sponsors, are then called forward.*

#### CHARGE TO THE PARENTS (AND SPONSORS, IF ANY) AND THE CONGREGATION

*These are vows made by the parents, sponsors of any), and the congregation for the care and guidance of the child to be dedicated to God.*

#### WORDS OR PRAYER OF PRESENTATION

*These are made by the minister or one of the parents acknowledging God's claim on the child and their trusteeship of his/her life; and their vows to help the child grow in stature, in wisdom, and in favor with God and people.*

#### ACT OF DEDICATION

*Here the minister may take the child in her/his arms, if an infant; then she/he with her/his right hand over the child's head or one of the parents may hold the child and over him/her the blessing is pronounced.*

#### ACT OF THANKSGIVING

*Here a prayer of thanksgiving may be given by a parent, or by the minister for the parent; or a hymn of thanksgiving may be sung by the choir or the congregation.*

#### PRESENTATION TO THE CONGREGATION

*After the act of dedication is completed, the child and her/his parents and sponsors are requested to face the congregation and the minister presents them to the congregation.*

The benediction is pronounced on all, and the worship rite is ended.

## **AN ORDER OF SERVICE FOR THE DEDICATION OF AN INFANT (33)**

### ADDRESS TO THE CONGREGATION

Friends, we are gathered together in this *Dedication Service*, first, to give thanks to God for this gift of a new life given to us in trust; second, to dedicate this child to God so that when she/he is grown, she/he will give her/himself in service to others, just as Jesus did; third, to name this child, thus recognizing her/him as a unique person and a member of the family of God; and, fourth, for all of us to promise to help this child grow in wisdom, in stature and in favor with God and people.

### SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Jesus said: "Whoever receives one such child in my Name receives me. See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven. So, it is not the will of my Father that one of these little ones should perish." (Mt. 18:6, 10, 14)

*and/or*

Jesus ... said to them: "Let the children come to me; do not try to stop them; for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you, whoever does not accept the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." And he put his arms around them, laid his hands upon them, and blessed them. (Mk. 10:13-16)

### CHARGE TO PARENTS (AND SPONSORS, IF ANY)

You know that the child's first concepts and understanding of God come from you. Do you then promise to grow in faith so that you may properly guide and instruct this child in the love and understanding of God?

Answer: I do.

### CHARGE TO THE CONGREGATION

Do you, as members of the church, acknowledge the preciousness of this child of God set before you and promise to so lead your lives that this child may come to know and acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Sovereign of your lives? And also of the child's life? Please rise in affirmation.

Congregation (*standing*): We do.

### PRAYER OF PRESENTATION (*by the minister*)

Bless, O God, this child whom we this day call by name, recognizing her/him as your child and here dedicate her/him to Your love and care. Cause Your Holy Spirit to descend upon her/him that she/he may grow in mind and body, loving You and her/his fellow human beings. Bless her/his parents and friends that they may grow in grace and in their faith so that they may be true examples for this child. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

### PRAYER OF PRESENTATION (*by Parents*)

We thank You, O God, for this our child whom we today dedicate to You. Grant her/him Your blessing and attend her/him with Your presence that she/he may grow up and to love whatsoever things are true, and pure, and lovely, and of good report. Grant to us, his/her parents, understanding and selfless devotion that we may be faithful in fulfilling the promises we have made before You this day. Through Jesus Christ, our Sovereign and Savior. Amen.

### ACT OF DEDICATION (*the minister shall hold the child or shall lift his/her right hand over the child's head and say*):

(*Name of child*), may the loving God, the God of peace, make you holy in every part, and keep you sound in spirit, soul, and body. Amen. (1 Thess. 5:23a)

May the blessings of God Almighty, Creator, Son and Holy Spirit be and abide with you, now and always. Amen.

or

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

#### ACT OF THANKSGIVING

##### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (by a parent)

O God, our loving Creator, we give You thanks for this wonder of a child whom You have given to us and of bringing her/him in safety through childhood's dangers; for our privilege of helping her/him to grow to adulthood, and to do good and what is pleasing in witness for You. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.  
(34)

#### PRESENTATION TO THE CONGREGATION

*(The child and parents/sponsors face the congregation)*

Friends, we have this day dedicated to the Loving God this child, \_\_\_\_\_, and we rejoice with the parents, \_\_\_\_\_, for this gift of a child in their family. See that in all you say and do, you may teach this child the truths and responsibilities of Christians, that through prayer, precept and example, you help bring her/him up in the love and care of our God.

*and/or*

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your hearts; and you shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." (Dt. 6:4-7)

## **B. PASSAGE RITES**

A person's journey through life—from the womb to the tomb —is a continuous movement from one phase to another. *Passage Rites*, as they are here called, have to do with those ceremonies and rituals which accompany some of the more significant phases in this life's pilgrimage. These are best celebrated in the public worship of God, witnessed by and participated in, by the community of God's people.

Passage rites include a person's entrance into the fellowship of the church when she/he has reached the "age of reason" as well as her/his entering into a new state and relationship, as in marriage.

Other passage rites may be observed in the Christian community on such occasions as when a person goes away to college; or when she/he starts off on her/his first job; or when she/he becomes engaged to be married or a death in the family. All these may be times for bringing the family together for the worship of God.

Some day, rituals for other farewells, such as divorce or dissolution of a marriage, a service for dissolving church membership, or saying goodbye to those ending a relationship with a congregation, among others, may be included in a book for worship. This book suggests orders only for Confirmation, Transfer of Membership, Engagement, and Marriage.

## **1. CONFIRMATION OF BAPTISM**

A person's passage from childhood to adulthood is most significantly marked and celebrated in what is known as the *Confirmation of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism*. In this act is dramatized one's 'acceptance of full adult responsibility as a member of Christ's church," says George Hedley, who also maintains that this is an "absolutely critical point in the individual's life story."



The rite of confirmation is a relatively late addition to early church practice, adult baptism having been accepted relatively recently as the means of entrance into the community of believers. As the Christian Church grew, infant baptism came to be practiced and so confirmation of the baptismal vows became necessary.

*Confirmation* strengthens or confirms God's claim on the person which was signally dramatized in infant baptism. The rite of confirmation is significant in that the confirmed person decides to assume for her/his own the vows which her/his parents and sponsors made for her/him in her/his infancy. The confirmed is also declaring publicly her/his passage to maturity and to responsible membership in Christ's community. It is imperative that candidates for confirmation undergo rigid training on the meaning and responsibilities of church membership prior to this Confirmation Ritual.

The Rite of Confirmation has its antecedents in the *bar-mitzvah* of the Jewish religion. Some of the important aspects of the Confirmation rite are the *prayer of confirmation* which includes the bestowal of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit; the *laying on of hands* by the bishop or the minister, which symbolizes the sanctifying of the confirmed on whom the Holy Spirit bestows its gifts; the *recitation of the Apostle's Creed* which was initially designed for adult baptismal candidates; the *kiss of peace* which was planted by the bishop or minister; and the *blessing*

The practice of inviting sponsors or godparents to participate in the confirmation rite is a still later development. The sponsor in the confirmation may place her/his hand on the candidate's head or shoulder signifying acceptance of responsibility for her/his nurture. Many aspects of the confirmation rites of the early, the medieval, and the early reformed churches are still quite meaningful for today. Some adaptations for contemporary use are naturally in order. For instance, instead of *The Apostle's Creed*, the candidates, in their training sessions, may be required to write out their own simple statements of belief which may be recited together during the service. The laying on of hands need not be confined to bishops and ministers alone, but may be extended to parents and sponsors, as well as to church leaders. The parental blessing, which is important to the Jewish bar-mitzvah, is equally so to the Filipino family and ought to be incorporated in the rite. The kiss of peace or the right hand of fellowship climaxes the rite.

## **AN ORDER OF SERVICE FOR THE CONFIRMATION OF BAPTISM**

*At the designated time in the order of the worship, the minister shall call the candidates for confirmation to come forward. The candidates shall face the minister.*

### ADDRESS TO THE CONGREGATION AND THE CANDIDATES

Minister: Friends, we are about to receive into full membership of the Church these persons whom we have called and who now stand before us. As infants, they were baptized in the Christian church, and God laid Divine claim on each of them as God's own and in that act they were already received into the fellowship of the Church. Today, on their own, they come before you and before God, to confirm what was done for them at baptism and to personally confess their faith in Jesus Christ and claim Him as Sovereign of their lives. In this act, they also present themselves to God as God's instruments in Kingdom-building. They also wish to pledge with us, as members of this Church, and the whole Church of God, as co-workers and co-seekers after truth. Let us now hear from them their statements of faith and intention.

*To the candidates*

Do you confess with us your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Sovereign? And will you now make your confession of faith?

### AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

*Here the Apostle's Creed or the Nicene Creed or any contemporary creed may be read or recited together by all the candidates. If the candidates have written out their own statements of belief; they may read or say this together.*

## AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISMAL VOWS

To the Candidates *(by the officiating minister)*:

Do you now promise, relying on God's grace, to follow Christ and serve Him all your life in the fellowship of the Church?

Answer: I do.

To the Parents/Guardians/Sponsors *(by the officiating minister)*: May we now request the parents, guardians, sponsors together with our church elders to come forward and participate in the act of confirmation?

*Parents, guardians, sponsors, or special friends stand behind the candidates while the elders stand beside the minister in front of the candidates.*

Friends, as parents, guardians, sponsors of these persons who are about to be confirmed in their church membership, you have earned the right and privilege of the laying on of your hands on these youth as a symbol of your love for them and concern for their continued growth and nurture in our God. Thus, together with the church elders and the minister, you enter into a partnership with the Church in guiding these young people in the fellowship and mission of Christ's Church. Let us now attend to the act of confirmation.

Let us pray:

Eternal God, our heavenly Parent, we give You thanks for these Your servants to whom You have granted knowledge of Your Son Jesus Christ. Strengthen them now, we beseech You, by Your Holy Spirit—the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, piety, and godly fear. Enable them to be faithful members of Your Church, continuing steadfastly in the Apostles' teachings, fellowship and worship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers. May they be faithful and effective in service and witness, enjoying their gifts for the common welfare as good stewards of Your grace. Grant that, holding the truth in love, they may grow up in every way unto Him Who is the Head, even Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Savior. Amen.\*

## THE ACT OF CONFIRMATION

*The candidates shall kneel and the minister, elders, parents and sponsors lay their hands on the heads or shoulders of the candidates.*

Minister: May God defend you with heavenly grace, and by the Holy Spirit confirm you in the faith and fellowship of all true disciples of Jesus Christ. And may love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control be the Holy Spirit's gifts to you, this day and always. Amen.\*

*Minister, parents, guardians, sponsors, and elders remove their hands from the candidates' heads.*

Minister: O Gentle and Nurturing God, great has been Your kindness toward these persons whom You have brought to Yourself in many different and wondrous ways. May they never cease to thank You and to glorify You for all that You have done for them. Help them to guard the rich deposit of faith with the help of the Holy Spirit Who dwells with us, and make them strong in the grace which is theirs in Christ Jesus. Help them to witness mightily to Your steadfast love. May the Spirit of Christ so fill their lives that all who come to know them shall be blessed and shall give glory to Your Name. In Christ's Name. Amen. #

## THE LORD'S PRAYER *(by all)*

## THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP

*The confirmands shall rise and the minister and elders shall extend their right hand of fellowship to each of the candidates, welcoming them to the community. The parents or guardians may give their children the kiss of peace. If there are any tokens of confirmation, such as Bibles and/or certificates to be given, this is the appropriate time to do so.*

## PRESENTATION TO THE CONGREGATION

*The parents, guardians and sponsors shall return to their seats as the newly confirmed persons turn around and face the congregation. The congregation shall be asked to stand.*

Minister: Dear Friends, I commend to your love and care these persons whom we this day receive into the membership of this Church congregation. Do all in your power to increase their faith, confirm their hope, and perfect them in love.

Congregation: We rejoice to recognize you as members of *(name)* Church, and bid you welcome to the fellowship of this congregation. With you, we renew our vows to uphold one another by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, and our service. May God help us. Amen.

#### BLESSING

Minister: Go forth in peace and be of good courage; hold fast that which is good, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And the blessing of the Triune God—the Creator, the Son and the Holy Spirit go with you. In Christ's Name. Amen.

*Or*

May God be within us to refresh us, around us to protect us, before us to guide us, and above us to bless us, now and in the days to come, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen. (35)

*The newly confirmed persons return to their seats and the service of worship continues.*

## 2. TRANSFER OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

The rite of transferring membership from one communion of the Christian Church to another may mark a simple move from a local congregation to another of the same denomination, or it may be a dramatic change from one sect to another. Whatever the case, the act is a serious occasion for the person or persons involved and should be celebrated with due dignity and seriousness.

#### AN ORDER OF WORSHIP FOR THE TRANSFER OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

*At the appropriate time in the service, the minister shall call those who are to be received as transfer or affiliate members. If this reception is to take place following the confirmation of new members, then the confirmands may be asked to stand for a while on the side while the affiliate members are received. Then together they may all be joined in the prayer to God and the presentation to the congregation.*

Minister: Let those persons who are members of other communions in Christ's Holy Church, and who now desire to enter into fellowship with this congregation, present themselves to be received into membership of this Church. (The naming of these persons).

*Those who have been called stand in front of the minister who address them:*

It is fitting that, as you are received into the fellowship of this church, you profess again publicly the faith into which you were confirmed and baptized. Do you here, in the presence of God and of this congregation, renew the solemn promises and vows that you made at your confirmation, confessing Jesus Christ as the Master of your life and pledging your allegiance to his discipleship through the fellowship of the Church?

Response: I do.

#### PRAYER

*This may be the same as or patterned after that of the Confirmation Service.*

#### THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP

#### THE PRESENTATION TO THE CONGREGATION

#### THE BLESSING OF THOSE NEWLY CONFIRMED PERSONS

*The morning worship may proceed.*

### 3. THE ENGAGEMENT RITE

The practice of celebrating engagement rituals is for those who feel that this is an important step in their married lives. Hence, it ought to be celebrated publicly and before God. A number of courtship and premarital customs practiced by the early Filipinos are then worth using. For instance, much dancing, feasting and poetry reciting usually accompany the negotiations between the two families concerned. The concept of extending family ties is heightened by the important part played by the families involved during the betrothal. Furthermore, the use of a trusted or respected friend to serve as spokesperson or "go-between" indicates community participation and concern. At times, the prospective groom presents a token or guarantee of good faith—often a ring of precious metal—to the woman to seal the engagement. At times, this is in place of the usual bridal price or dowry. Feasting then follows.

The engagement period provides an opportunity for the couple contemplating marriage to test whether or not they are compatible. Being a step prior to marriage it ought to be entered into seriously and prayerfully.

The following suggested order for *An Engagement Rite* is climaxed by a "love feast" attended by members of both families and close friends.

#### AN ORDER OF AN ENGAGEMENT RITE

##### THE PREPARATION

*The representative of the male party stands with the suitor himself and his family at the entrance, and in verse, proceeds to beg permission to enter. The spokesman for the woman replies, also in verse, with an invitation for them to come in and join them.*

##### THE OPENING MUSIC

*This is joyful, festive music which turns to soft, quiet music as the man and his party enter and find seats in the community; the man finds his place beside the woman.*

##### A SONG OF PRAISE TO GOD (*all standing*)

##### THE CALL TO CELEBRATION (*leader*)

Know that the Lord is God.  
It is God that has made us, and not we ourselves;  
we are God's people, and the sheep of God's pasture. (Ps. 100:3)  
God that made the world and all things therein ... (Acts 17:24a)  
sets the solitary in the families. (Ps. 68:6)

Let us worship the Lord our God, in Whom all true "families of the earth are blessed." (Gen. 28:14)

##### THE INVOCATION

*Leader/head of host Family/all:*

O God, we thank You that You have drawn two hearts to one another. May it be, that as they go on together to discover the mysteries of their emerging love, they will be found unfailing in spiritual sensitivity, keen to sense the moral meanings of life, intellectually eager, and resolute in courage. May it be Your will to protect and establish this which has begun within them. May their love be but another witness to the beauty and the wonder of the way You have planned these lives of ours. Amen. (36)

##### SCRIPTURE READINGS

Genesis 29:20 and 1 Corinthians 13

##### PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

*Here, again, representatives or spokespersons for both parties may have their debate or balagtasan on the exaltation of the ideal in love or faithfulness and constancy in love or marriage. In the absence of such literal message, the minister may preach a sermon or give a meditation on the same theme.*

#### THE OFFERINGS

##### The Offering of Dance

*The "balitaw" (or a literary song and dance) may be presented here, if possible, by the man and woman or their representatives.*

*and/or*

##### An Offering of Song/Music

*By a special group, a soloist or an instrumentalist.*

##### The Offering of Food

*Food to be shared is brought in at this time and uncovered.*

##### The Blessing of the Food By the Betrothed:

*"We give You thanks, O God, for all this bounty with which You nourish us, symbolic of Your love and care for us. We praise You for all who are present here today, whose company and concern nourish our spiritual lives, symbolic of Your manner of ministering to us and our needs. May we be worthy recipients of all these blessings. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen."*

#### THE LOVE FEAST OR BANQUET

*Everyone will proceed normally through the meal. The meal may be made more festive with some singing in the background or musical renditions by small groups which will simulate a serenade or "harana" of the new couple.*

#### THE PRESENTATION OF THE TOKEN OF LOVE

*Before the meal comes to a complete end, the leader or the representative of the man or groom-to-be shall announce the presentation of a token of engagement (if any), usually a ring, accompanied by promises of faithfulness and growing love, if possible, in verse. It would be more meaningful if the man to be engaged could say these words of promise, with the woman responding with her own promises.*

#### A SONG OF LOVE OR FELLOWSHIP *(by all or singers)*

#### A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT *(led by the minister and the couple to be married)*

#### THE BENEDICTION *(minister)*

#### THE EXIT MUSIC AND HANDCLASP OF THE BLESSING OF PEACE

*As the exit music is played family and friends shake each other's hands as they wish each other well, pronouncing God's peace on one another and especially on the newly engaged couple.*

## **4. THE WEDDING RITE OR MARRIAGE SERVICE**

Marriage is a most sacred relationship; therefore, the marriage rite between two Christians ought not to be simply a civil contract nor just a social ceremony, but a service of worship. It is an offering of the love of a man and a woman to each other, and a solemn pledge to share their lives fully with each other. It ought then to be a serious but a joyous celebration in the presence of God, and witnessed by their families and friends.

Indeed, a Filipino wedding is not only an affair between two people, but between two families and of the whole community. Traditional practices stress the important role of the family in the Filipino wedding. It presents another opportunity for the extension and strengthening of kinship ties between the two families which now share a

common concern for the new couple. The presence of sponsors in the wedding also express the community's concern for the new couple.

The practice of the parents' giving their blessing to the couple may be made a part of the marriage service. The practice of segregating members of the man's family from those of the woman need not be practiced here. An atmosphere of unity and fellowship ought to permeate the wedding service. The bride and the groom's parents or families, can become part of the bridal entourage. And both parties of the bride and groom can be together, instead of the traditional practice of their separation while the groom waits for the bride's entrance.

The most important aspects of the marriage service are the vows made between the man and the woman and the blessing of those vows by the minister in God's presence. The other parts, such as the ring, veil, cord, coin, and other ceremonies are adaptations from Jewish, social and cultural customs. Of these ceremonies, the exchange of rings may be the most significant since society has accepted the wedding ring as the outward symbol of marriage. When other practices are incorporated into the marriage service, they ought to be given Christian significance and explained to the congregation.

The wedding ceremony and its solemnization within a regular worship service is commendable. The gathered community becomes witness—as well as participant—in the marriage rite. Often, in the end, it is this same community in which the couple will live together their new life.

A wedding ritual may, however, be a worship service in itself. It may include a short sermon or meditation, and definitely, congregational participation through singing and prayers. In some wedding services, the sacrament of Holy Communion or the Holy Supper is celebrated and participated by all.

The basic elements of a traditional marriage service are as follows:

#### THE OPENING SENTENCES

*These are given by the minister and include the importance of the gathered community as witnesses both for society and the Christian Church: an elaboration of the fact that marriage is "an honorable estate and is ordained of God" and the comparison of the relationship between husband and wife to Christ and the Church.*

#### THE CHARGE TO THE BRIDE AND GROOM

*This is a legal requirement which requests proof of the couple's eligibility to marry each other. The couple is also asked if they are prepared to commit themselves to each other for life. A prayer to this commitment is appropriate and is included here.*

#### THE QUESTIONS OF INTENTION

*These questions are addressed to the groom and the bride to help them examine the sincerity of their intention and to publicly affirm this.*

#### ACKNOWLEDGING THE PARENTS' ROLE

*This aspect gives importance to the parents of the bride and groom as the new couple form a new family unit.*

#### PRAYER OF COMMITMENT (bride and groom)

*This is a prayer by the bride and the groom, composed specially by and/or, for them, as they enter into a new relationship as husband and wife.*

#### EXCHANGE OF WEDDING VOWS

*This is the heart of the marriage service of the man and the woman who pledge themselves to each other as husband and wife. It would be truly meaningful when they face each other join their right hands, and say their vows to each other. More encouragement should be given to brides and grooms to work out their own vows of commitment with the guidance from the minister, if necessary; or someone they do respect and look up to. To emphasize the importance of this aspect of the service, it may be supplemented with an appropriate hymn and/or a Scripture reading and, indeed, a brief sermon/ meditation.*

#### EXCHANGE OF RINGS

*The exchanging of rings between groom and bride strengthens and concretizes the vows made earlier. The wedding ring has become a symbol of the marriage ties between a husband and a wife.*

#### PRAYERS OF BLESSING

*Prayers asking God's blessing and help for the marriage partners to enable them to keep their vows and to enter a happy married life, may be said by the parents, sponsors and the minister. These could be concluded with the congregation repeating together "The Lord's Prayer" or the choir singing it.*

#### DECLARATION OF MARRIAGE AND PRESENTATION TO THE CONGREGATION

*This is a legal statement, as well as a priestly pronouncement, that marriage vows have just been contracted between the man and the woman before God and the community. And these vows are for as long as they live. The new couple and the wedding party then are asked to face and be presented to the congregation.*

#### BENEDICTION

*The Minister's benediction pronouncing God's blessing sends forth into the world the new couple as husband and wife with God's guidance, thus, concretizing the reality of their marriage vows made to each other before God and the people gathered.*

## **AN ORDER OF SERVICE FOR THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGE**

#### ORGAN OR OTHER INSTRUMENTAL RECITAL OR PRELUDE

*During this time the lighting of the candles, the ushering in of guests and relatives, and other preparatory acts may be done. If there is a printed program, a short paragraph for meditation may be printed here.*

#### A BRIEF PRINTED MEDITATION ON MARRIAGE

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

#### WEDDING PROCESSIONAL *(congregation standing)*

#### INVOCATION

#### HYMN OF PRAISE

#### SCRIPTURE READING *(congregation may sit, if not a Gospel Reading)*

#### WEDDING MEDITATION

## **THE WEDDING CEREMONY (37)**

#### ADDRESS

*The minister facing the people and the persons to be married (the woman on the man's left), addresses the people:*

"Marriage is as old as the human family. It is the highest of life's relationships. It is the ordaining of the Creator in the very nature of their being man and woman. God's loving and parenting intention toward the human children is revealed through this relationship.

The occasion that declares publicly the intention of a man and a woman to enter into this relationship has become known in our society as a *wedding*. For the Christian, this occasion is not a spectacle but an act of worship of God. It is not a mere formal observance, but indeed, a participation in the will of God for life. A wedding is the celebration of the highest we know in love—the pledging of the deepest fidelity and the expression of the highest aspiration of a man and a woman. And, a relationship so sacred must be entered into not casually or flippantly, but thoughtfully and deliberately.

On this occasion, and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ come before family, friends and the Church to affirm the choice that they have made of each other as a life's mate, their intention to establish a home for the raising of a family and the fulfillment of life together."

*or*

Good people, we have come together in the presence of God to witness and proclaim the joining together of this man and this woman in marriage. The bond of marriage was established by God at creation, and our Sovereign Jesus Christ Himself adorned this manner of life by His presence and by His performance of the first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. It signifies to us the union between Christ and the Church, and the Holy Scripture commends it to be honored by all human beings. The union of man and woman in heart, mind and body is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of God. Therefore, marriage is not to be entered into inadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately and in accord with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

#### THE CHARGE (*minister*)

I now, therefore, require and charge you both and this congregation that, if any of you know of any reason why you may not be lawfully joined together in marriage, you now confess it.

*(Silence to allow response, if any)*

*or*

Into this union, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ come now to be joined together in marriage. If any of you can show just cause why they may not lawfully be married, speak now, or forever hold your peace."  
*(Pause and await response.)*

*If there is no impediment, the ceremony may proceed. If there is any, the minister may invite the bride, the groom and the dissenting party into a private room. If the matter is settled, the service may continue: if not, the minister shall tactfully dismiss the congregation.*

Minister: Let us pray.

O God of Love, bless these persons as they come before family, friends and the Church to affirm the choice that they have made of each other as a life's mate and their intention to establish a home where Your love may be celebrated in the family. Grant them a seriousness of purpose that they may be delivered from empty words and casual commitments. For the fulfillment of their vows, may they discern the varied facets of Your many-splendored love. May Your Word nurture them all the days of their lives that their dreams and aspirations for life may find fulfillment in the doing of Your will in all events. As we share with them in the celebration of love on this occasion, may we all grow toward the perfection that is experienced in Your love. Through Jesus Christ, Who so hallowed the wedding feast in Cana with His presence, that the guests experienced a joy that they had never known before, we pray. Amen.

#### DECLARATION OF INTENTION

Minister: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, as you contemplate the making of your vows to each other, realize that henceforth your destinies shall be woven of one design and your perils and your joys shall not be known apart. The words "I love you," which you first spoke shyly to each other is the full commitment of yourselves to each other and to an adult responsibility in society.

*To the groom*

\_\_\_\_\_, are you ready to enter this holy relationship, to accept the responsibility of a husband; to be \_\_\_\_\_'s loving, faithful and helpful husband whether in days of success or adversity? The groom answers: "I am".

*To the bride*



\_\_\_\_\_, are you ready to enter this holy relationship, to accept the responsibility of a wife; to be \_\_\_\_\_'s loving, faithful and helpful wife whether in days of success or adversity? The bride answers: "I am".

*To the bride and groom*

By these answers which you have given, your purpose and willingness to take one another, for better or for worse from this day forward, is affirmed.

*or*

*To the groom*

\_\_\_\_\_ will you have this woman to be your wife, to live together with her in a holy marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as you both shall live? The groom answers: "I will, by God's help."

*To the bride*

\_\_\_\_\_, will you have this man, to be your husband, to live together with him in a holy marriage? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live? The bride answers: "I will, by God's help."

*The minister addresses the wedding party and the congregation:*

Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support and uphold this marriage in the days and years ahead?

The answer is: "We will."

#### THE BLESSING OF THE BRIDE

Minister: Who blesses the marriage of this woman and this man?

*The parents of the bride answer "We do." Or, if only one parent, "I do." In the case of the representatives of the father and mother, the answer is: "We do for her father and mother."*

*The minister then proceeds:*

Let us pray. Eternal God, Creator and Sustainer of all people, Giver of all grace, Author of salvation: look with favor upon this man and this woman, that they may grow in love, justice and peace together; through Jesus Christ Your Son our Savior, Who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

#### THE READING OF BIBLICAL MESSAGES:

Old Testament Reading (Gen. 2:4-9, 15-24 are suggested)

New Testament Reading (1 Cor. 13 is suggested)

#### THE EXCHANGE OF VOWS

Minister: Now, will you join your right hands and say your vows to each other.

*Here the groom and the bride may offer their own vows. In the absence of their own prepared vows, the following may be used:*

Groom: I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_ to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward; for better or for worse; for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, to cherish, and to honor, till death do us part. This is my solemn vow.

Bride: I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_ to be my husband; to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, and to honor, till death do us part. This is my solemn vow.

## THE EXCHANGE OF RINGS

Minister: Are there rings to further seal these vows? *The rings are placed in his/her hands.*

From the earliest time, the golden circle has been a symbol of wedded love. Being one unbroken circle, it symbolizes unending love. As often as either of you sees these circles, you will be reminded of this high moment and the unending love you promise to each other.

*The minister proceeds to ask God's blessing on the ring or rings as follows: "Bless, O God, these rings that they who give them and they who wear them may live in peace, and continue in Your favor, all the days of their life; through Jesus Christ our Savior."*

*To the groom:*

Minister: Take this ring and place it upon the wedding finger of (bride) and say your vow. *The groom: "With this ring, I take you as my wife, in the Name of the Loving God, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit."*

*or*

*Groom (Placing the ring on the ring finger of the bride):*

I give you this ring as a symbol of \_\_\_\_\_ my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you, in the Name of God."

*To the bride:*

Minister: Take this ring and place it upon the wedding finger of (groom) and say your vow: "With this ring I give you in token and pledge of our constant faith and abiding love." (*The bride repeats the statement.*)

The bride repeats the process or they can say the vow together to each other.

## PRAYER OF BLESSING OF THE PARENTS

*By the bride's parent*

*In the absence of a prayer prepared by the parent, the following may be used:*

O God, be in this blessing that we give to our children. We, who have been through this road of married life, know that there are a good deal of adjustments as well as of growing up ahead of them. Just as our love for each other and for You has sustained us, let their love sustain them in the days ahead, and let them believe in Your helping them so that they will grow together in Your care. May the home they form be full of Your peace, Your justice and Your joy, O God. May it always help others to know You are their God and a part of their life. Through Jesus Christ, the Savior of all lives. Amen. (38)

*By the groom's parent*

*In the absence of a prepared prayer by the parent, the following may be used:*

Creator God, we thank You for the light in the air, the glory in the sky, and the joy on our children's faces today. Bless all the people who made the day so good: for companions of their youth who have shared the joy and the work of the day, for the understanding and good will of the minister, and for all good wishes and prayers from sincere and loving hearts present here today.

Bless these our children and grant them some day to know fully the mystery of Your plan by which their lives have moved to seek each other out above all others and to find completion. Reveal to them increasingly the beauty of their marriage vows. And so, our Loving God, let them go forward seeking Your guidance and Your will. Hallow every hour of their united lives. Grant that in their love they may find Your face. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen. (39)

*By the minister, lifting her/his hands over the couple*

O Most Loving Heavenly Parent, let Your blessing be upon these Your servants, now joined in lawful marriage. Sanctify them and their lives, their home and their affairs, to Your glory. Maintain them in love to You and to each other; and send upon their home the fullness of prosperity, equality and peace. Guide their steps, protect them in all danger, spare them to one another in health and happiness through many days, and grant them an inheritance in Your everlasting Kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Sovereign God. Amen. (40)

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER *(by all)*

*Or the following prayer may be said in unison.*

O God, Who consecrated the state of marriage to be a sign of the spiritual union between Christ and His Church: bless these Your servants, that they may love, honor and cherish each other in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, and that their home may be a haven of truth, justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Savior, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (41)

#### THE DECLARATION OF MARRIAGE

#### THE PRESENTATION TO THE SPONSORS

Minister: Dear Sponsors (Godparents), \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ look up to you with great respect and love, and see in you the embodiment of the kind of persons they would wish to emulate. May you continue to be an example to them of kindness, understanding and love, as today you have been named co-parents with their own parents. And may God guide and help you in your new relationships, in Christ's Name. Amen. (42)

#### THE PRESENTATION TO THE CONGREGATION

*The whole wedding party now face the congregation.*

Minister: Dear friends, may I present to you, Mr. and Mrs. Your witness and participation in their pledge of love for each other show your personal interest and concern for their happy life together. May you continue to sustain them with your interest and concern as they grow stronger in their life together and in our God. (43)

#### THE HOLY COMMUNION

*If any, may be celebrated at this time.*

#### THE BENEDICTION *(congregation standing)*

Minister: Now may God's joy, which the world cannot give and which the world cannot take away, be yours today and tomorrow and in all of life's tomorrows in Christ's Holy Name. Amen. (44)

*The couple may seal their covenant with a kiss.*

#### THE RECESSIONAL *(congregation standing)*

## **AN ECUMENICAL ORDER FOR THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MARRIAGE (45)**

#### THE PRELUDE

#### THE CALL TO WORSHIP

God is love and those who abide *in* love abide in God, and God abides in them. God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. Therefore, let us declare our faith in the Divine God, to ask especially for the man and woman about to be joined into one, God's holy blessing.

#### A HYMN OF LOVE OR PRAISE TO GOD *(sung by all)*

#### THE CALL TO CONFESSION

Minister/Priest: In the Name of the Loving God, and of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Minister/Priest: The grace of our Savior Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And also with you.

Minister/Priest: My brothers and sisters, to prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries, let us call to mind our sins. Let us pray in silence our *Prayer of Confession*.

*A brief silent prayer*

#### THE PRAYER OF CONFESSION (*all kneeling or sitting*)

O God, our Creator, Jesus Christ has shown us how to love and invites us to love one another as He loves us. We confess that our lives have not been a fulfillment of this love.

We have been proud and selfish, impatient with others, and all too accommodating to ourselves. We have not trusted enough in Your love and in our love of each other.

We have not been open with each other, afraid to take the chance that in loving we may not be loved in return. There are times when we have had the opportunity to manifest love for one another a reality, and we have remained silent. Heavenly God, pardon the unkind word, the impatient gesture, and the selfish deed. Forgive our failure to become involved in the needs of others nor to care for them. Grant that we may walk always in Your presence so as to arrive in the fullness of life. In Christ's Name. Amen.\*

#### KYRIE ELEISON (*to be sung by all*)

##### THE RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF SUPPLICATION

Priest/Minister: Lord, have mercy on us. People: Lord, have mercy on us.

Priest/Minister: Christ, have mercy on us. People: Christ, have mercy on us.

Priest/Minister: Lord, have mercy on us. People: Lord, have mercy on us.

##### THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Priest/Minister: May the Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

Priest and People: Amen.

#### GLORIA (*congregation standing and singing together*)

Priest/Minister: "Glory be to God in the highest! People: And on earth peace to all people of good will!"

Priest/Minister: We praise You! People: We bless You!

Priest/Minister: We adore you! People: We glorify You!

Priest/Minister: We give You thanks for Your great glory! People: O Loving God, heavenly King, God the Parent Almighty!

Priest/Minister: O Savior, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son. People: Loving God, Lamb of God, Son of the Heavenly Parent.

Priest/Minister: Who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us!

People: Who takes away the sins of the world, receive our prayers.

Priest/Minister: Who sits at the right hand of the Parent God, have mercy on us.

People: For You alone are Holy!

Priest/Minister: You alone are our Savior!

People: You alone, O Jesus Christ, are Most High!

Priest/Minister: Together with the Holy Spirit, in the Glory of God the Creator.

All: Amen.

#### COLLECT

Priest/Minister: Let us pray. In Your increasing loving kindness, watch over our household, we beseech You, O God, that safeguarded by You from all evil, we may give ourselves with fervor to the doing of good works to the glory of Your Holy Name! Through our Savior Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.

People: Amen.

#### EPISTLE: 1 Corinthians 13 (*congregation seated*)

Priest/Minister: Cleanse my heart and my lips, O God Almighty, Who did cleanse the lips of the prophet Isaiah with a burning coal; and vouchsafed him through Your gracious mercy, so to purify me that I may worthily proclaim Your Holy Gospel. Through Christ our Savior, deign, O God, to bless me. Grant that Your love be in my heart and Your Word be on my lips, that I may worthily and becomingly announce Christ's Gospel. Amen.

#### GOSPEL Matthew 19:4-6

*Congregation may stand at the reading*

People: Praise be to You, O Christ.

#### THE WEDDING MEDITATION

#### THE WEDDING CEREMONY

*Led by a duly ordained minister*

Dearly beloved: We have gathered here to witness a most significant and solemn act: to join a man and woman together in matrimony. This is a ceremony symbolic of the best judgment of human history and of the personal concern of our families, our friends, the civil government, and the Christian Church. In recognition of the importance of the family to a secure society, the State has set up certain legal and medical qualifications for those who would enter into marriage. Evidence that these qualifications have been met is furnished by a marriage license, which will be witnessed and placed upon permanent record in the public archives.

In acknowledgment of your personal interest in (*groom's name*) and (*bride's name*) and your concern for their happy home, you, their friends and family have presented yourselves to witness the ceremony and to wish them well. In accordance with ancient custom, I am required to ask that if anyone here present can show just cause why they may not be properly joined together, she/he is to speak now. (*Silence to allow response.*)

And further, as commanded by venerable tradition, I am required to inquire of you both: if either of you know any impediment, why you cannot be properly joined together in matrimony, to request that you do now confess it. (*Allow a moment for response.*)

And now, having answered these ancient requirements of society, you do present yourselves freely in the sanctuary of this Church, as an act of seeking the blessing of Almighty God upon this ceremony and upon the life you here undertake together.

Let us, therefore, reverently remember, as you make your vows to each other, that we believe God has established and sanctified marriage for the welfare and happiness of humankind. Our Savior declared that a man shall leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife. You are now about to take the marriage vows before God, and, seeking God's strength to bear each other's infirmities and weaknesses, to comfort each other in sickness, trouble and sorrow; in honesty and industry to provide for each other, and to share together—through all stresses—a common life that is greater than either of you. It is proper that we should do this prayerfully. Let us pray:

Almighty and ever-blessed God, Whose presence is the happiness of every condition, and Whose favor hallows every relation: we beseech You to be present and favorable to these Your servants, that they may be truly joined in the estate of marriage, and in the covenant of their God. As You have brought them together by Your providence, sanctify them by Your Spirit, giving them a new frame of heart fit for their new life. Enrich them with all grace whereby they may enjoy the comforts, undergo the cares, endure the trials, and perform the duties of life together as do become Christians, under Your heavenly guidance and protection; through our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

*To the groom*

\_\_\_\_\_, do you take this woman to be your wife, and do you pledge your troth to her, in all love and honor, in all duty and service, in all faithfulness and tenderness; to live with her and cherish her, according to the ordinance of God in the holy bond of marriage?

*Response:* I do.

*To the bride*

\_\_\_\_\_, do you take this man to be your husband, and do you pledge your troth to him, in all love and honor, in all duty and service, in all faithfulness and tenderness; to live with him and cherish him according to the ordinance of God in the holy bond of marriage?

*Response:* I do.

Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

*Bride's parents: We do.*

*Then the parents of the bride shall place her right hand into the hand of the minister who shall cause the groom with his right hand to take the woman by her right hand; the groom then faces the bride and says his vows to her:*

"I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wife, and I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses to be your loving and faithful husband, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live."

*They shall then disengage their right hands, and the woman with her right hand shall take the man by his right hand, and likewise say her vows to him.*

"I, \_\_\_\_\_ take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my husband, and I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses, to be your loving and faithful wife, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live."

*A server brings the wedding rings. Minister says, while showing the ring(s) to all:*

"The wedding ring is the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace signifying to all the uniting of this man and this woman in holy matrimony, through the Church of Jesus Christ our Lord."

Let us pray: Bless, O God, the giving of these rings, that they who wear them may abide in Your peace, and continue in Your favor, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The bride and the groom one after the other Better still, to say the vow together.*

"This ring I give you, in token and pledge of our constant faith and abiding love, so help us, God.

*The wedding rings are exchanged.*

*The server brings the coins and the minister lifting the coins, says:*

"These coins symbolize God's blessing upon \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of material possessions so that they may use them to attain their daily needs through Jesus Christ our Lord."

*The groom and the bride now take the coins in both hands; and say to each other:*

"I share with you these coins as a pledge of my dedication to our material welfare. In the Name of God, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

*The bride and the groom then place the coins on the tray held by the server. The couple shall then go up to the altar and kneel. The lighting of the nuptial candles, the yelling and cording will take place there.*

#### THE PRAYER OF BLESSING

Minister/Priest: Dearly beloved, let us now pray for the Church and for the newly-wedded couple whose marriage reflects their union with Christ.

For the Holy Church spread over the world, for its leaders and for the rulers of our nation, let us pray to God.

All: We pray You hear us.

Minister/Priest: For the poor and the sick and all those in trial and affliction, let us pray to God.

All: We pray You hear us.

Minister/Priest: For \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that God may keep their hearts united forever, let us pray to our God.

All: We pray You hear us.

Minister/Priest: That God may protect them from evil, lighten their burdens and fortify them in their trials, let us pray to Almighty God.

All: We pray You hear us.

Minister/Priest: That God may stir up the grace of the sacrament in all the married couples here present, let us pray to our God.

All: We pray You hear us, oh God!"

*Parents' blessings may be inserted here.*

Minister/Priest: Let us pray:

Our Heavenly Parent and our God, we commend to Your keeping these two, who today are joined together in marriage in Your sight. Grant them strength of body and soul that they may long be permitted to minister to each other and to any who, in Your providence, are given to their care. Give them courage to stand firm in an evil day and to be a rock of strength to all whose lives will touch theirs. Shed upon them Your wisdom. Give them faith in each other and in You which never fails. May the light which lights every one illumine their hearts and direct their paths. We who love them, O God, commit them to Your care. Take them; uphold them; use them in Your service. In Jesus Christ's Name. Amen.

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER *(by all)*

*The uncording and the unveiling may take place after the prayer here.*

#### THE DECLARATION OF MARRIAGE

*The couple shall stand and join right hands. The minister shall place her/his right hand over the couple's joined hands and say:*

"By the authority committed to me as priest/minister of the Church of Christ, I declare that and are now husband and wife, according to the Ordinance of God, and the Law of the State; in the Name of God the Creator, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Whom, therefore, God has joined together, let no one put asunder."

#### PRESENTATION TO THE SPONSORS

*The couple turn to face the sponsors who in turn shall stand.*

"Dear sponsors, Mr. and Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ hold you in highest esteem. They see in you and your family relationship a model of what they wish to emulate in the new home that they are establishing. May you continue to merit that esteem as you continue to watch over them with your concern and love."

#### PRESENTATION TO THE CONGREGATION

*The members of the wedding party shall turn and face the congregation while the congregation stands.*

"Dear friends, may I/we present to you Mr. and Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_. Your presence here is an acknowledgment of your personal interest and concern for their happy home. May you continue to follow their new life together with that same interest and concern."

#### BENEDICTION

God, the Eternal Creator and Parent, keep this couple in love with each other, so that the peace of Christ may stay with them, now and forever.

May they always bear witness to the love of God in this world so that the afflicted and the needy will find in them generous friends, and welcome them into the joys of heaven. And may the Almighty God bless these two who are here; and all of us, the Creator, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

#### RECESSIONAL

### **C. THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION RITES**

There are many events in a person's individual and community life that call for an acknowledgment of human dependence on God as well as on one another. These events may naturally become occasions for thanksgiving as well as for dedication to God, thus bringing the eternal dimension into what most likely would simply be a social gathering. While it is true there is often genuine fellowship and deep affection manifested in many family and community gatherings, being aware of God's presence and God's participation in such events are indeed significant parts of the Christian's witness. And while there is genuine gratitude among the people for things received, they also need to truly acknowledge God as the Source and Giver of all blessings.

The thanksgiving events are many and varied, ranging from a simple birthday celebration or a dedication of a new home to a community banquet celebrating its founding anniversary. These occasions are essentially *thanksgiving* in nature.

In the dedication or the blessing of any property, such as a home, a building, motor vehicle, machine, etc., the intent of the owner is always to give God the glory. And when something is dedicated to God, it is always God's blessing that is poured out on it. In the Old Testament, *blessing* means the "active outgoing of the divine goodwill or grace which results in prosperity and happiness amongst men."<sup>2</sup> The old and commonly accepted meaning of God's blessing has been measured in terms of material prosperity. However, wisdom, righteousness and peace are the more worthy concepts of blessedness that the Bible teaches. These concepts truly need to be emphasized in blessing rites.

In the rite, the appearance, value or character of the object is not altered. The rite is intended to enhance in the trustee (since everything belongs to God and the human being is simply a trustee—as well as other participants) a heightened awareness of the potential for good of a thing or things now becomes their responsibility to accomplish.

There are elements in the *Thanksgiving Rite* that may be taken from Scripture. The use of hands, whether in the act of laying them on the object or lifting them above it, is a fundamental Scriptural gesture for blessing. The act is always accompanied by prayer. And to complete the "circle of blessing," God must also be blessed and extolled.

Also, a constant aspect of thanksgiving events is the FEAST. *The Agape Feast* pattern may be used on these occasions.



## DEDICATION OF A NEW HOME

One of the more significant events in family life is the acquisition or the completion of a new home. It is seldom that a family would neglect invoking God's blessings on this new home, whether the celebration of this event be of community-wide importance or a simple family affair. This occasion is often a deeply religious and festive event. On page 106 is a sample rite for blessing or dedicating a new home to God's glory. Such a rite may be observed in the living room or in the front yard, preferably after the usual tour of the new house. This is to give the participants a mental image of what is being dedicated to God or, for which they are asking God's blessings.

## A FIESTA CELEBRATION

The basic qualities present in a celebration are most clearly seen in a *fiesta* or a feast, which is a special event in the life of a community or a clan. The extraordinariness of the event is always linked with some value which the community or clan considers important to its life and heritage. Elements of a fiesta which should also be present in a worship service are: (1) *preparation* that calls for spontaneous and wholehearted cooperation among the members; (2) *participation* of all who are present so that the fiesta may be more meaningful; (3) a general feeling among the participants of *amiability and a unity of purpose*, or the love and good will shown to friends and strangers alike. Likewise, there is (4) an *atmosphere of exaltation or exuberant joy brought about*, not only by the physical richness of the occasion, but also by some inexplicable spiritual splendor felt by all. Hence, there is (5) a *sincere sense of sharing* in a banquet or a meal which is definitely abundant, but not overabundant, for the satisfaction of all; (6) the inclusion of the *main speech and the conversations among* small groups which are really the official expressions of the feast; and (7) a *glow of satisfaction* and happy reminiscences of the event just concluded as the people take their leave.

## A NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATION

One of the possible patterns for the New Year's Eve celebration comes from the *Enthronement Psalms* of the Hebrews. These psalms were probably used during the New Year's festival "in which the Lord was enthroned anew as King over the people and over the nations of the earth." This symbolic enthronement of God as King was an annual ceremony among the Hebrews. As people acknowledged once again God's reign, songs of praise were sung.

The focus of today's New Year's celebrations ought to incorporate the message of the Psalms. At midnight, at the turn of the year, as the church bells and the noise-makers welcome the New Year, Christians would be similarly engaged in proclaiming the *reign of God in Jesus Christ in their lives and communities*. The service given on page 124 is an example of how the "*Enthronement Psalm*" may be used as a pattern for a New Year's celebration. A Covenant Service of Holy Communion is another way of meaningfully welcoming the New Year.

# 1. THE BLESSING OF A NEW HOME

## PREPARATION

*Here joyous music may be played or sung as the community gathers and prepares itself for the worship service.*

## OPENING SENTENCES

*These may be spoken by the host or a member of the family of the home about to be blessed.*

"Friends and loved ones, I bid you all welcome to our home. May you find joy and comfort here. We are grateful for your presence and participation as we celebrate the completion of our new home and as we bless it as God's abode and to His glory."

## CALL TO CELEBRATION

Minister: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. (Ps. 127:1)

. . . Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it." (Ps. 90:17)

God is here—God is now!  
It is time for celebration!  
It is time for exaltation!  
Let us praise God!  
Let us exalt His Name together!

#### A HYMN OR SONG OF ADORATION OF GOD

*(by all, standing)*

#### INVOCATION *(minister/member of the family or unison)*

O Almighty and Merciful God, You have promised to be with Your servants when they act in Your Name: Be with us now, we beseech You, and of Your goodness bless what we shall bless to the glory of Your Name and the benefit of Your people; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. (46)

*or*

Like the living blood that flows through our bodies, so You, O God, are present throughout the universe. Heaven and earth are full of You so none can hide herself/himself from where You are not. Yet there is one place where we feel the pulse and know the heart is beating. It is here in this place where words and songs, readings and movements, sounds and lights, symbols and persons cause us to feel the presence of Your Spirit, as in Jesus Christ. Amen. (47)

#### AN AFFIRMATION OF FAITH OR A STATEMENT OF CREED *(See pages 226-229)*

#### SCRIPTURAL AFFIRMATION

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and Psalm 128  
Psalm 122:6-9 and Matthew 7:24-25

#### MEDITATION

*If a brief message is desired, this may be the place to give it.*

#### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

*This prayer may be short extempore statements of thanksgiving given by some members of the family who have been requested to prepare them ahead of time. If not, the following may be used by the minister or community leader:*

Holy God, Giver of every good and perfect gift, we give thanks for this family, for their faith in You and their love for one another; for the work and service to which You have called them, and for all the happiness and joy You have given to them. We praise You for this house now to be their home, for the labor and skills of those who built it; for the shelter, amenities and comfort it will provide, and for all that are useful and beautiful within it. We bless You for all the love and affection, the joy and hope, the discipline and responsibility of the family life that will inhabit it. Accept our gratitude and thanksgiving, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. (48)

#### THE ACT OF BLESSING

Minister: In God's Holy Name, the Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we bless this home, committing to God's love and care this house and all who are to dwell therein.

*Minister sprinkles salt and water on various parts of the house.*

People: Praise and thanksgiving to God for the Divine goodness and love! Amen.

*People's response at all acts of blessing of different parts.*

*or*

Minister: Let us ask God's blessing upon this home:

Almighty and everlasting God, by Whose power, wisdom and love things are sanctified, enlightened and made perfect: let Your blessing rest upon Your Servants who are to dwell within this house. Grant that Your Son, Jesus Christ, may ever reign within this house as Sovereign and from it, let the light of His truth and love go forth into the world. Make it a place of purity and peace, of joy and love, of hospitality and service. May it be to Your servants, a shelter from the storms of life and a place of provision for their needs of body, mind and soul. Let this household be ever linked with Your Church, bringing to it faithful worship and service, and drawing from it inspiration and strength for the conduct of life. Grant that in this, and all our homes, Your Name be hallowed, Your Kingdom come and Your will be done; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.\*

*or*

Minister: Almighty God, Who has mercifully promised to hear the prayers of Your people who call upon You, we beseech You graciously to bless this home and make it the abode in their going out and their coming in, protecting them from all adversaries and directing their footsteps ever in the way of Your commandments; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.\*

THE LORD'S PRAYER *(by all)*

THE BLESSING OF GOD ON ALL

*Through spoken or sung words such as, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul" or Psalm 72:18-19. If the blessing of God is sung, perhaps the blessing of the people and the home may be spoken; or vice versa.*

THE CHORAL BLESSING OR HYMN OF BLESSING

*(by a choir, soloist or all)*

"Bless This House, O Lord, we pray" *(or something similar)*

THE PRAYER OF DEDICATION *(by all)*

O Loving God, we dedicate this home and this family to You and Your service. Make this truly a Christian household. For its members, may it be a place of happiness and health; a haven of peace and joy; a center of life that will develop beautiful things of heart and mind that will lead the soul to wider visions and higher aims. Give the members love for each other and for their neighbors near and far. And, our God, bestow on them patience, strength and courage to live in such harmony with one another and in accord with Jesus Christ, that together they may glorify You and Your Son, our Savior and Master. In Whose Name we pray. Amen. (49)

THE BENEDICTION *(and blessing of the food, if any)*

Peace be to this house, and to all who dwell in it. Peace be to those who enter, and to those who go out therefrom. Peace be to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. And may this peace be from God the Creator, God the Son, and the God the Holy Spirit. Amen.\*

*or*

O God, may Your eyes ... be open upon this house day and night ... from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same. May the praise of Your Name be the honor of it, and the glory of God ... fill this house as in the Lord. Amen. (2 Chron. 6:20; Ps. 113:3a; 1 Kgs. 8:11 b)

## **2. DEDICATION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY**

*The people gathered shall surround the object to be dedicated: or if this is not possible, they shall stand in front of it. The officiating minister shall stand by the object together with the other participants in the leadership, facing the people.*

THE WORDS FROM SCRIPTURES

Minister: "Let Thy work be manifest to Thy servants, and Thy glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Creator God be upon us, and establish Thou it." (Ps. 90:16-17)

All: "I will sing unto the Lord, because He hath dealt bountifully with me." (Ps. 13:6)

*or*

Minister: "Every good gift and every perfect present comes from heaven; it comes down from God, the Creator of the Heavenly lights." (Jas. 1:17a) "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?"

All: "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the Almighty. I will pay my vows unto our God now in the presence of all God's people. (Ps. 116:12-14)

#### INVOCATION (*minister or owner*)

O God, Creator and Sustainer of the universe; Giver of all that we own and enjoy; we give You praise that You have so blessed us with one more thing and our hearts overflow with thanksgiving. Be with us here and be with us now as we dedicate anew our lives and our new (*name of property*) to Your glory and to the service of humankind. Through Jesus Christ through Whom all things are sanctified. Amen.

*or*

O God of the world's resources and of human creativity: we lift our hearts to see beyond the narrow confines of our words and ceremonials. Make us appreciative of the wonders of Your creation, sensitive to the beauty of Your holiness and aware of Your endless blessings for us through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

#### HYMN OF PRAISE TO GOD (*all standing*)

#### READING FROM SCRIPTURES

1 Peter 4:10	John 1:14, 16-18
James 1:17	Psalm 24: 5, 6
2 Corinthians 9:8	

*One or two of the above may be read as the basis of the brief meditation to follow, if any*

#### MEDITATION

#### PRESENTATION OF THE PROPERTY TO BE DEDICATED (*by the owner*)

*Here may be spoken pertinent information that the owner may wish to share with the gathered community concerning the property to be dedicated: its origin, its reason for acquisition, its purpose and intended use, etc. At the end, the owner will say:*

"We present this (*name of property*) to be dedicated to the glory of God, the Source of all our blessings; and to the service of our people."

#### THE ACT OF CONSECRATION

*The minister shall lay his/her right hand on the object or lift his/her hand over it and pray:*

"Bless, O God, this (*name of property*) which we today dedicate for (*repeat the purpose or use of the object*) to the glory of God Almighty and in the service of our fellow human beings, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

*or*

Minister: To the glory of God the Creator, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit,

People: We dedicate this (*name of property*)

Minister: To the realization of its potential for good and the service of humankind.

People: We seek Your blessing and enabling.

Minister: In grateful acknowledgment of all who have helped in making possible the acquisition of this (*name of property*),

People: We dedicate this (*name of property*)

Minister: As the dedication of this (*name of property*) is vain without the solemn consecration of those whose gifts and labors it represent, let us now give ourselves anew to the service of God.

All: We give ourselves anew to Christ that all we say and do may be according to God's holy will. Amen.

#### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

We give You thanks, our God and Creator, for all the material things we have been allowed to possess and for the opportunity to discover meaning as we accept and carry out purposes of our own through their use, we thank You. Deliver us from greed and guile in the pursuit of wealth, and give us, instead, diligence in our work. Help us to acknowledge You to be the Owner of all things, that we may live our lives as good stewards of Your earth.

Help us to see that the world is Your creation, and that we have no right to anything unless we humbly and reverently seek to do Your will and live in this world according to Your purpose. Grant us the grace of our Savior Who did not count equality with You a thing to be possessed, but emptied Himself and became Servant of all. We pray in His Name. Amen.

*or*

O God, this is our true thanksgiving: That through this (*name of property*) we shall praise Your glorious Name through its use for human good; That through it, we shall ever be reminded that all that we have are a trust from You; that through it, we shall ever be grateful to You and Your goodness to us in many ways; that through it, we shall ever be mindful of the needs of others and our dependence on other human beings.

Let us never to be proud and haughty, and may this (*name of property*) never come between us and our relationship with others; and may it never come between us and our God, You our Creator and Sustainer. Accept our thanksgiving for all that we are and have. Accept also our sincere desire to live up to our thanksgiving. Through Jesus Christ our Savior and our Enabler. Amen.

#### HYMN OF THANKSGIVING OR DEDICATION OR CONSECRATION

#### BLESSING OF GOD

#### SCRIPTURE READINGS

*Here may be used psalms, such as Psalms 103, selected verses; or 1 Corinthians 1:3 and/or Revelation 7:12, or Luke 1:68.*

#### BLESSING OF THE FOOD (*if any*) OR BENEDICTION

### 3. THE LAYING OF A CORNERSTONE

*The minister and other leaders in the rite shall surround the corner where the first stone is to be laid.*

#### SCRIPTURE SENTENCES

"... a sensible man ... built his house on rock. And the rain fell, and the rivers rose, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it did not go down, for its foundations was on rock." (Mt. 7:24b-25)

"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." (Ps. 127:1)

"... each one must be careful how she/he builds. For God has already placed Jesus Christ as the one and only foundation, and no other foundation can be laid. Some will use gold, or silver, or precious stones in building upon the foundations; others will use wood, or grass, or straw. And the quality of each one's work will be seen

when the Day of Christ exposes it. For that day's fire will reveal every one's work: the fire will test it and show its real quality." (1 Cor. 3:10b-13)

*For a Church Building*

"God has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong and do it. Fear not, be not dismayed: for the Creator God . . . is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of God is finished." (1 Chron. 28:10b, 20)

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Almighty God, Who has made persons in Your image and has given them creativity and skills, we ask that You be present here and now as we dedicate the labors of human beings in this building to Your glory and to the service of humankind. May this act be a reminder to us that unless You are with us in all that we do and say they will not be worth anything. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

*or*

Almighty God, our Creator, Who has so graciously given to humans the gift of imagination and creativity, we bless You that today we shall be enabled to begin the work of another person's creations. Grant that through this laying of the cornerstone, we shall be enabled to so build a house of worship worthy of Your Presence and Your people's dedication to Your reverence and adoration. In Christ's Name. Amen.

HYMN OF PRAISE *(community standing)*

WORDS OF INTENTION OR PURPOSE *(by the owner)*

Dear friends, we are gathered here today to lay the cornerstone of a new *(name of building)* for *(purpose of building)*. Therefore, let us humbly seek God's blessing on this our undertaking.

PRAYER OF SUPPLICATION

Ever-loving God, Who has promised to be wherever two or three are gathered in Your Name, be present now as we offer to You the foundation which we are about to lay for this building *(name of building or a description)*. Bless our words and actions that they may give You glory and praise. Amen.

THE LAYING OF THE CORNERSTONE

*The minister shall stand by the corner where the stone is to be laid and shall invite the participants to place in the box whatever documents have been prepared for preservation in the cornerstone. Or else, in the absence of this, she/he will invite them to pour spadeful of earth, cement or gravel and stones in the hole for cementing. As they do this, a special choral acclamation may be sung or she/he may say:*

"Behold, I am laying in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation." (Isa. 28:16)

*and/or*

"Blessed art Thou, O Holy God of Israel, our Father forever and ever. Thine, O God, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the pre-eminence and the majesty, for all that are in the heavens and on the earth are thine! Thine is the dominion, O God, and Thou art exalted as the Supreme Head. Riches and honor come from Thee, since Thou rulest over all; in Thy hand are power and might, and it lies in Thy hand to make all great and mighty, and it lies in Thy hand to make all great and strong. Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise Thy glorious Name! (1 Chron. 29:10-14)

*or*

*For a Church Building*

"O Blessed God, all these materials that we have prepared to build Thee a house for Thy Holy Name, came from Thy hand and are all Thine own ... O Holy God of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, and Israel, our parents keep

this forever as the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and direct their hearts toward Thee.  
" (1 Chron. 29:16-18)

THE ACT OF CONSECRATION (*community standing*)

*The minister, laying her/his hand upon the stone or the foundation, shall say:*

"Let us pray: Almighty God, we bless You, we praise You, for now the foundation of this house is laid! Accept the act by which we lay this cornerstone. Bless those whose offerings enabled us to build this building (or house of worship). Graciously guard and direct those who labor in erecting it, shielding them from accident and peril. May the walls of this building rise in security and in beauty; and may the hearts of these Your people be fitly joined together in their rejoicing as they rejoice in the Sovereignty of Jesus Christ, our Chief Cornerstone. Amen.

THE DOXOLOGY OR A BRIEF SONG OF PRAISE (*community standing*)

PRAYER (*by all*)

O Creator God, when You give to Your servants incentive to endeavor any great undertaking, grant us also to know that it is not just the beginning, but the continuing of the same to the end, until it is thoroughly and satisfactorily finished, which yields true glory; through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen. (50)

*or*

Eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, bless and confirm that which we have now done in Your Name. Let Your favor be upon us this day and establish the work of our hands. Give us grace that in this task to which we have set our hands we may neither flinch nor waiver, but be strong to persevere, until under Your blessing we bring it to a right end. Bless all those who have given generously and freely of their substance for this building. Help all those who labor with their hands on this building; save them from all hurt and give them joy and satisfaction in their work. We pray that when this building (house) stands complete in strength and beauty, Your glory may ever dwell within it. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Sovereign and Savior. Amen.\*

HYMN OF THANKSGIVING OR DEDICATION

BENEDICTION

Minister: And now, may God's glory dwell in this house forever, that all who dwell (or work) in this place may be found steadfast in faith and honest in work. And may God's love, joy and peace be with you all, now and always. Amen.

## **4. A BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY SERVICE**

OPENING MUSIC

*This may be rendered by any member of the family on any musical instrument.*

WORDS OF GREETINGS

*These may be words of welcome by a member of the host family*

CALL TO CELEBRATION

Leader: God is here. God is in our midst. Now is the time for us to come alive. Now is the time for us to celebrate: who we are, whose we are, where we came from and where we are going.

All: Indeed, with joy and thanksgiving, let us praise God.

HYMN OR SONG OF PRAISE AND ADORATION (*community standing*)

AN AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (*by all, standing*)

*(see pages 227-230)*

## SONG OF AFFIRMATION

*(By member/s of the family or by the whole community)*

## THE WORD OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE *(Reading)*

## A WITNESS TO THE WORD *(Message)*

## A SONG OF THANKSGIVING *(by singers or the whole community, standing)*

## TRIBUTE TO THE CELEBRATOR

*This tribute may be spoken by members of the family, by a close friend, or by both family and friends. They are brief statements of thanksgiving to God.*

## THE PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Minister: O God, our loving Creator, we thank You that You have given to *(name of celebrator)* one more year of growth in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and humans. We thank You for this glad occasion when family and friends have come together to wish him/her well.

We thank You for all that has happened in the past year—the times of joy as well as of sorrow—when You were very near; the times of success which will be remembered with happy satisfaction, and the times of failure which reminded her/him how much we depend upon You.

You have given her/him Your Word, the life of Your Son and the loving companionship of family and friends. Thank You for Your enabling Spirit shining all the way.

Help her/him in the days that lie ahead to make this the best year yet and in it to bring credit to herself/himself, happiness to her/his loved ones and glory to You. We, who love her/him, O God, do commit her/him to Your love and care. Graciously abide with her/him all the days in the years ahead. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (51)

*Here the celebrator may offer a short simple prayer of thanksgiving and dedication.*

Closing with all saying: "The Lord's Prayer"

## THE HYMN OF FELLOWSHIP OR A BIRTHDAY SONG *(community standing)*

## THE BLESSING OF THE FOOD AND PEOPLE

## THE FELLOWSHIP MEAL

# 5. A WEDDING ANNIVERSARY SERVICE

Of the many anniversaries that are celebrated by families and communities, the most common is that of the wedding. Very often, unless it is a significant milestone such as the silver (25 years) or golden (50 years) anniversary, the celebration is held at home. A circular or semi-circular room arrangement is suggested, with a worship center containing three candles placed on it in triangular formation—to symbolize the Triune God and the triple Christian virtues: love, faith and hope; or to symbolize the three participants in the marriage ceremony: man, woman and God. The following is suggested for an anniversary celebration:

## WORDS OF GREETINGS

*By a member of the family*

Welcome to the fellowship of our home!  
Welcome to the fold of our family circle!

*By another member of the family*

Here we live and love and cherish one another and try to build a home which perpetuates the grace of our God and Savior, trying always to transmit the values of the Christian way of life.



*Another member of the family*

In Christ, the Head of this home, we invite you all to join us in this happy celebration of God's love. May God's love, joy, peace and hope be with us now and forever. Amen.

#### A SONG OF LOVE OR HYMN OF LOVE

*By singers or the community, standing and singing to each other.*

#### PRAYER OF INVOCATION *(by all)*

Ever-loving and Eternal God, Source of light that never sets and love that never fails; Life of our life, Love of our loves: come into our hearts at this moment and speak to us as we worship You in love. This we pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.\*

#### CALL TO CONFESSION

Minister: Now let us examine ourselves as members of the Body of Christ, and as members of our earthly families, asking God to search our hearts and to make us aware of our failures as husbands, wives, parents, and children.

All *(kneeling, if possible)*: O God, we who are bound together in tender ties of love, pray for Your forgiveness for moments and days when we lived in clouded love. We are sorry for the passing irritation which robbed us of our joy in one another. Forgive us if we have been swift to see human failings, and slow to feel the preciousness of those who are still the dearest comfort of our life. For the occasional sharp word that wounded and scarred, and the rifts that might have grown into estrangement but for Your grace, and for all our sins, known and unknown to us. O God, forgive us; In Christ's Name. Amen.\*

#### AFFIRMATION OF GOD'S PARDON

*The minister may tap the shoulder or lay her/his right hand on the shoulder of the person sitting closest to her/him or she/he may shake her/his hand or lift her/him up, if kneeling, with the rest of the community following likewise, one after another, saying:*

"Receive the love and forgiveness of God in Christ Jesus our Redeemer. Amen."

*or*

"The love and mercy of God be with you."

Response: "And also with you. Amen."

#### **THE PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD**

##### THROUGH BIBLICAL READINGS

1 Corinthians 13  
Ephesians 5:21-6:4

##### THROUGH CHORAL MUSIC *(preferably by members of the family)*

##### THROUGH THE INTERPRETED WORD *(meditation)*

#### **THE REDEDICATION TO THE COVENANT**

##### THE CALL TO COVENANT RENEWAL

Minister: "And now, friends, let us with all our hearts renew our part in the covenant that God has made with His people, and take time to dedicate ourselves anew to God and to each other."

*The couple shall then light their candles from the center candles and proceed to stand in front of the minister to renew their vows, surrounded by their children (if any) and the congregation. The vows are preferably those*

*that the couple shall have worked out together by themselves or with the help of the minister. In the absence of this, they may use the actual vows used when they were married, or the following may be used.*

Husband: (*name of wife*), I promised and covenanted with you and before God, (*number of years*) ago, and I do now covenant again, to be your loving and faithful husband, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live.

Wife: (*name of husband*), I promised and covenanted with you and before God, (*number of years*) ago, and I do now covenant again, to be your loving and faithful wife, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live.

Minister (*to the congregation*): I entreat all husbands and wives present here to do the same, to renew their vows of loving each other and, in effect, strengthen their covenant with God.

*Husbands and wives stand, face each other and repeat the renewal of covenant above or say their own vows to each other.*

#### PRAYER OF DEDICATION (*minister*)

O God, our loving Creator, bless all that we say and do here today for we know that in You everything is possible. Grant that as You have been the God of Mr. and Mrs. and their family this past (*number*) years, You will continue to be so in the years ahead. And grant, O God, that the lives of those who are gathered here may be made more meaningful because we have covenanted and worshipped together in Your presence. Amen.

#### SONG OR HYMN OF DEDICATION (*community standing*)

#### BLESSING

*(All worshippers shall face and sing to each other preferably in the circle in the giving of the blessing to each other.)*

Let us rejoice in this fellowship we have had with each other here; and with the Holy Spirit, by Whom we are born into the family of God and made members of the Body of Christ. The grace of God, our Creator, and the peace that passes all understanding that only Christ can give be with you.

Couples: "Praise to You, O God of our families."

Children: "Praise to You, O Christ."

All Others: "Praise to You, O Holy Spirit."

#### THE CONGREGATIONAL AMEN

## 6. A FIESTA RITE

#### THE ENTRANCE RITUAL

#### THE SOUND OF THE AGONG

#### WORDS OF WELCOME (*by the host or leader of the community*)

We welcome you all to this celebration of (*name of occasion*) and to this community which has gathered today, proud of the heritage that is theirs and humble in the presence of God Almighty, the Giver and Preserver of such a heritage. We wish to acknowledge the participation of (*names of those to be presented and the reason for their participation*).

#### CALL TO CELEBRATION (*host or leader*)

"This day shall be for you a memorial day; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generation." (Ex. 12:14)

"I will sing unto the Lord; because He has dealt bountifully with me." (Ps. 13:6)

"You shall rejoice in all the good which the Lord Your God has given to you and your house; You, and the stranger who is among you." (Dt. 26:11)

"Let the people praise You, O God, let all the people praise You." (Ps. 67:3)

THE ACCLAMATION *(by all)*

The Doxology or some other Canticle

THE INVOCATION

O God, Beginner of our yesterdays, Mystery of our today, and Hope of our tomorrows, we acknowledge in humility and gratitude our dependence on You and praise Your Holy Name, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen."

*or*

God Almighty, You have been our dwelling place through all generations; You are for us a very present help in trouble. Be with us now in our celebration of who we are and as we now once again acknowledge Whose we are. We are Yours in Christ Jesus, in whose Name we pray. Amen.

A HYMN OR SONG OF PRAISE *(by all)*

AN ACT OF PENITENCE

The Call to Repentance: *(leader/liturgist)* Let us confess our sin of separation from our neighbors and from our God. Let us pray together:

*The Prayer of Confession (in unison)*

God, our Creator, we give thanks to You for community life,  
although, we have not always acted as though it was important to us.  
Forgive us,  
When we have put our own self-interest first,  
When we have failed in our responsibilities,  
When we have looked for escape routes,  
When we have taken community life for granted.

Awaken in us  
A sense of community and loving fellowship,  
An alertness to the needs of each other.

Help us  
To add small miracles of love and laughter in Our community and family,  
To be worthy of being called Your children,  
For in Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen. (52)

*The Assurance of God's Love (leader/liturgist)*

Listen! Here is good news:

Jesus said, "Whoever comes to me, I will not turn away. I have come to forgive you in your failure, to accept you as you are, to set you free; And to make you want to be what you were meant to be. Amen." (53)

*The Call to Self-Examination (leader/liturgist)*

We know that we cannot truly celebrate our oneness if we are at odds with our neighbors. Therefore, let us now acknowledge our need for forgiveness and reconciliation. Let us offer our prayers of confession silently in the presence of God.

*The Silent Prayers of Confession*

*The Assurance of God's Love (leader/liturgist)*

Listen! Here's the Good News! "God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, that everyone who has faith in Him may not die but have eternal life." (John 3:16 NEB)

THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE COMMUNITY (*the leader guides the members*)

THE MESSAGE (*or words on the reason for gathering*)

THE SONG OF THANKSGIVING

THE PRAYER OF BLESSING

Almighty and most merciful Creator, from Whom comes every good and perfect gift: we yield to You praise and thanks for all Your mercies. Your goodness has created us. Give us hearts to love and serve You, and enable us to show our thankfulness for all Your goodness and mercy by giving up ourselves to Your service, and cheerfully submitting all things to Your blessed will. In Christ's Name. Amen. (54)

*or*

God our Creator, Who supplies us with every good thing, we give You thanks for the bounty of this land from which we are fed. We thank you now for this food and for family and friends. Bless now this food that it may nourish our emotional and spiritual lives; and grant that we may be worthy of these Your gifts to us. Through Christ our Savior. Amen.

SCRIPTURE AFFIRMATIONS

1 Chronicles 16:19-20  
Ecclesiastes 44:1-2  
Psalms 145:4

THE ACT OF DEDICATION

A Hymn of Dedication (*together with*)  
An Offering of Cash or Kind for the Community's Poor

THE SHARING OF THE MEAL

THE DISMISSAL

May the God of joy, peace, love, and hope go and abide with you, and keep you singing in gratitude to God in your hearts the rest of your days. In Christ's Name. Amen.

## **7. A NEW YEAR'S EVE SERVICE**

THE PREPARATION

*At the start of the service, the choirs should be at the entrance of the church and a soloist or the minister; with some singers, at the chancel. During the processional, one or two of the choir members may carry a symbol of Christianity which will become the worship center for the service.*

*The chancel should be bare at the start. A spotlight should be ready and focussed on the spot where the cross will stand. The spotlight is turned on at "The Proclamation of God's Kingship" or at the declaration: "The Lord is become King!"*

PRELUDE OR PREPARATORY MUSIC

EXHORTATION TO PRAISE GOD Psalm 47:1-4

Minister: Clap your hands, all nations;  
Raise a shout to God with the sound of a ringing cry.

All: (*Clap hands heartily.*)

ENTRANCE RITUAL Psalm 24:7-10

*The Choirs (at the church entrance, singing or speaking)*

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates,  
And be lifted up, you everlasting doors,  
And the King of Glory shall come in!"

Male Soloist or Men's Voices *(from the chancel)*

"Who is the King of Glory?"

*The Choirs (singing) The Lord of Hosts,*

He is the King of Glory!  
He is the King of Glory!  
He is the King of Glory!

#### FESTAL PROCESSION AND HYMN OF ADORATION *(congregation standing)*

*The Choirs proceed into the sanctuary singing in joyous and festive mood A symbol of Christianity, perhaps a large cross, is placed at the center of the chancel*

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD'S PRESENCE

A Male Voice or Minister: God has gone up with a shout,  
The Lord with the sound of a trumpet!  
Sing praises to God, sing praises! (Ps. 47:5-6)

A Female Voice: The chariot of God is amidst myriads of companies.  
The Lord has come into His sanctuary! (Ps. 68:17)

#### PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S KINGSHIP

Minister: The Lord is become King!  
*(Trumpet sounds here, if possible.)*  
The Lord is King!  
*(More trumpet sounds.)*

*(Men in the congregation):* He has clothed  
Himself in majesty;  
The Lord has clothed  
Himself with strength,  
And He has girded Himself. (Ps. 93:1)

#### CHORAL PROCLAMATION (anthem)

Women in the congregation: Let the earth rejoice!  
Let the many islands be glad! (Ps. 97:1)

All: For God has come to judge the earth!  
With righteousness shall God judge the world,  
And the people with equity! (Ps. 98:9b)

#### A RECITAL OF GOD'S EXCELLENT DEEDS

From the Old Testament: Psalm 98  
From the New Testament: Philippians 2:5-11  
From the Contemporary Word (Sermon or Meditation)

#### THE EXALTATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE

A Word of Challenge and Exaltation of God's People *(in the manner of Ps. 97:10-12)*

#### THE RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT WITH GOD *(congregation standing)*

*Call to Renewal (minister)*

*\*Prayer of Dedication (by all)*

O God, our Parent, You speak to us today as yesterday and will speak tomorrow as today, saying that You have always loved us and, therefore, because of Your great goodness have drawn us to You.

We hear You, O God, but grant that we may hear You aright!

We believe You, but help our unbelief! We want to obey You, but we make You an end of all in us that is much too soft and much too hard. Help us that we may obey You truly and aright. We trust You, but grant that we may trust You more fully and gladly. We flee to You, but grant that we may wholeheartedly leave behind what must remain behind, and help us look forward and go forward in lively confidence.

We see near and far so much which saddens and discourages us, so much which makes us angry or indifferent. But with You there is fullness of order, peace, freedom, and joy. In the old year You were our hope and the hope of the world; You will also be our hope in the new. We lift up our hearts—no, raise our hearts to You! To You, Who are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be glory! As it was yesterday, so be it today; as today, so tomorrow and for eternity, in Jesus Christ! Amen! (55)

*\*Hymn of Dedication (by all)*

**\*THE FINAL ACCLAMATION**

Minister: The Lord is become King!

People: The Lord is King!

All: God reigns forever and ever! Amen.

**BENEDICTION**

Minister: Go out into the world, remembering God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. May the peace, joy and love of God in Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.\*

**POSTLUDE OR EXIT MUSIC**

## **D. COMMISSIONING RITES**

Among the special services which a church may be called upon to celebrate are what here are called "*Commissioning Rites*." As the name suggests, "to commission" is to empower or entrust certain persons to responsible service. In the commissioning rite, individuals are set apart for certain tasks of leadership and authorized to act in behalf of the group commissioning them.

In the earliest years of Christianity, the Apostles took care of the churches. As the churches grew in number, it became imperative for apostles to ordain or commission certain gifted and trusted persons to positions of church leadership, and they eventually became the clergy. At first, the event was very simple, requiring merely the laying on of hands and prayers. As time passed, the rite became heavy with the embellishments of the power associated with the clerical office. Added to the laying on of hands and prayers were words of ordination which literally gave the ordinand "power to offer sacrifice for the living and the dead," and to forgive sins in Christ's Name. Symbols of the office, such as the chalice, paten, bishop's mitre, the Bible, and all types of vestments were also presented to the ordinand in the rite.

The Christian faith has always been basically a forthright proclamation of the Gospel of the love of God in Jesus Christ. The Christian ministry likewise has always been a response to a definite call to "servanthood" as exemplified by the Lord and Savior of the Church, Jesus Christ. The ordination rite ought to embody these basic servanthood aspects of the faith and the ministry. It should include elements which, as found in the Scriptures, are traditional to the denomination or the church body, and are also inherently meaningful to the ordinand. These may be expressed in the vows and in the prayers. The presentation of symbols of the ministerial office would add meaning

to the service, so long as they are of a peculiar significance to the ordinand. Whatever symbols are used, they ought to be properly explained to the congregation in the rite.

The Ordination of a Minister ought to be accomplished in all seriousness and dignity, as well as, in beauty. The rite sets apart a person for the awesome task of pastoring or leading a congregation of believers.

The "Rite of Induction into the Ministry of a Church" is for a minister who has been ordained earlier, or at some place other than the church he is presently called to serve. This ought to take place during a regular weekly service of the church where she/he is to preach her/his first sermon as its pastor. It is only proper that a denomination official officiate at the induction.

## **1. THE SERVICE OF ORDINATION TO THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY (56)**

### PREPARATION

*Some materials for silent meditation — related to ordination to the ministry — may be printed here if the order of worship is printed.*

### PRELUDE OR OPENING MUSIC (*instrumental or choral*)

*Candidates and other leadership participants enter and take their places as had been designated.*

### OPENING SENTENCES

*Here the moderator, bishop or presiding ministers may give the statements surrounding the occasion for ordination: the roll call of candidates, if appropriate; their sponsors, if any; and their assignments in churches.*

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader/Liturgist: Know that the Lord is God: it is God that has made us, and not we ourselves.

People: We are God's people, and the sheep of God's pasture. (Ps. 100:3)

Leader/Liturgist: Surely you know you are God's temple, and that God's Spirit lives in you! (1 Con 3:16a)

People: God is our Maker, and in our union with Christ Jesus,  
God has created us for a life of good works, which God has already prepared for us to do. ([ph. 2:10)

All: Amen! Praise be to God, the God and Parent our Savior Jesus Christ!

*or*

Leader/Liturgist: This is the day which God has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!

People: Indeed, let us worship God our Creator, Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own wishes, but according to God's own purpose and grace. (2 Tim. 1:9)

*or*

Leader/Liturgist: In various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets. (Heb. 1:1)

People: Blessed be the God Who spoke of old through the prophets!

Leader/Liturgist: But in these days God has spoken to us by a Son. (Heb. 1:2a)

People: Blessed be Christ Jesus through Whom we receive redemption!

Leader/Liturgist: Let us love one another, for love is of God, and whoever loves is born of God and knows God.  
(1 Jh. 4:7)

All: We will give thanks to You, O God, with our whole hearts; we will tell of all Your wonderful deeds, we will be glad and exult in You, we will sing praises to Your Name, O Most High! (Ps. 9:1-2)

HYMN OF PRAISE (*congregation standing*)

INVOCATION (*minister/liturgist*)

O Almighty God, Whose power holds the universe and makes it move, rule over our lives and strengthen our spirits that our time, our dreams and our choices shall be in the path of Your will and true to Your wisdom. Amen.

*or*

O Creator God, You have called us to commit our lives to You for service to others in the world. Grant us now Your power and grace as we give ourselves to the ministry of our Savior Jesus Christ. Reveal to us the joy in serving You, that we may find the fulfillment of ourselves in the ministry to which we are called. Through Jesus Christ Who came to serve. Amen.

READING FROM SCRIPTURES

Numbers 11 :1 6, 17, 24-25;  
Luke 10:1-5 and Matthew 28:18-20

SERMON OR MEDITATION

*If the candidate for ordination is expected to preach her/his first/initial sermon after ordination, this is the place where he/she may do so. This sermon ought to come after the act of ordination.*

THE CHARGE TO THE CANDIDATES

*Any of the following passages may be read as they are or with interpretation.*

Jeremiah 1:4-10; John 21:15-19;  
Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12  
2 Corinthians 5:11-21; 2:1-13  
1 Timothy 6:12-16; 2 Timothy 1;  
2 Timothy 4:1-18; 1 Peter 5:1-11

HYMN OF CHALLENGE OR PRAYER OF SUPPLICATION (*congregation standing*)

THE VOWS OF ORDINATION

*The ordaining minister or bishop stands at the center of the chancel or at the chancel steps with the candidates facing him/her.*

Minister: Friends, we have gathered together to witness and bless the ordination to the Christian ministry of (*names of candidates*). Please be reminded that ordination is the setting apart of persons to the task of preaching and teaching the Word of God; of leading and guiding the worship of the church; of administering the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; of being a faithful pastor of the community of believers in Christ to whom she/he has been called to serve; and of proclaiming and witnessing to the Gospel that others, who are not in the fold, may believe.

Further, ordination to this sacred undertaking rests upon the call of God, acknowledged and confirmed by the Church and therefore ought not to be undertaken lightly and half-heartedly nor with conceit or arrogance.

We will now hear from the candidate(s) her/his/their statement's of belief and vows to discharge their duties with all humility, faithfulness and diligence.

STATEMENT OF BELIEF (*by the candidates*)

*In the absence of a statement of belief prepared by the candidates, use one of the creeds on page 226-229.*



or

Minister: Do you believe in one God, Son, and Holy Spirit; Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier of all life; in Jesus Christ, the Man of Nazareth Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, in Whom God shows people what He/She is like; and in the Holy Spirit, guiding, enabling and empowering all in the way of the godly?

Answer: I do.

Minister: Do you believe the Holy Bible as the Word of God?

Answer: I do.

#### ORDINAND'S PLEDGE

*The candidate may now give her/his pledge expounding or explaining her/his main understanding of what ordination means to him/her. She/He may wish to include how she/he looks upon her/his co-workers and others in light of her/his new station in life. This pledge may be in the form of a prayer or a brief statement or a sermon.*

#### VOWS OF THE CONGREGATION

*If the ordination takes place in the new pastor's congregation, the following may be used:*

Minister: Do you, as members of this church, (*name of church*), acknowledge and receive (*name of ordinand*) as a minister of the Church of Christ and as pastor of this church and this congregation; and will you work together with her/ him, giving her/him all due honor and support in our God? If so, signify your assent by standing.

#### PRAYER OF SUPPLICATION (*while congregation is standing*)

Minister: Almighty God, Who has called Your servants to make her/ his/their vows before You: enable her/him/them so to keep the same that they may remain steadfast in faith and to continue being fruitful in every good work, and faithful to their vows; through Jesus Christ our Savior and Master. Amen.

#### THE RITE OF ORDINATION

##### The Laying on of Hands

*The candidate shall kneel at the center, facing the ordaining official and appointed representatives of various church groups: ministers, lay leaders, youth, others, and they shall lay their hands on her/his head.*

##### The Prayer of Ordination

Ordaining Minister: Almighty God, our Creator and the Lord of our lives, be pleased to ordain to the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, this Your servant/s (*name/s of candidate/s*) whom we this day set apart, by the authority of this Church and through the laying on of our hands, to this awesome calling. And may the blessing of God the Creator, Son and Holy Spirit be upon her/him this day and all the days of her/his/their service in Your name. Amen.

#### VESTING THE ORDINAND AND PRESENTATION OF SYMBOLS OF THE MINISTRY

*The vestment sponsors, if any shall robe the ordinand; the Bible and other sponsors shall present their gifts of the symbols of the ministry as the ordaining minister says:*

Receive from our hands, this vestment—symbol of your being set apart for this holy task; this stole—symbolic of your being servant and yoked to the work and ministry of Jesus Christ; and this Holy Bible—the Word of God from which you shall preach and teach from here on. To God be the glory and honor and majesty, now and forevermore! Amen.

#### PRAYER OF CONSECRATION (*by the ordinand*)

*This prayer is best prepared by the ordinand herself/himself to be read or said at this point. A guide for such a prayer follows:*

O My God, Thank You that You have called out of the world, men and women into the Church through the ministry of Your Word and the sacraments, among whom I now count myself a part in humility and sincerity. Be pleased to use me in the nurture of Your people in this Church and in this congregation, making me always aware of the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

Help me to be concerned with human guilt, often masked in all forms and shapes, in order that I may be better able to live in sincere charity and appreciate people's true accomplishments.

Help me to be bold and sincere in my praise of You, my God, for Your grace is sufficient for my guilt. Grant that I shall live a life of constant awe and wonder as a child, enabling me to sing loud songs of praise to You wherever I am and in whatsoever state I may be.

And then, dear God, help me to pray without ceasing, for my religious life now is my profession; and I dare not fumble unnecessarily, for I shall now take people's lives into my care.

O God, these things I pray in utter abandon, for in Your hands I now place my life and my all. Through Jesus Christ Who has shown me the Way, the Truth and the Life. Amen. (57)

#### THE DECLARATION OF ORDINATION

Ordaining Minister: In the Name of our Savior Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and on behalf of the Church, we now declare you to be ordained to the Ministry of the Gospel in the *(name of denomination)* Church and to be appointed pastor of this *(name of local church)* Church.

And may the God of all grace, Who has called us to be coworkers ...

*or*

*(Name)*, we now declare you duly ordained to the Ministry of the Gospel in the *(name of church)*, in the Name of our Savior and Master Jesus Christ, the Man for others; and on behalf of the Church.

May the God of peace, Who brought again from the dead our Savior Jesus Christ the Great Shepherd of the sheep, make you perfect in all goodness so that you may do His will: and may He make of you what He would have you be through Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

#### VALEDICTORY SERMON *(may be preached here)*

#### CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE *(if held in the ordinand's new church assignment)* The Newly ordained Minister

Minister: Dear Friends, you have witnessed the setting apart of \_\_\_\_\_ to the ordained ministry of the Church.

As a minister of God's people, her/his task will be only as rewarding and fruitful as the cooperation and support of her/ his congregation. I therefore urge you to work diligently and lovingly, hand in hand, with the new minister of Christ, the Holy Spirit being your Guide and the Savior Jesus Christ, Himself, your great Example. And may God, the Creator and Sustainer of us all, bless you richly in your mission and ministry as a Church. Amen.

#### HYMN OF CONSECRATION *(congregation standing)*

#### BENEDICTION

Minister: The blessing of God Almighty, the Creator, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you now and for ever. Amen.

## **2. INDUCTION INTO THE MINISTRY OF A CHURCH (58)**

## OPENING SENTENCES *(officiating minister)*

Friends, we are about to receive/induct *(name of new Pastor)* into the pastoral ministry of this Church and this congregation and to recognize her/him as pastor. It is fitting that we should first hear of the steps which led the members of the Church, acting as they believe under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to call our brother/sister to be their minister; and that we are assured that they receive him/her as appointed by our God. It will be fitting also that she/he confess his/ her faith and declare her/his belief that she/he will diligently discharge all the duties of the pastoral office in the Name of the Savior Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church.

## PRESENTATION OF THE NEW MINISTER AND HER/HIS CALL

*(Pastoral Call Committee or Pulpit Committee Chairperson)*

*Here shall be read the circumstances surrounding the call of the new pastor, which shall include only such bio-data as pertains to her/his new office of pastor*

## SCRIPTURE READING

1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 27-31;  
John 21: 75-17; or John 10:1-16

## AFFIRMATION OF FAITH OR STATEMENT OF BELIEF

Minister: Although it seems needless, since we believe you are acting in obedience to a call from God, but for your own assurance of faith, we do ask now that you affirm before this congregation—whom you are to lead in the faith—and before God, Who alone shall be your Master your own statement of beliefs.

*Here the minister-elect may say or read her/his statement of faith, preferably as she/he has prepared it herself/himself, or she/he may use one of the traditional creeds or some contemporary statement found on pages 227-230. Or, through the question-answer form, she/he may answer questions concerning her/his faith and understanding of the Christian faith that the inducting minister may ask of her/him, such as:*

Do you believe in one God, the Creator, the Son and the Holy Spirit; and do you confess anew Jesus Christ as Your Sovereign and Savior?

Are you persuaded that the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments contain sufficiently all doctrine required for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ?

## VOWS OF RESPONSIBILITY

*Here the minister-elect may continue the above procedure of stating or declaring his/her promises to the congregation and before God of faithfulness to her/his task, in her/his own prepared words: or the inducting minister may continue to question her/him in this manner:*

"Do you believe in your heart that you are truly called of God to the pastoral oversight of this Church and congregation?"

"Do you promise to execute your charge with all fidelity, to preach and teach the Word of God from the Holy Scriptures, to lead the congregation in worship and administer the Sacraments, to fulfill the pastoral office, and to live a godly life, enhancing the doctrine of God our Savior in all things?"

*The inducting minister may ask the congregation the following question: "Do you, the members of this Church, acknowledge and receive *(name of new pastor)* as pastor/minister of this Church and congregation, promising her/him all due honor and support as she/ he fulfills her/his ministry among you?"*

## PRAYER OF SUPPLICATION AND BLESSING

*This may be an extempore prayer offered by the inducting minister or the ruling church elder, or the following prayer may be offered:*

Eternal God, our Creator, let Your blessing rest upon Your servant as we now, in the Name of the Savior Jesus Christ, install her/him to the office and work of a minister/pastor in this church and congregation. Pour out upon him/her Your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom, power and love, that being equipped for every good work, she/he may discharge all her/his duties with zeal and faithfulness. Grant to her/him a right and an enlightened understanding of Your Holy Word, and the power and wisdom to preach and teach it for the conversion of sinners and the building up of believers in Your Church. Shed abroad Your love in her/his heart, that she/he may care for all her/his people, feeding and tending the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made her/him guardian. Grant that she/he may always inspire the confidence and affection of all the officers and members of this congregation, that in one spirit and with one mind, they may strive together for the faith of the Gospel. Make fruitful their partnership in Your service, and keep them all steadfast in faith, active in love, and abounding in hope. We ask this through Jesus Christ, to Whom with You, O God, and the Holy Spirit, be glory in the Church to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Almighty God, Who has given you the will to do all these things: grant you also strength and power to perform the same; that God may accomplish the work which God has begun in you: through Jesus Christ our Sovereign. Amen.

#### THE HYMN OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OR OF PETITION

#### A PRAYER OF INDUCTION

*The congregation shall stand: the family of the minister-elect, if any, shall surround her/him in front of the inducting minister.*

Installing Minister:

Bless, O God, we beseech You, Your servant to whom the care of these people in this Church and congregation is now committed. Pour out Your Holy Spirit upon her/him that she/he may fulfill her/his sacred duties with all faithfulness, diligence and courage. Give to her/him the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Make her/his ministry to be the means for awakening the careless, strengthening the faithful, comforting the afflicted, building up Your Church, and converting sinners to You. Guard her/him against the snares of temptation, that she/he may be kept pure in heart, fervent in spirit, and valiant against evil. And grant that, at last, she/he may receive the crown of life which You have promised to Your faithful servants.

Bless abundantly the people of her/his charge; edify them by her/his ministry, establish them in all holy living and godliness, leading them together into the manifold service of Christ, and keeping them by Your power through faith into salvation, through Jesus Christ our Sovereign. Amen.

#### THE ACT OF INSTALLATION TO THE PASTORAL MINISTRY

*Installing Minister (placing her/his right hand on the shoulder of candidate):*

In the Name of our Savior Jesus Christ, and in behalf of this church, the \_\_\_\_\_ Church, we declare you to be appointed Pastor of this church and congregation.

The God of all grace, Who has called us to the eternal glory by Christ Jesus, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you: and to God be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

#### THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP

#### THE BENEDICTION

May God bless us all with a loving sense of the Divine's near presence, to guide us, to protect and help us; and that we may know what it is to walk closely with God all our life long. In Christ's Name. Amen. (59)

### **3. INSTALLATION AND CONSECRATION OF A DIRECTOR/MINISTER OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION (60)**

*This rite ought to be embodied in a regular public worship service. At the appointed place in the service, the following may be used:*

#### THE PRESENTATION OF THE CANDIDATE

*Here can be spoken brief words by the chairperson of the Board or Committee on Christian Education, or the chairperson of the Personnel Committee, introducing to the congregation the new Director or Minister of Christian Education, such as:*

In the Name of our Savior/Sovereign Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, we are now to receive as one commissioned to serve as director/ minister of Christian Education in the *(name of church)*, *(name of candidate)* She/He has been approved and recommended to serve by the *(name of committee)*. I now instruct that she/he be duly installed to service in this office.

#### SCRIPTURE SENTENCES *(minister)*

Hear the words of the Holy Scriptures: "The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I commend you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise." (Dt. 6:4-7)

#### VOWS OF COMMISSIONING

Minister: Jesus said, "Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember: I will be with you always, to the end of the age." (Mt. 28:19- 20)

Do you take this as your commission, and your sole purpose for entering into the ministry of Christian Education?

Candidate: I do, Jesus Christ being my Helper.

Minister: Every Scripture inspired of God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction which is in righteousness, that the worker of God may be complete, perfectly equipped for every good work.

Will you diligently read and study the Holy Scriptures and faithfully teach the same to others to the best of your ability?

Candidate: I will, the Lord Jesus Christ being my Guide.

Minister: The task of Christian Education is not merely the imparting of information, but the awakening and the inspiring of the whole person to the Sovereignty of Jesus Christ in all of life. As Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and humans, so ought all persons to grow.

Do you accept this as the purpose of your office as director/minister of Christian Education in this church?

Candidate: I do, the Savior Jesus Christ being my Teacher.

#### CHARGE TO THE CANDIDATE

Minister: I beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We exhort you to encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all things; hold fast that which is good; and to refrain from every form of evil. Give heed to reading the Holy Bible and study to show yourself a worker approved of God, rightly handling the Word of life.

Fight the good fight of faith. Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. If you put Christ's followers in mind of these things, you shall be a good minister of Jesus Christ.

#### CHARGE TO THE CONGREGATION

Minister: The privilege and responsibility of guiding persons in this congregation, as well as those who stand outside these walls in the Christian way, are not the duty and task of the director or the minister of Christian Education alone. Our new director/minister of Christian Education, *(name)*, has promised to do what she/he can do, but her/his best efforts will fail of fulfillment unless they are supplemented and supported by the wholehearted and loyal cooperation of each of our families, members and of our Church as a whole. Recognizing that the responsibility of Christian upbringing for all persons rests upon all of us, will you then join the church staff (or ministers) in pledging your prayers, support in all ways, and a rededication of yourselves to our vital teaching ministry?

Congregation(standing): We will, God being our Guide, Teacher and Helper. Amen.

#### THE PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

*The candidate shall kneel in front of the minister while the minister lifts her/his hand in blessing over said candidate and saying:*

All glory, praise and thanksgiving be unto You, O Lord our God, for You have revealed Your love for the children of humankind in sending Your beloved Son for their redemption; and have, from the beginning, raised up chosen servants to tell abroad the message of Your love.

We give thanks for the devotion of this Your servant whom we now, in Your Name, set apart for the ministry of teaching and guiding others to Your grace. Accept her/his love and devotion; and increase in her/him the gifts of Your Holy Spirit, that she/he may commend by teaching an example of the love of Jesus Christ. Give him/her understanding, sympathy, patience; guard her/him in body and soul; be her/his strength and joy; cheer her/him with Your continual Presence; and make her/him glad with the fruits of her/his ministry.

And we pray that You will help us who join in this act of installation and consecration to encourage her/him in her/his ministry and to bear her/him up continually with prayer; and to share in this gracious ministry with her/him as we all endeavor to build the living faith in the lives of all who come within our Christian ministry; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

#### DECLARATION OF INSTALLATION

*The candidate shall stand.*

Minister: In the Name of the Savior Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, and by the authority of the *(name of church)* vested in me, I do now declare you installed as director/ minister of Christian Education of this Church and its congregation. May the rich blessings of the Creator, Son and Holy Spirit be upon you and abide with you to effect a gracious and fruitful ministry in Christian Education for our people of this Church and this community.

#### PRESENTATION TO THE CONGREGATION

*The candidate shall face the congregation.*

Minister: Members of the household of faith, receive your new director/ minister of Christian Education. And God grant us all fruitful ministry together. Amen.

## **4. ORDINATION OF ELDERS OR DEACONS (61)**

*The Service of Ordination for Church elders or deacons ought to be a part of a regular church service where the congregation with whom such church officials will minister may be present. This rite ought to be administered before the new officials begin their office.*

*At the appointed time in the service, the following may be used:*

## OPENING SENTENCES (*minister*)

There are different gifts,  
But it is the same Spirit Who gives them.  
There are different ways of serving God,  
But it is the same God Who is served.  
God works through different persons in different ways,  
But it is the same God Who achieves Divine purpose through them all.  
Each one is given a gift by the Spirit to use it for the common good.  
Together we are the Body of Christ, and individually members of Him. (1 Cor. 12:4-6)

Though we have different gifts, together we are a ministry of reconciliation led by the Risen Christ. We work and pray to make His Church useful in the world, and we call men and women to faith, so that, in the end, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Sovereign, to the glory of God the Creator.

Within our common ministry, some members are chosen for particular work as elders, some as planners/workers in the Teaching Ministry, some as committee chairpersons, some as delegates to conferences, and so on. In this varied services, we recognize those special ministries, remembering that our Savior Jesus said:

"Whoever among you want to be great must become the servant of all, and if she/he wants to be first among you, she/he must be the slave of all! Just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life to set others free." (Mk. 10:43-45)

*Here also may be read 1Timothy 3:1-13 or parts of it.*

## VOWS OF FAITH AND RESPONSIBILITY

*To the New Officers*

Friends, God has called you by the voice of this Church to serve Jesus Christ in a special way. You know who we are and what we believe, and you understand the work for which you have been chosen. Do you trust in Jesus Christ, your Savior, acknowledge Him Lord of the world, and Head of the Church, and through Him believe in one God, Creator, Son and Holy Spirit?

*I do.*

Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to you?

*I do.*

Will you be leaders of this Church in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scriptures; and will you be a friend among your comrades in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?

*I will.*

Will you govern the way you live by following the Sovereign Jesus Christ, loving neighbors, working for the reconciliation of the world; and will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?

*I will.*

And now as elected elders/deacons, will you be faithful, watching over the people and their needs, providing for their worship and instruction? Will you share in the government and discipline of the Church, serving in the sacraments and, in your ministry, will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

*I will, so help me God.*

*To the Congregation*

Do you, as members of this Church, accept these persons set apart as Church Elders/Deacons, chosen by God through the voice of the congregation, to lead you in the way of Jesus Christ?

*We do. (standing)*

Do you agree to encourage them, to respect their decisions, and to follow as they guide you, serving Jesus Christ, Who alone is the Head of the Church?

*We do.*

Let us pray:

"Almighty God, in every age You have chosen servants to speak Your Word and lead Your loyal people. We thank You for these men and women whom You have called to serve You. Give them special gifts to do their special work; and fill them with the Holy Spirit, so they may have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus, and be faithful as Your disciples as long as they shall live. Amen."

#### THE ACT OF ORDINATION

*The new elders shall kneel; ministers and current elders shall lay their right hands on their heads.*

Minister: Let us pray:

Bless, O God, these Your Servants whom we set apart in obedience to Your will for the work to which You have called them. Grant to them grace through the Holy Spirit as we, in Your Name and in accordance with Your Will, by prayer and with the laying on of hands, ordain them to the office of Church elders. We pray in the Spirit of Christ. Amen.

#### RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP

*The new elders shall rise, and the minister and incumbent elders shall extend to them the right hand of fellowship with the following words:*

We welcome you to the Board (or committee) of Elders and to the task to which we have been called to serve, God helping us.

#### CHARGE TO THE ELDERS AND CONGREGATION

Minister: In the Name of Jesus Christ our Sovereign, the Head of the Church, we do hereby declare you duly ordained and set you apart for the holy ministry of Church Elders. We now charge you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, to be faithful in your tasks.

*The new elders shall face the congregation. The minister shall address the congregation:*

"I also charge you, Christian brothers and sisters, to pray for these your chosen leaders, to guide you in the Spirit of God, and to render them all due cooperation and support, and to follow them in so far as you see them follow Christ."

#### BLESSING OR BENEDICTION

And now, the God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do the Divine will, working in you that which is well-pleasing, through Jesus Christ to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

## **5. INSTALLATION AND CONSECRATION OF OFFICERS**

*The officers referred to here may be overall church officers or officers of church organizations The rite may be held during a regular worship service, a special service, or at the conclusion of a conference or an organizational meeting.*

#### ENTRANCE MUSIC



## OPENING WORDS

Leader: Friends and members of this congregation: hear ye:  
Have we not all one God and Parent?  
Has not one God created us? (Mal. 2:10a)

Response (*the congregation*): Yes, one God created us one and one is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brothers and sisters.

All: Behold, how good and pleasant it is for the brothers and sisters to dwell together in unity and peace. (Ps. 133:1)

*or*

Leader: We, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone member one of another. (1 Cor. 12:12b)

Congregation: One is our Master, even Christ; and we are brothers and sisters. (Mt. 23:8)

All: Unto God be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end! Amen. (Eph. 3:21)

## \*HYMN OF PRAISE

*(Processional of elected officers, congregation standing.)*

## \*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (*al I standing*)

(Use any found on pages 226-229)

## \*DOXOLOGY or ALLELUIA

*Use contemporary tune or some other brief song of praise. (congregation standing)*

## THE CONFESSION OF SIN

Call to Confession (*leader/liturgist*)

God has given us life, but we have not lived. We have been called to freedom, but we have found the burden heavy, the anxiety painful. In fear and pride we have turned from God to live in self-deceit and to serve other lords. May we admit our common willfulness and weakness. Let us examine ourselves in silence ... (62)

*Pause for silent prayer, kneeling, if possible.*

Leader/Liturgist: Let us confess our sins together to Almighty God.

The Prayer of Confession (*all, kneeling or sitting*)

O God, we know the Head of the Church is Jesus Christ, but we have acted as though it belonged to certain leaders: forgive us.

We know that the Church is a fellowship of believers, but we have acted as though it is only for a chosen few: forgive us.

Dear God, we know that the mission of the Church is to proclaim Your good news of love in Jesus Christ, but we have been so busy establishing organizations, we have no time nor funds to proclaim Your Word: forgive us.

Dear God, we know that Jesus was a Man for others and we have accepted His call to follow Him, and yet, we have continued to be self-centered and self-serving: forgive us.

Together — all: Have mercy upon us, we beg You;  
Help us to overcome our faults,  
Through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness (*led by the Minister*)

*Each one shall turn to her/his neighbor and, laying her/his hand on the shoulder of the other, shall say:*

Almighty God, have mercy upon you,  
forgive you all your sins, and  
bring you to everlasting life. Amen.

CHORAL ACCLAMATION OR HYMN OF PROCLAMATION

"Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen" (Jamaican Amen)

SCRIPTURE READING

MEDITATION/MESSAGE

CHARGE TO THE OFFICERS

Installing Officer: As newly elected officers, you have been called to assume the great honor and responsibility of leading and guiding the (*name of organization*) in the Church's ministry. Are you aware of the tremendous responsibility of such a task?

Elected Officers: We are.

Installing Officer: Are you willing to serve as instruments of God through your office by constantly referring to God's Word, the Holy Bible, and turning to Jesus Christ in prayer, through the Holy Spirit?

Elected Officers: We are willing, and we shall try.

Installing Officer: As Christians, you are different from other professing religious people, are you not?

Elected Officers: We are.

Installing Officer: What is it that makes you different? Your sense of social justice? Certainly the believers in Buddha are just as concerned. Your missionary zeal? Certainly the Muslims are just as zealous. Or is it the belief that your God is the one true God? Certainly the Hindus believe the same of their gods.

Elected Officers: We are uniquely different in that the Founder of our faith, Jesus Christ, lives! No other religious people can say that of their founder. We are different not in what we do, or should do, but in what motivates our behavior, which is the power of Jesus Christ.

It jars us from the pit of indifference, and causes us to seek to forgive more than to be forgiven, to help more than to be helped, to understand more than to be understood. Love distinguishes us as Christians.

Installing Officer: Where did you learn of this love?

Elected Officers: From God, through the Holy Spirit, Who loved the world so much, gave the Son, that whoever believes in Him would not die but would have eternal life.

Installing Officer: Do you truly believe this?

Elected Officers: We do, to the extent that we are willing to lose our lives for Christ's sake, as He gave His life for our sake, so help us God.\* Amen.

THE ACT OF INSTALLATION

*The officers shall kneel and the minister shall place her/his right hand on the shoulder of each of them saying:*

*(Name), you have indicated your awareness of your responsibility; you have acknowledged the foundation of your belief; and now, as (name of office), I install you in your office in the Name of God the Creator, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

THE PRAYER OF CONSECRATION (*by all the installed officers*)

O Creator God, it is good to know that our place is to serve, and that this is our usefulness. You do not ask us about motives or results, but quietly and unpretentiously, to do our job in trusting obedience. Thank You for inviting the *(name of organization)* to play its part in the Church and to enjoy its role as Your Body set in the midst of the world today. Through Jesus Christ our Sovereign Lord. Amen.\*

*or*

Installing Officer: And what is that?

Elected Officers: Love! Love that commands us to love our God and each other: love that comes through Jesus Christ!

Installing Officer: And this is what makes you different, love? Elected Officers: Yes, for it prompts us to put others before ourselves.

*or*

Don't let this be just another ritual, O God. Don't let us merely go through the motions of another ceremony. As persons created in Your image, remind us of our true calling. For we are a race chosen, a royal priesthood, a dedicated community and a people claimed by You.

As chosen leaders of this community, we humble ourselves in Your presence and pledge today, at this hour and before these witnesses, to be used only by You and no other. For we recognize Your Lordship and Sovereignty over our lives.

Kindle anew in us, individually and collectively, the flavor of love, joy, peace, hope, and knowledge that in this community, Your Word will be very near to us. Through Jesus Christ our Savior and our Leader. Amen.

#### THE RITUAL OF DEDICATION

*Each officer shall light her/his candle from the Christ-candle and shall face the congregation. The other members of the organization shall light their candles from the Christ-candle and join the officers in forming a circle. Other worshippers shall light their candles and join the widening circle. During the lighting process, the minister shall read any or all of the following Scripture passages, as needed, until all shall have lighted their candles and have formed the circle.*

1 Timothy 4:12

Matthew 5:48

2 Timothy 2:25

Colossians 3:12-17

Matthew 5:15-16

Ephesians 6:10-17

Romans 12:16-17

#### THE HYMN OF DEDICATION *(all remain standing)*

*All other lights shall be turned off: only the candle lights shall remain lighted or lit.*

#### THE BENEDICTION *(minister)*

"Behold, I have set you before an open door; and which no one is able to shut off. (Rev. 3:8) I beseech you to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace." (Eph. 4:1-2)

"And now, may the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you;

May the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon you, and give you peace, now and always." Amen. (Num. 6:24-26)

#### EXIT MUSIC

## **E. DEATH RITES**

Death rites are commonly observed by Filipino Christians to accompany the final passage from this earthly life. In the observance of these rites, it should be remembered that God, Who is the God of life and death, is the sole Object of worship and that the Bible remains the norm of faith and practice. These rites include the Vigil, Funeral and Memorial services. These are not occasions for simply extolling the virtues of the dead nor for oratorical display. Rather, they are occasions for proclaiming what God has done for and through the person who has died and for sharing in the burden of the bereaved.

Vigil Services are held in the evenings after death occurs and before the burial. The current observance varies as to when and how often the vigil service are held. Services may be held every night from the first to the last night before burial or simply on the first and last nights. These are held in the early evening or later in the night, and in some cases, several vigil services are held within the same evening.

Originally, vigil rites had nothing to do with death. They were observed by early Christians on Saturday evenings or on the eve of Holy or Feast Days in preparation for the celebration of the Eucharist or Holy Communion the following day. Later, these vigil rites became associated with the preparation of candidates for Christian baptism. The night before baptism, the candidates or catechumens were prepared through prayers and confession of beliefs. Still later, Christians also began to meet for vigil or all-night watches on the anniversaries of the martyrdom of their fellow-Christians. This was specially true after the persecution of the Christians began.

Today, at the request of family and friends, vigil services are held by the Church for any Christian member who has died. These may be in the church or in the home, wherever the body of the dead lies.

The Filipino practice of "*keeping watch*" over the dead has provided an opportunity for evangelical Christians to strengthen their faith through the vigil rites, which are usually led and attended by relatives, close friends and associates. The most important aspects of vigil services are the *prayers*, often offered by friends and relatives of the dead; *Scripture readings* celebrating life and proclaiming faith in God's abiding love; and the *singing of hymns* both to comfort the bereaved and to exalt God.

The healthy Filipino outlook on death shows itself during vigils where an atmosphere of wholesome relationships prevail to ease the pain of the grieving members. It might be well to recapture this attitude toward death and help to bring the community gathered together to a feeling of strong confidence in the God Who is Lord of all sorts and conditions of life. The songs, hymns, readings, and meditations used should indicate this trust and hope.

The Vigil Services ought to be simple and brief, composed mainly of Scripture readings, a short meditation [if requested), hymn singing, and much praying. Brief words of remembrance of the departed are also appropriate.

Funeral or Burial Services are the accepted ways by which Filipino Christians bury their dead. The funeral or burial rites are celebrations of the life lived by the departed and the affirmation of such a life as a gift from God. The funeral rites, as well as the vigil services, are occasions for sharing in the grief of those bereaved, and are for the living, rather than for the dead. The funeral services are indeed public worship rites, proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His victory over death, as well as the assurance of the resurrection for those who believe in Him. Thus, the people gather to affirm their faith in God and their conviction that nothing can separate them from God's love.

The early upland Filipinos believed that the dead had been called by an *anito* or a spirit, and so rejoicing, they let their dead go to enter a better life. Thus, they share something of the belief of Christians that life holds the promise of eternal joy and ultimate happiness, and death ushers one into the presence and company of the Creator God. The early Christians, at their funeral processions, heartily joined in the singing of psalms as though they were participating in a victory parade of some sort, rather than in a journey to life's end. This spirit of joy ought to permeate funeral services today.

The funeral service normally ends with a *Committal Rite* or a *Service of Committal* which is held at the graveside. As the name suggests, the act of committing the body to the ground is based on the biblical idea that a human being who comes from dust returns finally to dust. But equally important for the grieving family is the presence of the supportive community, together with the religious leader, at the final disposition of the body of the dead. It is

often at this moment that the reality of the loss finally sinks into the consciousness of the bereaved. It is then that God's comforting Word ought to be heard more clearly.

**Memorial Services** were originally held on the death anniversaries of faithful Christians and were highlighted with the celebration of the Eucharist. In the Old Testament, *remembering* "is closely related to the idea of the 'name' ... [and] the significance in the very mention of it." Thus, an important aspect of the memorial rite is the life of the person remembered, whose name is significantly passed on from generation to generation or remembered through other means, such as a memorial fund or a memorial object. But of greater importance is the fact that God is proclaimed and His abiding presence and upholding strength through the past difficult days are recalled.

Memorial Rites may meaningfully be observed when the family desires a worship service on the evening after the burial or any night thereafter. The Filipino custom of observing the third, seventh, ninth, or fortieth night after death may well be the occasion. But memorial services are more appropriately celebrated on death anniversaries.

## 1. THE VIGIL SERVICE

OPENING MUSIC

SILENT MEDITATION

*A printed material is helpful for a gathered community preparing for the service to begin.*

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION FROM SCRIPTURES (*minister*)

God is our shelter and strength,  
Always ready to help in times of trouble.  
So we will not be afraid, even if the earth is shaken  
And mountains fall into the ocean depths; or even if the seas roar and rage,  
And the hills are shaken by the violence. The Lord Almighty is with us;  
The God of Jacob is our refuge! (Ps. 46:1-3,7)

*or*

Lord, You have always been our home.  
Before the hills were created,  
Before You brought the world into being,  
You are eternally God, without beginning or end.  
You tell people to return to what they were;  
You change them back to soil.

A thousand years to You are like one day;  
they are like yesterday, already gone,  
like a short hour in the night. (Ps. 90:1-4)

*or*

Lord, You have examined me, and You know me.  
You know everything I do;  
From far away You understand all my thoughts.  
You see me, whether I am working or resting;  
You know all my actions.  
Even before I speak  
You already know what I will say.  
You are all around me, on every side;  
You protect me with Your power.

Your knowledge of me is overwhelming;  
It is too deep for me to understand. (Ps. 139:1-6)

INVOCATION (*minister/leader*)

We bless the God and Father/Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
The God of mercy, and of comfort,  
Who comforts us in our sorrows and afflictions.

Let us trust God, for God will help us through the Son Who invites us: "Come to me all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest."

*or*

We call to You, O Lord; hasten to help out!  
Hear our voices when we cry to You.  
Let our prayers come before You like incense,  
The raising of our heads like a morning sacrifice.  
To You, Lord God, our eyes are turned:  
In You we take refuge. Amen. (Ps. 141:1)

*or*

Descend upon us, O Giver of Life, in this time of death.  
Quicken our spirits, O Comforter, in this moment of despair.  
Brighten our path, O Glorious Light, in this hour of gloom.

Life and death are one, just as day and night are one.  
We behold the victory of death and in death there is life.  
This assurance we experience in Christ our Lord. Amen.

HYMN OF FAITH OR AN EVENING HYMN OF COMFORT/ASSURANCE

*The congregation need not stand in consideration of the bereaved*

WORDS OF COMFORT FROM SCRIPTURES (*minister*)

"The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,  
and there shall no evil touch them." (Wis. Of Sol. 3:1)

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;  
neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.  
For the Lamb which is in the midst  
Of the throne shall feed them,  
And shall lead them into living fountains of water ...  
And God shall wipe every tear." (Rev. 7:16-17)  
"Do not be worried and upset," Jesus told them.

"Believe in God, believe also in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house, and I am going to prepare a place for you. I would not tell you this if it were not so. And after I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am." (Jh. 14:1-4)

*or*

"Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Because of His great mercy, He gave us new life by raising Jesus Christ from the dead. This fills us with living hope, and so we look forward to possess the rich blessings that God keeps for His people. He keeps them for you in heaven, where they cannot decay or spoil or fade away. They are for you, who through faith are kept safe by God's power, as you wait for the salvation which is ready to be revealed at the end of time." (1 Pet. 1:3-5)

Or any of the following may be used:

John 5:25-29; 2 Corinthians 4:10, 5:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

#### MEDITATION OR MESSAGE OF HOPE

*If requested, a brief message may be given here.*

#### PRAYERS

*Here, a series of prayers by relatives and close friends, as well as by church leaders, may be offered. It is best that people who lead in the prayers be informed before the service in order that they may come prepared. The following may be used as samples or as prepared prayers if fitted for the occasion.*

Loving Parent, and God of all comfort, look with tender love and com-*passion* on Your servants who mourn; so that, while they grieve they may not turn against You; nor faint, but remembering all Your goodness, Your promises, and Your love in Christ, may give themselves into Your hands, to be taught and guided by You. Fill their empty hearts with Your love that they may trust You more fully, You Who bring life out of death and turn their grief into endless joy; through Jesus Christ our Loving Savior. Amen. (63)

*and/or*

Great God of mysterious wonders, if in the face of death our minds are muddled and our lips utter confused sounds, speak to us that a calmness may envelop us and cover the sadness of our hearts. Give us patience to wait for Your grace. Help us to feel Your presence for we know You are nearer than we can ever think. Forgive us if we search in the wrong directions to find You. Assure us once again that whatever pain we suffer today, You have already endured it; and that whatever anguish we feel in our hearts, You have already suffered it. You Who have walked in the darkest shadow and have felt the deepest pain, be our Comfort and our Consolation while we walk through this dark valley of death; through Jesus Christ, our Savior, we pray. Amen.

*and/or*

Our Heavenly Father/Mother, we need strong comfort amid the perplexities and sorrows of this, our difficult, mysterious pilgrimage. Lead us to the high hills from which alone our help comes. Comfort us, not only with Your nearness but also with Your greatness, You Who from everlasting to everlasting are God. Through Christ Jesus, our Comforter and Savior, we pray. Amen. (64)

#### HYMN OF COMFORT AND ASSURANCE (*congregation may stand*)

#### BENEDICTION

Minister: God has promised us eternal life if we do God's will. Let us ask God's blessing, so that we may live meaningful lives.

All: God bless all of us, through the Creator, Son and Holy Spirit now and all our days ahead. In Christ's Most Holy Name. Amen.

*or*

Minister: I pray that the God of peace, Who brought our Sovereign Jesus Christ back from the dead to become the Great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood that sealed an eternal covenant, may make You able to do God's will in any kind of good action; and turn us all into whatever is acceptable to the Godself, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory for ever and ever. (Heb. 13:20-21)

All: Amen.

*Silent Moment of preparation for going out into the world.* CLOSING MUSIC

## **2. A FUNERAL SERVICE**

#### A CELEBRATION OF THANKSGIVING FOR THE LIFE OF

*(name of the deceased)*

PRELUDE

SALUTATION *(minister)*

"Grace and peace from our God and the Savior Jesus Christ to you all."

SCRIPTURE SENTENCES *(minister)*

"The Lord, the everlasting God, Creator of the wide world, does not grow weary, nor faint; His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the fainthearted, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youth shall faint and grow weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." (Isa. 40:28b-31, RSV)

*or*

"The righteous live for ever; their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High. Therefore shall they receive a glorious Kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand: for with His right hand shall He cover them, and with His arm shall He protect them." (Wis. Of Sol. 5:15-16)

*or*

"I am certain that nothing can separate us from God's love: neither death, nor life; neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers; neither the present nor the future; neither the world above nor the world below — there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:38-39, TEV)

HYMN OF TRUST OR HOPE *(congregation standing)*

PRAYER *(minister/liturgist/unison)*

Almighty and most merciful God, the Consolation of the sorrowful and the support of the weary, Who does not willingly grieve nor afflict the children and families: look down in tender love and pity upon Your servants of this bereaved household, whose joy is turned into mourning; so that while they mourn their loss, they may not murmur, and in their perplexity they may not despair. According to Your great mercy, uphold, strengthen and comfort them, that they may not faint under this sore affliction. Let them find in You their strength and refuge, so that they may face the future with confidence and hope; through Jesus Christ our Anchor and Lord. Amen. (65)

*or*

Our Father/Mother in heaven, You are the consolation and strength of all who trust in You, sustain us in this hour of bereavement. Bless this home and bring to every sorrowing heart, we pray You, the comfort of Your Word and Presence. Make us all deeply conscious of the brevity and uncertainty of this earthly life. Amid the passing of visible things, help us to build our lives upon that which is eternal. And may Your peace which passes all understanding guard our hearts and thoughts in the knowledge and love of God through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. (66)

*or*

Loving God, our Creator, from Whom we come, and to Whom our spirits return: You have been our dwelling place in all generations. You are our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Give to us Your blessing in this hour, and enable us to put our trust in You that our spirits may grow calm and our hearts be comforted. Lift our eyes beyond the shadows of earth, and help us to see the light of eternity. Thus, may we find grace and strength for this and every time of need, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. (67)

THE PSALTER READING

*Psalm 23, 90, 121, 130, or 139 may be read or sung.*



THE GLORIA PATRI (*all stand*)

AN AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (*congregation standing*)

Minister: Let us affirm our faith through words from Scriptures.

All: Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life; she/he who believes in me, though she/he die, yet shall she/he live, and whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die." (Jh. 11:25-26, TEV)

"Lord, we believe. Help our unbelief. We believe that Jesus died and rose again; so we believe that God will bring back with Jesus those who have died believing in Him." (1 Thess. 4:14, TEV)

"For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. 5:1, TEV)

"Faced with all this, what can we say? If God is for us, who can be against us? Who, then, can separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble do it, or hardship, or persecution, or hunger, or poverty, or danger, or death? No, in all these things we have complete victory through Him Who loved us! There is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 8:31, 35, 37, 39) Amen!

SONG OF FAITH (*solo, choir or congregation*)

LESSONS FROM SCRIPTURE (*possibly read by members and friends of the family*)

Minister: O Lord, open our eyes

People: That we may behold wondrous things out of Your law.

From the Old Testament: Isaiah 25:1,4, 7-9; 26:3-4

\*From the Gospel: John 14 (*selected readings*)

From the Epistles: 1 Corinthians 15 (*selected readings*)

\*HYMN OF TRIBUTE TO HUMANKIND (*congregation standing or may remain seated*)

SERMON OR MEDITATION

*Since this is a Celebration of Thanksgiving for the life of one who had died, the theme of the message ought to be thanksgiving to God for all that He has been enabled to do in and through the deceased. Statements of tribute to the dead will naturally become a part of the sermon.*

\*HYMN OF RESURRECTION (*congregation standing*)

"For All the Saints" SINE NOMINE

\*PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND SUPPLICATION (*all stand*)

*These prayers ought to be composed and written, if possible, by those who will pray them. In the absence of such prayers, the following may be used:*

***By a Member of the Family:***

O God, our Creator, we know that You are afflicted in all our afflictions; and in our sorrow we come to You today that You may give to us the comfort which You alone can give. Make us to be so sure that in perfect wisdom, perfect love and perfect power, You are working ever for the best.

Make us so sure that a parent's hand will never cause the child a needless tear. Make us so sure of Your love that we will be able to accept even that which we cannot understand. Help us today to be thinking not of the darkness of death, but of the splendor of the life everlasting, forever in Your presence and forever with You.

Help us to face life with grace and gallantry; and help us to find courage to go on in the memory that the best tribute we can pay to our loved one is not the tribute of tears, but the constant memory that another has been added to the unseen cloud of witnesses who encompass us.

Comfort and uphold us, strengthen and support us, until we shall also come to the green pastures which are beside the still waters; and until we meet again those whom we have loved and lost awhile, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.\*

***By an Associate or a Close Friend:***

O God, Whom we do not know as we would like, yet Whom we acknowledge as the Source of all life and the Sustainer beyond death. We do not ask for escape from our grief and sorrow. We only pray for a renewed faith in the reality of the unseen, and the promises of Jesus Who brought life, hope and immortality to light.

We recall with tender appreciation and pride our personal relationships with *(name of the deceased)* and the family through whom she/he has been a joy to us and to them.

We thank You for the community we have in Christ as in these moments, for we dare to gather in the face of death and proclaim Your Word, dry weeping eyes, to declare our mutual dependence on each other and celebrate each others presence.

We commend to Your keeping our loved one, now gone ahead of us, \_\_\_\_\_, believing in Your eternal love and the power of resurrection through Jesus Christ. O Blessed Hope! O Blessed Peace! Amen. (68)

***By the Minister:***

Eternal Spirit, from Whom we come, to Whom we belong, and in Whose service is our peace: even in the presence of death our first word to You is "Thanks" for Your unnumbered mercies. For the memory of our loved one now departed, in whom we have seen the light of Your presence, we thank You. For victories of character over trial, of courage over difficulty, of faith over sorrow, and for all souls who have done justly, loved mercy and walked humbly with their God, we are grateful to You. Grant us now such spiritual triumph in the memory of our friend (loved one), *(name)*, Your servant, in whose character and long years of service we rejoice, that in our hearts, death may be swallowed up in victory.

You are the God of the living. With You there is no death. Our departed who has passed out of our sight is at home with You forevermore. As You did not lose her/him in giving her/him to us, so have we not lost her/him by her/his return to You. Deepen in us this faith in life eternal.

Let Your mercy then rest upon us, a company of friends, who today remember with grateful affection Your servant who has departed this life. For her/his uprightness of character, for her/ his fidelity and loyalty, thank You! For the long years of able service which she/he rendered to Your Church and to many a Christian cause, thank You! Give especially to those—who most intimately mourn her/his going—wide margins of comfort around their spiritual need and deep wells from which to draw their consolation.

Once more we stand upon the shore of the sea and bid farewell to one in a ship that loses itself over the rim of the world. O God, give fair voyage and safe harbor! And as we stand upon this shore and bid farewell to our loved one, grant us faith to hear the voices on yonder shore, cry, "Welcome!" and "All hail!"

O God, support us all the day long of our troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed and the fever of life is over and our work is done. Then in Your mercy grant us safe lodging and a holy rest and peace at last. We pray in the Spirit of Christ. Amen. (69)

THE LORD'S PRAYER *(by all)*

WORDS OF FAITH

Minister: It is our God Who goes before you; God will be with you, God will not fail you nor forsake you; do not fear or be dismayed. (Dt. 31:6)

BLESSING AND ASCRIPTION TO GLORY

Minister: God sends you from the gathered Church to be scattered and let loose in the world. May you make your world God's world, a world that is in Christ. To the God of all grace, Who has called us into the eternal glory in Christ, belong glory and power forever and ever!

People: AMEN!

CHORAL ACCLAMATION "Hallelujah Chorus" Handel

RECESSIONAL

*The ministers shall precede the casket out of the church while the family follow closely behind it.*

### 3. THE SERVICE OF COMMITAL

*(at the grave side)*

SCRIPTURE SENTENCES

Minister: Jesus said: "I am the Resurrection and I am Life. If anyone has faith in me, even though she/he dies, she/he shall come to life again; and no one who is alive and has faith shall ever die." (Jh. 11:25-26)

*or*

Jesus said: "Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, and I am the Living One: for I was dead and now I am alive for evermore." (Rev. 1: 17b-18a)

*or*

Jesus said: "Do not be worried and upset. Believe in God, believe also in me, and because I live, you also will live." (Jh. 14:1 and 19b)

*or*

"In committing this body to the grave, I will bring to your memory the following triumphant words from Scripture:"

"For me to die is gain." (Phil. 1:21)

"Happy are the dead who die in the faith of Christ; henceforth," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." (Rev. 14:13)

"He who does the will of God lives forever." (1 Jh. 2:17b)

WORDS OF COMMITAL

Minister: "Seeing that the earthly life of \_\_\_\_\_ has come to an end, we commit her/his body to be buried, confident of the resurrection to eternal life through our Savior Jesus Christ."

*And as the coffin is lowered into the grave:*

Minister: "They shall never again feel hunger or thirst, the sun shall not beat on them nor any scorching heat, because the Lamb, Who is at the heart of the throne, will be their Shepherd and will guide them to the springs of the water of life; and God will wipe all tears from their eyes."

*The minister holds some dirt in his/her hand:*

"Dust to dust" (throw in some soil into the grave);

"ashes to ashes" (throw in more soil and flowers.)

HYMN OF FAITH OR HOPE

*This hymn may be sung while the coffin is lowered.*

"For All the Saints" Sine Nomine

*or*

"Jerusalem the Golden" Ewing

## PRAYER/BENEDICTION

All: God of peace, You brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus,  
the Great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant. (Heb. 13:20)  
Show us the peace we should seek,  
Show us the peace we must try to give,  
Show us the peace You have given,  
And make us what You want us to be; through Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory for ever. (70)

Minister: May the peace of God, which is beyond our utmost understanding and of far more worth than human reasoning, keep guard over your hearts and thoughts, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen. (Phil. 4:7)

*or*

O Saving, Loving God, here at the grave, we confess again that we have reached the end of our strength. Humans may boast of their power, and they do, but at the grave it all ends. All the hopes we have left in this dark hour are in You. If You fail us, all is lost! But thanks to Your mercy and revelation, our faith lights the dark valley. Only go with us, and give us strength, and especially do we ask it for those who sorrow now.

Now may God bless us and keep us,  
May God make His face to shine upon us, and be gracious unto us;  
May the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon us, and give us peace, now and forever more. Amen!

## 4. A MEMORIAL SERVICE

### PRELUDE

### SILENT MEDITATION OR SILENT PRAYER

### WORDS OF WELCOME

*Here, a member of the family may say a few words welcoming the people gathered and stating briefly the reason for the gathering.*

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader/Liturgist: The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no evil touch them, (Wis. of Sol. 3:1). And I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying:

People: Alleluia, salvation and glory, and honor and power unto the Lord our God!!!

Leader/Liturgist: And a voice came out of the throne saying:

People: Praise our God, all God's servants, and you that fear God, both great and small.

Leader/Liturgist: And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying:

People: Alleluia; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor unto our God ... King of kings, and Lord of lords! (Rev. 19:1,5-7a, 16b)

*or*

Leader/Liturgist: God is our refuge and strength, a tested help in times of trouble.

People: So we need not fear even if the world blows up, and the mountains crumble into the sea.

Leader/Liturgist: Let the oceans roar and foam; let the mountains tremble!

People: There is a river of joy flowing through the City of our God — the sacred Home of the God above all gods. (Ps. 46:1-4) Leader/

Liturgist: God indeed is living in that City

People: Stand silent! Know that I am God!

\*HYMN OF PRAISE OR THANKSGIVING (*congregation standing*)

\*INVOCATION (*by all or leader*)

Grant to us, O God, who have gathered together in the Name of our Savior Jesus Christ, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit: that we may sing Your praise with joy and gladness, offer our prayers with faith and love, and learn and obey the lessons of Your Word; through Jesus Christ our Savior Amen.\*

*or*

O God, we pray: give us Your strength that we may live more bravely and faithfully for the sake of our loved one whom we especially remember this day; and grant us to serve You day by day that we may find eternal fellowship with our loved one; through Christ Who died and rose again for us all. Amen. (71)

CHORAL ACCLAMATION (*choir or singers*)

*If a choir or singers or some other musicians have been invited, they may offer their musical piece here.*

AFFIRMATIONS OF FAITH OR STATEMENT OF BELIEF

*(congregation standing) (see pages 226-229)*

\*THE DOXOLOGY OR A SONG OF PRAISE (*Congregation standing*)

WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE

*Here may be spoken brief words of remembrance by a relative, a friend, and/or an associate.*

\*THE HYMN OF ASSURANCE (*congregation standing*)

THE SCRIPTURE READING (*congregation stand if from the Gospels*) A MEDITATION

THE CHORAL OR MUSICAL PROCLAMATION

A PRAYER OF FAITH (*by all*)

Enable us, O God, to hold fast to our faith without wavering, for You are faithful to Your promise; and grant that we may consider one another, to provoke to love and do good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but exhorting one another.

And grant us grace to continually offer the sacrifice of praise to You, O God, the fruits of our lips, giving thanks to Your Name.

And grant us grace, Loving Parent God, not to love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and truth.

Give us strength, O Gentle God, to put away from us all bitterness, wrath and anger, clamor and evil-speaking with all malice.

Grant us grace, to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as You for Christ's sake, have forgiven us.\*

God of peace, Who brought again from the dead our Savior Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep; make us perfect in every good work to do Your will, working in us that which is well—pleasing in Your sight, through Jesus Christ our Savior, to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Heb. 13:20-21)

\*THE LORD'S PRAYER (*all standing*)

\*THE HYMN OF ETERNAL LIFE OR HYMN OF TRUST (*congregation standing*)

\*THE BENEDICTION (*congregation standing*)

Minister: May God bless us all with a loving sense of Christ's near presence, to guide us, to protect and help us; that we may know what it is to walk close with Him all our life long. In Jesus Christ's Most Holy Name. Amen. (72)

*or*

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Christ Jesus' Name, now and forever more. Amen.

ASCRPTION OF GLORY (*congregation standing*)

Minister: Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever.

All: Amen.

*or*

All: Blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honor and power and might, be unto our God forever and ever, through Jesus Christ Our Savior. Amen. (Rev. 7:12)

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE POSTLUDE

## CHAPTER 4

# SPECIAL RITES FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP

### A. THE MAUNDY THURSDAY LITURGY

Maundy Thursday takes its name from the Latin word "*mandatum*" which means "command." This refers to the command Jesus gave to His disciples to offer their lives in the service of others. Its observance may be a simple commemoration of Jesus' Last Supper with His disciples. Or, increasingly, the Lord's Supper is followed by an adaptation of the "*Office of Tenebrae*," which is recalling of Christ's agony in Gethsemane. This helps to make the observance more meaningful and more fitting to the original Maundy Thursday event.

In celebrating\* the Last Supper, it must be remembered that a whole meal originally separated the acts of the breaking of the bread and the giving of the cup. Hence, it seems improbable that Jesus intended the bread and the wine to be taken as His body and blood, these being the two elements making up a person. The meal included a lamb which reminded them of the badge of blood on their home doors and there was unleavened bread in the meal which reminded them of their hasty departure from Egypt. There was a paste called *Charosheth* to remind them of the clay which they made into bricks.

Then there were four cups of a mixture of water and wine drunk at different stages during the meal to remind them of the four promises in Exodus 6:6-7: "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians; I will rid you of their bondage; I will redeem you with an outstretched arm; and I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be your God."

Entering a time of separation—from His coming to their final reunion—Jesus gave new meaning to the actions used in the Last Supper. "This is my body broken for you ... " promises His presence with them whenever they eat together during the time of separation. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" promises that his presence with them will be as the Savior Whose death brings about the new covenant. Thus the Bread becomes the token of

His real presence and the Cup, the tangible pledge of their share in the new covenant The 136th Psalm may have been the hymn they sang before they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The second part of the liturgy of Maundy Thursday is an adaptation of the fourth century "*Office of Tenebrae*." At this time, the sanctuary is gradually darkened, symbolic of the flight of the disciples and the agony of Jesus. The rule of silence is strictly observed, and only a silent nod of recognition to friends should be made. The service itself recalls the passion of Jesus as recorded in Scripture. These scriptural passages may be read simply or dramatically, or they may be supplemented with actions to heighten their impact. After the dismissal, the Church is in total darkness save for an exit light. The leaders withdraw and after a moment of reflection, the congregation leaves in silence in keeping with the sadness of the event, and to prepare themselves for the Good Friday event commemoration.

## **AN ORDER OF THE MAUNDY THURSDAY LITURGY**

### **THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE UPPER ROOM**

#### THE PREPARATION

##### Prelude

*The Minister and the Elders enter and take their places at the chancel. The lighting of the candles, if any may take place prior to this time. A brief statement may be printed here to help prepare the worshippers for the service, especially for the gradual darkening of the sanctuary*

##### Individual Silent Prayer of Confession

Loving God, do not let us make this simply another ritual. Forgive us the many times we have gone through ceremony after ceremony, with no real feeling of participation within us and no real change in our attitudes and our lives. Forgive Us our callousness, for in these moments we are reenacting Your agony and Your loneliness, not only then but also now, whenever in our selfishness we lead You again and again to the Garden of Gethsemane. Amen.

*(silent prayer of repentance)*

#### THE PRAISE OF GOD

##### The Call to Praise:

Minister: "Hallelujah!  
Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, Praise the Name of the Lord!

People: Blessed be the Name of the Lord, Henceforth, even forever more!

Unison: From the rising of the sun to its setting,  
Let the Lord's Name be praised!" (Ps. 113:1-3)

The Remembrance of God's Goodness *(Silence or a Reading about God's goodness.)*

The Hymn of Praise *(congregation standing)*

##### The Scripture Reading

*Here may be read excerpts from Exodus 12 which tell of the deliverance of the Hebrews.*

#### THE BLESSING OF THE MEAL

##### The Blessing of the Bread

Minister: "Blessed are You, O God, our Maker, Who brings forth grains from the fields. Blessed are You, O God, Who has sanctified us with Your commandment and enjoined us to eat unleavened cakes."

##### The Breaking of the Bread

Minister: "This is the bread of affliction which our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whosoever is hungry, let her/him come and eat. Whosoever is in need, let her/him come and keep the Feast of Redemption with us."

*Taking the Bread, the minister breaks it and says:*

Minister: "Take, eat: This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

*The minister and elders partake of the Bread.*

The Blessing of the Cup

Minister: "Blessed are You, O God, our Creator, Who has created the fruit of the vine. Blessed are You, O God, Who has hallowed our lives with the Eternal. Whosoever is hungry for the joy of the Spirit, come and drink. Whosoever is in fear of death and darkness, come and keep the Feast of Deliverance with us.\*"

*Lifting the cup, the minister says:*

"Drink this all of you: This is my blood of the New Covenant which is poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

*Minister and elders partake of the drink.*

The Sharing of the Bread and Cup

*The congregation may come forward in small groups, guided by ushers, and may kneel at the kneeling rail or sit around the communion table, and partake of the elements. They will rise and return to their seats after the minister has pronounced a blessing on them\_*

THE LITANY OF THANKSGIVING

"The Great Hallel" (*responsive reading*)

Leader/Liturgist: "Give thanks to our God, for God is good, for Divine kindness is everlasting."

People: "Give thanks to the God of gods, for Divine kindness is everlasting."

Leader/Liturgist: "Give thanks to the God of lords, for Divine kindness is everlasting."

People: "To God Who did great wonders alone, for Divine kindness is everlasting."

All: "Give thanks to the God of the heavens, for Divine kindness is everlasting!"

The Hymn of Thanksgiving (*congregation standing*)

The Prayers:

Leader/Liturgist: All! Your works shall praise You, O Creator God. And Your saints, the righteous, who do Your good pleasure and all Your people, with joyous songs, let them praise and bless, magnify and glorify, exalt *and* reverence, sanctify and ascribe the Kingdom to Your Name, O God, our King! For it is good to praise You, and a pleasure to sing praises to Your Name, for from everlasting You are God!

People: The breath of all that live shall praise Your Name, O Lord our God. And the spirit of all flesh shall continually glorify and exalt Your memorial, O God, our King. For from everlasting to everlasting, You are God; and beside You, we have no King, Redeemer and Savior! In Christ's Name. Amen.\*

THE OFFICE OF TENEBRAE

*The extinguishing of some house lights.*

SILENT MEDITATION

A HYMN OF ANTICIPATION



"There Is a Green Hill Far Away" MEDITATION

THE SCRIPTURE READINGS

***The Shadow of the Betrayal*** Matthew 26:17-25  
*Some of the lights are turned off*

***The Shadow of Desertion*** Matthew 26:31-35  
*More lights are turned off*

A HYMN OF DESERTION "Go to Dark Gethsemane" REDHEAD

SCRIPTURE READINGS

***The Agony of the Soul*** Luke 22:39-44  
*More lights are turned off*

***The Lonely Vigil*** Mark 14:32-41a  
*Still more lights are turned off*

HYMN OF LONELINESS "Tis Midnight, and On Olive's Brow" Olive's Brow

THE SCRIPTURE READINGS

*The Hour Has Come* John 17:1-6  
*That They May Be One* John 17:15-22  
*The last of the house lights are turned off*

A CHORAL MEDITATION *(by a choir or a group of singers)*

THE SCRIPTURE READINGS

*The Arrest at the Gate* John 18:1-5  
*The remaining lighted candles are extinguished gradually*  
*The Shadow of the Cross* Mark 15:16-20  
*The last of the candles are extinguished; only an exit light is left lighted or lit.*

A CHORAL MEDITATION *(light only on singers)*

THE LORD'S PRAYER *(choir and congregation singing or reciting together in darkness)*

THE DISMISSAL *(minister) (complete darkness)*

Christ Jesus, help us to know that the weight of our sins was the cause of Your pain; and the cup of suffering, which You feared was our distance from God. Then, let us not weep for You, but for ourselves, and yet rejoice that Your love has reached out to us.

Go forth into the world with the courage to stand by Jesus Christ with the least of the followers in their hours of grief and pain, and not to run away. Be loyal and devoted to the end, always open to the Divine will and to the needs of your fellow followers, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.\*

A SILENT RECESSIONAL

*(All leave in silence.)*

## **B. THE ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE**

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. From early Old Testament times and on through the long history of Christianity, ashes had been used as a sign of sorrow, mourning and penitence. Today, the use of the ancient sign of ashes begins the Lenten period of penitence, prayer and self-denial.

The penitential psalms of the Old Testament portray the urgency of the people's desire to be set aright with God. They set up days of lament—which were truly days of humiliation and prayer—when people actually "rend their clothes, smite their breasts and hips, and their skins with knives, shave or pluck off hair and beard ... roll in the dust, fall on their knees or prostrate themselves ... "It was also a day when they refrained from the usual pleasures and luxuries of life, and even the manifestations of a normal life: food and drink, sexual contact and so on. All of these were to appeal to Yahweh or God, for the Divine passion on a people who had been estranged from God.

In discovering the significance of Ash Wednesday for Christians today, much is suggested in the *penitential psalms*. There is also an obvious pattern running through these psalms to suggest an order for an *Ash Wednesday Liturgy*. This pattern is followed in the order given here.

## **AN ORDER OF THE ASH WEDNESDAY LITURGY**

### PREPARATION

*Musical prelude or preparatory music may be omitted for this particular service. If the order of worship is printed, a short meditation on penitence or a prayer may be included.*

### CALL TO PRAYER

Blessed are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.  
Blessed is the man or the woman on whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,  
And in whose spirit there is no deceit.  
Therefore, let everyone who is godly offer prayers to Thee  
At a time of distress ... (Psalm 32:1-2,6a)

### THE INVOCATION OF YAHWEH (*minister/leader*)

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,  
You who led Abraham and Sarah  
Shine forth before Miriam, Moses and Aaron  
Stir up Your might, and come, save us! Amen.

### HYMN OF INVOCATION "Into Our Hearts" or "Come, Holy Spirit" or St. Agnes

### RECITATION OF YAHWEH'S GOODNESS (*reader or speech choir*)

Psalm 22:3-5; Psalm 44:1-8;  
Psalm 74: 12-17 or Psalm 80:8-13

### AN ANTHEM OR A HYMN PRAISING GOD (*by all*)

### PRAYER OF PENITENCE (*by a reader, speech choir, or all*)

Psalm 51

### A SONG OF PENITENCE (*singers or choir*)

"O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" Passion Chorale (*choir*)

### THE PRAYER OF HOPE (*a reading*)

Psalm 74:18-23; Psalm 80:14-19; or Psalm 89: 18-52

### AN OFFERING OF THE SACRIFICE OF RENEWED LIVES

Psalm 22:23-31 or Psalm 144:9-15 (*with words of invitation*)

### A PROPHETIC UTTERANCE ON SALVATION

Deuteronomy 15:4-13 and Romans 6-9 (excerpts) Isaiah 43:1-5; or Psalm 126:3,5-6

#### A PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Psalm 96:4,6-13 and Romans 8:31-37 or Hebrews 11:33-37, 12:1-2

#### A SONG OR HYMN OF THANKSGIVING (*all*)

"And I Thank You, Lord"

*or*

"My God, I Thank Thee" Wentworth

#### THE BENEDICTION (*minister*)

May God our Creator and the Savior Jesus Christ give you all peace and love, with faith. And God's blessing be with all who have an unfailing love for God's Son, Jesus Christ. Amen. (Eph. 6:23-24)

### **C. THE COVENANT SERVICE**

The idea of a *covenant* between God and the people is basic to both the Old Testament and the New Testament. (*The covenant under Moses marked the beginning of Israel's religion in the Old Testament; while in the New Testament, Jesus initiated the New Covenant which was sealed by the Cross.*) God is a covenant—making God! And covenant-making expressed as *mercy* is one of the qualities or attributes of God, for God restores again and again the covenant relationship between the Godself and the people.

Indeed, God initiates the covenant binding the people to the Godself: "You shall be my people; I shall be your God." The prophets constantly recalled Israel to be faithful to the covenant, and God in Divine mercy and steadfast love, constantly renews the covenant.

The covenant thus defines a relationship between God and God's people. God keeps His promises faithfully—creating, judging, redeeming the people: and the human response is to obey God's Law.

The Old Testament prophets saw the danger of legalism implied in the idea of a *covenantand* looked for a New Covenant with the law written in the heart. At the Last Supper, Jesus indicates that His death shall bring about this New Covenant. Thus, Paul says that the Cup is the new covenant in Christ's blood and becomes the pledge of our participation in the said new covenant. Indeed, the covenant must constantly be renewed because of human faithlessness and this renewal is made possible because of God's faithfulness. For many, this covenant renewal takes place in the Holy Communion. Occasions for renewal and times of beginnings are therefore appropriate moments in which to celebrate this necessary act of renewing the covenant.

The "*Covenant Service*" or "*A Service for the Renewal of a Covenant with God*" should be used by more Christians today. Filipinos are deeply touched by drama and symbolism and these may be incorporated in such a rite. The suggested order for a "Covenant Service" here may be used for a "New Year's Watch Night Service" or on other occasions, such as the opening of a new school year or a new season.

#### **AN ORDER OF A COVENANT SERVICE**

##### THE LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

##### THE SILENT PRAYERS

*As the people enter, they are invited to meditate silently, preferably without any background music.*

##### THE CALL TO WORSHIP

Minister/Leader/Liturgist: Then the One who sits on the throne said, "And now I make all things new! ... I'm the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To anyone who is thirsty I will give a free

drink of water from the spring of the water of life. I will be his/her God, and she/he will be my son/daughter (Rev. 21:5-7)

*or*

"Listen! I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into his/her house and eat with him/her and she/he will eat with me ... If you have ears, then, listen to what the Spirit says . . ." (Rev. 3:20,22)

#### THE ACT OF PENITENCE

A HYMN OF PENITENCE (*congregation may be seated or kneeling*)

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" HAMBURG

THE PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS (*by all*)

Psalm 51

A SILENT PRAYER OF CONFESSION

*The people are invited to reflect individually on the words of the Psalm just read and to add her/his own individual prayers of confession of sin.*

KYRIE ELEISON

"The Kyrie Eleison" or another song of penitence or plea for help may be sung by all here or a song could also be used, like "Why Have You Chosen Me?"

THE WORDS OF ASSURANCE (*responsive reading*)

Minister/Leader/Liturgist: "Everyday is a new day to be born." Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven; go and sin no more."

People: Our life indeed, is given back to us with hope.

Minister/Leader/Liturgist: "For everyday is an opportunity to decide again and yet again, that this day shall not be like the past."

People: That indeed, as of this moment, a new person is created.

Minister/Leader/Liturgist: We are therefore free from bondage to our past.

People: Truly, we are free to live fully in the present.

Minister/Leader/Liturgist: The future is wide open!

All: We will arise, pick up our lives, and walk! (73)

#### THE ACT OF THANKSGIVING

A HYMN OF THANKSGIVING (*congregation standing*)

THE INVOCATION (*minister/leader/liturgist*)

*(The invocation for the Holy Spirit to come and be present....)*

O God, Beginner of our yesterdays, Mystery of our today, and Hope of our tomorrows: we acknowledge in humility and gratitude our dependence on You, and praise Your Holy Name. In Jesus Christ's Name. Amen. (74)

*or*

Give us a pure heart that we may see Thee,  
A humble heart that we may hear Thee,  
A heart of love that we may serve Thee,  
A heart of faith that we may love Thee,

Thou Whom we do not know, but Whose we are. (75)  
In Christ Jesus' Holy Name. Amen

#### A PSALM OR AN ANTHEM OF THANKSGIVING

#### THE PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S LOVE

#### THE SCRIPTURE READINGS

From the Old Testament: Exodus 20:1-17  
*Congregational or Choral Response*  
From the New Testament: John 15:1-8

#### THE MEDITATION (or) THE SPOKEN WORD

*This may be on the meaning of God's Covenant with God's people or a related subject, incorporating the message of the Lord's Supper for this particular occasion.*

#### AN ANTHEM OR A HYMN OF PROCLAMATION

*(congregation standing, if a hymn is sung by all)*

#### THE COVENANT-MAKING (76)

#### A CALL FOR EXAMINATION OF INDIVIDUAL LIVES

Minister: Let us now, remembering the mercies of God and the hope of God's calling, examine ourselves by the light of God's Spirit. Then we may see wherein we have failed or fallen short in faith and practice; and considering all that this Covenant means, may give ourselves anew to God.

#### A PRAYER OF PREPARATION (*unison*)

Have mercy upon us, O God, according to Your loving kindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out our transgressions. Wash us thoroughly from our iniquities, and cleanse us from our sin. Create in us a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within us. Amen. (Ps. 51:1-2)

*Or silent prayers of preparation may be made by each one.*

#### THE CALL FOR RENEWAL OF COVENANT WITH GOD

Minister: And now, friends, let us bind ourselves with willing bonds to our Covenant God, and take the yoke of Christ upon us. Taking His yoke upon us means that we are heartily content that He appoint us our places and our work, and that He alone be our reward.

Christ indeed has many services to be done; some are easy, others are difficult; some may bring honor, others bring reproach; some are suitable to our natural inclinations and temporal interests, others are contrary to both. In some, we may please Christ and please ourselves; in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves. Yet the power to do all these things is assuredly given us in Christ, Who strengthens us.

Therefore, let us make the covenant of God our own. Let us engage our hearts to the Savior and resolve in Divine strength never to go back. Being thus prepared, let us now in sincere dependence on Divine grace and trust in God's promise, yield ourselves anew to God.

#### THE PRAYER OF RENEWAL (*by all, with minister and congregation kneeling, if possible*)

Minister: O Holy God, Loving Creator, Who has called us through Christ to be partakers in this gracious covenant: We take upon ourselves with joy the yoke of obedience, and engage ourselves, for love of You, to seek and do Your perfect will. We are no longer our own, but Yours.

All: I am no longer my own, but Yours. Put me to what You will, rank me with whom You will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed by You or laid aside for You, exalted for You or

brought low for You; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to Your pleasure and disposal.

And now, O Creator and Blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, You are mine, and I am Yours. So be it. And this covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. In Jesus Christ's Most Holy Name. Amen.

THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (*congregation standing*)

Minister: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to our God.

Minister: Let us give thanks to our Creator.

People: It is fitting and right to do so.

Minister: It is fitting, right, and our duty that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O God, Holy Parent, Almighty and Everlasting God. Therefore, in company with all Your people, past, present and to come; with them and all creation, we praise You and say:

All: (*singing, if possible*)  
"Holy, holy, holy,  
Holy Lord God,  
Heaven and earth are full of Your glory:  
Glory be to You, O God most high! Amen!"

THE HOLY COMMUNION/HYMN OF THANKSGIVING

*The celebration of the Holy Communion may follow, having already begun with the Eucharistic Prayer above; or else a hymn of communion may be sung in preparation for The Lord's Supper. If there is no communion service, a hymn of thanksgiving may be sung, followed by a benediction.*

BENEDICTION (*congregation standing*)

The Grace of God be in our eyes  
To minister Divine gladness;  
The Grace of God be in our tongues  
To minister Divine peace,  
The Grace of God be in our hands  
To minister Holy healing;  
The Grace of God be in our hearts  
To make all know God's love. Amen. (77)

*or*

May the love of God unite us; the joy of God inspire us; the peace of God enfold us; the courage of God sustain us; and may the blessing of God, the Creator, Jesus Christ our Savior, and the Holy Spirit, rest upon us now and evermore. Amen. (78)

## CHAPTER 5

# AIDS TO WORSHIP FOR THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

The aids which follow include only Scriptural texts or combinations of these which may be used as calls to worship or opening sentences or bases of the sermon. The prayers are samples of what may be used as invocations and/or collects.

## A. THE ADVENT SEASON

ADVENT, which means *beginning*, is a season of preparation for the coming of Jesus both as a babe born in Bethlehem and as the Christ of human redemption. The season, which marks the start of the Christian year, begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and ought to feature the mood of penitence and expectancy. The color is PURPLE for penitence and royalty.

### SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Romans 13:12	Isaiah 40:3b, 5a
Zechariah 2:10	Isaiah 21:11, 12a
Isaiah 9:2	Isaiah 52:8
Luke 2:9	Isaiah 11:1-2
Luke 2:14	Malachi 3:1
Isaiah 60:1	Luke 12:37a
Romans 13:11	Matthew 25:13
Isaiah 25:9	Luke 35, 36a, c
Matthew 3:2	

### PRAYERS FOR ADVENT

1. Make us ready through the Holy Spirit, O God, for the coming of another Christmas, that we may put away all sinfulness: the gnawing grudge, the petty quarrels, the perennial jealousies and prejudices, until our hearts are opened to welcome once again the Babe of Hope, Joy, Peace, and Truth. Help each of us to see our Bethlehems and to behold the Star of Light and Wonder, that we may humble ourselves and hear the angels sing to us in spite of our busyness these days. Help us to walk through these days of preparation with such keen remembrance of what Jesus Christ means to us or could mean to us. Through Him, we pray. Amen.
2. O God, Who has taught us to expect great things of You: rekindle our hopes. Make straight in our hearts a highway to You. Give us clear heads and pure hearts as we look to the Dayspring from on high.

We bless You for everything that prompts us to turn to You—for the tasks that tax our strength and for the friends who trust us and ask our help. Teach us in our helplessness to seek You, and seeking You, to find You. And help us to find You that we may never lose You; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. (1)

3. Prepare our hearts, O God, for the coming of Jesus Christ Your Son. By the memory of the world's great need of a Savior, deepen our joy in making all things ready for the anniversary of His lowly birth at Bethlehem. By true faith in Him as the Divine Redeemer, strengthen our loyalty and our hope, that at His appearing in glory, we may welcome Him as our Risen Lord, our Royal Master, the Savior of our souls. Amen. (2)
4. We greet Your coming, O God, with wonder; You come to be with us; yet You remain far greater than we can imagine. You are near; yet Your wisdom sets You apart from us. You appear among us; yet we cannot describe Your glory.

We greet Your coming, O God, with repentance!  
We are more or less satisfied with ourselves;  
But Your presence exposes our sin and failure.  
We are self-confident; but You challenge our confidence in ourselves.

We greet Your coming, O God, with joy.  
We had no true idea of what You are like,

But You have shown us Yourself in Jesus Christ.  
We greet Your coming, O God, in Jesus Christ our Loving Savior. (3)

## **B. THE CHRISTMAS SEASON**

The Christmas Season or Christmastide begins on Christmas Eve or 24 December and continues through to 5 January or the eve of Epiphany. The season is marked with festivity and celebration for the coming of the Light of the world. The color therefore is WHITE to symbolize light and the purity of the One Who has come.

### SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Isaiah 9:6	Isaiah 11:2
Luke 2:15	I John 4:9
Luke 2:10, 11, 14	Luke 1:68
Galatians 4:4	Hebrews 1:1-2a
John 1:4	Titus 2:11
II Corinthians 9:15	John 1:17
Isaiah 52:7, 9	

### PRAYERS FOR CHRISTMASTIDE

5. Merciful and most loving God, by Whose will and bountiful gift, Jesus Christ our Savior, humbled Himself that He might exalt humankind, and became flesh that He might restore in us the lost celestial image; and was born of a Virgin that He might uplift the lowly; grant to us the inheritance of the meek, perfect us in Your likeness, and bring us at last to rejoice in beholding Your beauty, and, with all Your saints, to glorify Your grace, Who has given Your only begotten Son to be the Savior of the world. Amen. (4)
6. Infinite, Eternal and Everlasting God, during these days of Christmas celebration, we come again to the ageless Manger. Inspire us to see, worship and tell others of Your coming. As we depart upon life's journey, we go with transformed minds, renewed spirits and hearts full of faith, hope and love.

God of divine truth, we thank You for Your Omnipresent Gift, so splendid and so powerful that peace can come on earth among people of good will. Indeed, we pray because of the Christ of Bethlehem. Amen.\*

7. O Holy God, high and lifted up, yet in mercy humbling Yourself to enter these poor and often perverted hearts of ours! Come, we pray, as Christ came, with healing and with peace. You shall find us proud, for we have not yet learned what it means to be humble; You shall find us guarded and defensive, for we are weak within and full of fear; You shall find us irritable and somehow arrogant, for we are uncomfortably guilty and have not been willing to admit our frailty nor our wrongdoings. While we dress and parade like little Herods and lordly Pilates, we know we have a deeper need of You. Come again, O God, and save us from ourselves, for our selves, in Christ's Name. Amen. (5)
8. Grant us, O Savior, such love and wonder that with the humble shepherds, wise men, women and children pilgrims unknown, we may come and adore the holy Babe, the Heavenly King; and with our gifts, worship and acknowledge Him as our Sovereign and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. (6)

## **C. THE EPIPHANY SEASON**

This Season starts on 6 January which is the twelfth day of Christmas and continues until the third Sunday before Lent. The liturgical color of the season is WHITE for joy in God's appearing or in the manifestation of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, or to non-Jews through the Wise Men.

### SCRIPTURE TEXTS



Matthew 2:1-2  
Isaiah 60:1, 3  
I John 1:7  
Matthew 12:18  
Malachi 1:11a  
Luke 13:29

Numbers 24:17  
Isaiah 11:10  
John 8:12  
Matthew 12:21  
II Corinthians 4:6  
John 1:9, 11, 12

#### PRAYERS FOR THE EPIPHANY SEASON

9. Almighty and Everlasting God, the Radiance of faithful souls, Who brought the nations to Your light and kings to the brightness of Your rising: fill, we beseech You, the world with Your glory, and show Yourself to all the nations; through Him Who is the true Light and the bright Morning Star, even Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. (7)
10. O God, Who by the shining of a Star did guide the Wise Men to behold Your Son, our Savior: show us Your heavenly light, and give us grace to follow until we find Him and, finding Him, rejoice! And grant that as they presented gold, frankincense and myrrh, we now may bring Him the offering of loving hearts, adoring spirits and obedient wills, for His honor and for Your glory, O God Most High. Amen. (8)
11. Dear God, mercifully hear our cry and help us to have such objectivity about ourselves and others as will enable us to perceive things in Your true light. Then, may we know from You what we ought to do. Forgive us our transgressions. Forgive us for the many times we have turned aside from the guidance of Your glorious Star. Grant us grace to return to You Who has given us still a more glorious Sign, even His Holy Cross, that we may follow and be led by it the whole way of our salvation, through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen. (9)
12. O God, we know what darkness means in our lives: the darkness of our minds,  
the narrowness of our thoughts,  
the contraction of our circle of concern.  
We thank You that the Light—Your Word in Jesus—shines in our darkness  
to enlighten our minds and free us from our dogmatisms;  
to enlarge our thoughts and free us from undue preoccupation with ourselves and our problems;  
to expand the circle of our concern until it encompasses all who suffer and are oppressed.  
Quicken our lives with the power to love and fill all the world with Your Light which our darkness cannot overcome. Through Him Who is the True Light, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.\*

## D. THE LENTEN SEASON

Lent begins on the fortieth weekday before Easter, and concludes at noon on the Saturday of Holy Week or Easter eve. The 40 days (not counting Sundays) are for the period of preparation in penitence and soul-searching for a meaningful celebration of Easter or the rising of the Savior Jesus from the dead. The color of this liturgical season is PURPLE symbolizing *penitence*.

#### SCRIPTURE TEXTS

II Chronicles 7:14  
Joel 2:13  
Hosea 6:1a, 2b  
Isaiah 53:6  
Ezekiel 18:31  
Acts 3:19  
Jeremiah 29:13  
Lamentations 3:40

Psalms 139:23-24  
Isaiah 59:1  
Hosea 4:1-10  
Psalm 145:18  
James 4:8, 10  
Isaiah 55:6-7  
Luke 17:33

## PRAYERS FOR LENT

13. Our Savior Jesus, like Your disciples, we have been loud in our protestations of loyalty to You, and yet we have proven to be disloyal. You trod the way of love without flinching; while we hesitate to tread it at all. We have been afraid of the pain and suffering which love brings.

But it has done us no good to follow the easy way, for it has made us less than the men and the women we could have been. So we must follow Your way, even though it is hard, for it is the way to true life.

Give us the courage to stand by You in Your hour of grief, and not to run away. Keep us loyal and devoted to the end, always open to the Creator's will and to the needs of our fellow-humans for Your sake. (10)

14. We love You, but not enough; we seek You, but not diligently; we see but do not perceive; we hear but do not understand; we hope for the things heavenly, but cling to things of this earth; and our hearts are far from You, the Holy One! O Savior Jesus, forgive us! (*silence*)

O Loving Jesus, in these 40 days to come, draw us to You that we may learn discipline from Your perfect obedience. and compassion from Your pure love. Stretch our minds and hearts, enlarge our vision, show us Your will for each one of us, and the part You would have each of us play.

Take from us by loving force all that we withhold from You, all that we will not give You—for we are for You against ourselves! (*silence*) (11)

15. O Holy God, we come to You again in prayer bringing to You the same grievances, the same offenses, the same requests. How often we have come in prayer without any attempts on our parts to do something about our plights, nor to lift a finger about our situations; indeed, to even help ourselves! Forgive us, O God, for words insincerely uttered and promises casually made. During this Lenten time, teach us a spirituality that has depth and foundation in You! Help us to realize how badly we need You. Help us to abandon ourselves in Your hands, not in carelessness, but in trust and in faith. Through Jesus Christ Who was obedient even unto death. Amen.

16. Gracious God, in this Lenten Season we come to You in prayer. You know the deepest prayers of our hearts before we frame them in words. Yet, when we force ourselves to find the right phrases to tell You of our need, we realize how much we depend on You. Walk with us and teach us so that our lives may truly become a prayer. In Christ's Name, we pray. Amen. (12)

## ASH WEDNESDAY

### SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Isaiah 2:3c, 5

Isaiah 55:6-7

James 4:8

James 4:10

Joel 2:13

Lamentations 3:40

Isaiah 30:15c

Matthew 26:41

II Corinthians 7:1

Isaiah 57:15

Jeremiah 29:13

Acts 3:19

### PRAYERS

17. Almighty and Everlasting God, Who hates nothing that You have made, and forgives the sins of all those who are penitent; create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain from You, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Praise be to You, O Most Holy God, for the unfathomable love whereby You have ordained that Your Spirit with our spirits may meet, and that we, weak and erring mortals, may have ready access to the Heart of the One Who moves the stars. (13)

18. Most merciful Creator, deliver us from all the luxuries and comforts of a smug and private righteousness, and impel us by the love of our fellow human beings to set our faces toward the world. Grant us to know of our own needs for conversion and divine nourishment before we go forth, for only if we come from You will we have anything to give. Help us to realize how urgent Your command is: "Go into all the world." (0)

Truly this is our poverty—  
That we do not belong to each other,  
Nor serve one another.  
We go each her/his own way  
And do not care for our own neighbor.  
Forgive us, O God. (14)

19. Almighty God, Who summons us to be born again and forever reborn into the world of the Spirit: grant that through the indwelling of Christ in both our hearts and our minds we may be changed into His likeness. Amen. (15)

## MAUNDY THURSDAY

### SCRIPTURE TEXTS

John 13:1, 3	Exodus 12:14
Mark 10:38b	Exodus 12:26-27a
John 14:6	Exodus 12:42
Luke 21:28	John 13:34-35

### PRAYERS

20. Almighty God, Whose dear Son, on the night before He suffered, did institute the sacrament of His Body and Blood; mercifully grant that we may thankfully receive the same in remembrance of Him. Who in these holy mysteries give us a pledge of life eternal. The same as Your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior, Who now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit forever, one God, world without end. Amen. (16)
21. O God, Who, by the example of our Savior Jesus Christ, has taught us the greatness of true humility, and do call us to watch with Him in His passion: Give us grace to serve one another in all lowliness, and to enter into the fellowship of His sufferings; in His Name and for Your sake. Amen. (17)
22. Be present at this Table, Lord, just as You were present with Your disciples who gathered in Your name. You will find us wanting in faith and wanting in strength and even wanting in a true understanding of You. But You will find us loving You with feebleness and yet, with sincerity. Accept this love, O God, and let it blossom into fullness! Grant to us forgiveness of sins as we seek again to eat with You at Your Table, even at this Lenten Season. Be present at this Table, O God, that we may experience once again Your love and Your joy! Amen.

## GOOD FRIDAY

### SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Lamentations 1:12a	Luke 23:34a, 43, 46
II Chronicles 7:14	John 19:26-27; 28; 30
John 17:1	Matthew 27:46b
John 12:23	

### PRAYERS

23. Jesus, You ruined all the phony success stories forever when You did not come down from the Cross, turn Your crown of thorns into solid gold, transform the crowd at Golgotha into a mighty army, to march on to Rome, and become the King.

Now every success symbol looks so shoddy and short-lived when it is placed against Your Cross. You accepted and overcame death. You showed us the dimension of life in God's eternal dispensation which makes the careers we plan and the standards we accept look absurd. And, when You refused to play the role of a successful man, or the ultimate 'Big Shot', You really made us level with You as Yourself, O truly Humble Savior Christ. Amen. (18)

24. Almighty God, the shadow of the Cross looms heavily over us today. Help us to truly search our hearts and look deeply into our lives, repenting sincerely of our littleness and proneness to sin. With Your Holy Spirit discipline us, not only today because the Cross seems so vivid and demanding, but also tomorrow and the other tomorrows of our lives. Give us a newness of purpose and a clear vision of our calling that we may arise from today with renewed faith and renewed love to act for the glory of Your Name. Bind us together who gather here today into a community of love and compassion, that others may find in us a true manifestation of Your Kingdom. In the Name of Christ Who suffered that we may live. Amen.
25. Most wondrous Builder of our Eternal Life, help us to know that our eternity is built with the wood of Your cross and the nails we drove into Your body. As we come before You today, grant that our penitential tears may clear our vision. Then we may know what Your will for us is and that through our meditation and prayers in these Good Friday hours, Your will may be grafted into us, and thus, bring us nearer to what You would have us be.

In You, death—even in all its pain and mystery—is but a milestone through which life passes. O Divine God and Perfect Man, we kneel before the sweep of Your inevitable progress across the plains of history into eternity. Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven! Amen. (19)

## **PALM SUNDAY**

### SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Psalms 118:19, 24, 26, 29  
Zechariah 9:9  
John 13:31  
Philippians 2:9-11  
Nahum 1:15a  
Matthew 21:9b

Isaiah 42:1ab  
Revelations 11:15b  
Mark 11:9  
Luke 19:38  
Luke 21:28

### PRAYERS

26. As on this day we keep the special memory of our Redeemer's entry into the city, so grant, O Savior, that now and ever, He may triumph in our hearts. Let the King of grace and glory enter in, and let us lay ourselves and all that we are in full and joyful homage before Him; through the same Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. (20)
27. O God of Life, we have taken our places among the glad multitude who hailed the King of kings. Stir us and our complacent city and land anew, because of His coming. Give us grace to cut from life the vital branches of sacrifice; and may our garments of plentiful things be cast upon the highway of His coming. Grant us depth of faith and honesty of purpose to raise up ever new standards of welcome to Christ, our Sovereign. Amen. (21)
28. Come, O Christ, and reign among us in love and joy and peace! Extend Your empire over human hearts and let the burning vision of Your truth and love shine before the eyes of the world! Hasten the consummation of Your Kingdom in which love and justice shall be the only Sovereign and King. In Jesus' Name. Amen. (22)
29. O God of the ordinary and the common things, grant to us an understanding of Your ways. How often we have waited for the miraculous to sway us to Your side. How often we have desired the spectacular to convince us

of Your presence. We have failed to see You humbly riding on a donkey, silently seeking entrance into our crowded hearts. Indeed, we have had no time for the lowly, for the common and the ordinary, for the poor and the lonely. Forgive us, O God, and renew our eyesight, O Loving Creator, and grant us to see Your glory revealed without pompousness and show; saving us again and again from the worship of the false gods of our often meaningless lives. In humility and shame, we pray. Amen. (0)

## E. THE EASTER SEASON

EASTER is known as "the Queen of Christian Festivals." It commemorates the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. The season of Eastertide consists of the 40 days between Easter and Ascension Day, which is 50 days before Pentecost. The color is WHITE to depict, once again, the joy and purity of Him Who rose from the dead, to reign as Sovereign and Savior.

### SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Psalms 118:24

Mark 16:6

Luke 24:34

Isaiah 49:13

I Corinthians 15:20

I Corinthians 15:55

I Corinthians 15:57

John 11:25, 26a

Revelations 1:17b, 18a

Revelations 21:5a, 6

Timothy 6:15b, 16

Amos 5:8

Luke 24:13a, 15, 28a, 19b, 30-32

### PRAYERS FOR THE EASTER SEASON

30. O Living God, Who by Your life-giving Spirit raised our Savior Jesus from the dead; and Who, by that same Spirit, gives life to all who put their trust in You, grant us today a new vision of compassion and understanding love, that seeing You we may desire You, and desiring You we may surrender to You; and surrendering to You, body mind and spirit without reserve, we may find our lives transformed by Your Spirit into the likeness of Jesus Christ, Your Son our Savior. Amen. (23)

31. Thanks be to You, most glorious God, for the revelation of Yourself to our world, through the Gospel of Christ to every creature; and for the innumerable company of people who praise Your Name out of every kindred and nation and tongue. Glory be to You, O God! (24)

32. Mysterious and loving God, we tremble at the threshold of this day's wonder, lost for word. Like the disciples, we dreaded that Jesus' life had come to nothing, and we did not expect to find Him. But He startles us with a greeting and disturbs us with His presence. It is not that we have forgotten Him. We were determined to hold Him in our memory and cherish His example. But now He is no mere remembered friend! He is someone Who meets us and guides us still! Gracious God, we praise You for Jesus' resurrection—an unexpected new creation!

You have raised Him from the dust of death, and do breathe sweet life into the graveyard of this world. Suddenly life has just begun for us, and we are moved at its great prospect! Fill us now with the joy of believing, through Jesus Christ our Risen Savior. (25)

33. O Risen and Victorious Christ, Whose light and love destroyed the darkness of death, Whose compassion forgives all sins of this world especially the sins we now confess to You: (*pause for silent confession*).

Come, we pray You, into our contrite hearts and so rule our wills by the might of that immortality wherewith You have set us free.

Hence, we may evermore be alive to God, through the power of Your glorious resurrection and for the honor of Your Holy Name. Amen. (26)

## F. THE SEASON OF PENTECOST

PENTECOST comes 50 days after Easter and is the day commemorated for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the gathered disciples as Jesus had promised. The color is RED to depict the bloodshed by the martyrs of the Christian Church and the symbol of *fire* which appeared on the first Pentecost. On this occasion, the Church celebrates the anniversary of its Birth.

### SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Joel 2:28-30a

Acts 2:16-17

Acts 1:8

Luke 1:35

Acts 2:1-2, 4a

John 1:32

Acts 2:38-39

Galatians 3:28-29

### PRAYERS FOR PENTECOST

34. *O Holy Spirit-come to us as the water and cleanse!*

We pray for our churches—too comfortable, too self-centered, too fearful from too little faith—that we may know our need for conversion, for unity, and for a more costly commitment to mission.

*O Holy Spirit-come to us as the fire and burn!*

We pray for wisdom to understand our divisions which can be so destructive when not humbly faced; and for willingness to discuss them openly, with love, justice and with prayer.

*O Holy Spirit-come to us as the wind and refresh!*

We pray for inspiration, that we may grow up into Christ, and learn to receive as well as give, in grace and mutual understanding.

*O Holy Spirit-come as the light and lead!*

We pray for mercy that we, all seeking unity in Christ and in the truth of Your Holy Word, may with one mind and one heart glorify You. (27)

35. God of all peace and consolation, You gloriously fulfilled the great promise of the Gospel by sending down the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, to establish the Church as the House of Your continual presence and power among people; mercifully grant to us that same gift of the Spirit to renew, illumine, refresh, and sanctify our souls and to be ever with us and around us, like the light and dew of heaven. And to be in us as a well of water springing up into everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. (28)

36. Today we recall the tongues of fire. When You came as the Holy Spirit to those early believers gathered in Jerusalem. We glory in Your presence among the fisherfolk, the women disciples, and varied workers from many countries—drawn together through their common bond of Love for Christ; indeed, lives that were urgently waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit. And when the Spirit came to them, its mighty powers were released through them! O God, You have promised that the Holy Spirit will come to us! Draw us now together in that common bond of love for Christ, and fill us with the urgency. To await the Spirit's divine coming, even when we do not fully understand how this can be! Come, Holy Spirit, have Your way in and through us, now and forever! Amen. (29)

37. Come, Holy Spirit, come! Come as the fire and burn! Come as the water and cleanse! Come as the wind and refresh! Convict, convert and consecrate my/our heart(s) and will(s) to my/our great good and to Your greater glory. Amen. (30)

## G. KINGDOMTIDE

KINGDOMTIDE is the season which acknowledges and emphasizes the Kingship of Christ in all aspects of life, drawing upon the teachings of Jesus. The season begins on the last Sunday of August and ends with Advent. The color of the season is GREEN, symbolic of aliveness and growth.

#### SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Jude 20-21	Revelations 19:6
Job 11:7	Revelations 19:5b
John 1:18	Revelations 19:7a, 16b
I John 5:10a	Revelations 15:3-4
I John 5:6b	

#### PRAYERS FOR KINGDOMTIDE AND GENERAL USE

38. God of Creation, Who has given to Your Son, Jesus Christ, a Kingdom of justice and love, that all peoples, nations and languages should follow Him: make us loyal followers of our Living Savior, that we may always hear His Word, obey His commandment of love and truth, and live in His Spirit. And hasten the day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord, to Your eternal glory! Amen! (31)
39. O God, with Your Spirit You transformed the lives of the first disciples of Your Son. And You have been changing people's lives ever since, making them see newness and purposes in life, making them love, hope and endure. Indeed, making them courageous instruments of Your peace. In the Name of Him Who promised us the presence of the Comforter, grant us Your Spirit and give us strength and wisdom in the living of these days. Amen.\*
40. We have set our hope on You, our living God, as those who set course for home from distant places. But we need Your help if we are to keep on course; indeed, we need fresh sight of Your on which to check our bearings. Let this service be a check-point for us. Show us where we are and where we should be. You are near as well as far-accompanying as beckoning: make this a meeting place between our minds and Your mind, so that we may see that the controlling interest in human affairs is Yours. Amen. (32)
  41. O God, as we draw near to You we cannot but falter because of our sinfulness. But through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, You have bidden us to come to You even with our burdens and cares from which You have promised us release. Draw us with Your Spirit. Purify our intentions. Redeem our lives. Give us a vision, and make us see the possibilities of life lived in freedom, according to Your Holy Will. Amen.\*
42. We offer our praise, and thanksgiving, O God, for the coming of another day and for this gathering of Your people with the assurance of Your presence. Your Son knew that some small things were important and some large things were not. Today, send Your Spirit to help us choose among the experiences of this day, that we may rejoice in what is necessary or good and refuse the demands of things unworthy or mean. So may the kind of life we live today be the praise which You deserve and which we desire to give, through Christ our Lord. Amen.\*
43. Almighty God, Whose Spirit leads us, as it led Your Son into the wilderness of trial in order to be tested: grant that standing in Your strength against the powers of darkness, we may win the victory over all evil suggestions, and with singleness of heart, ever serve You and You alone, through Him Who was in all points tempted as we are, and Who therefore has perfect understanding, the same Jesus Christ Our Savior. Amen.\*
44. O Savior Jesus Christ, Who bids Your Church to bring all people to Yourself, make clear to each one of us our part in the task. Enlighten our minds with a vision of a more perfect society here on earth, in which justice and right, peace and unity shall reign according to Your will. And help us to do our part, that Your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen. (33)
45. O God, our Creator, great in power and majesty, and yet mindful of the least of Your creatures; constant in righteousness and in the outworking of Your Holy will, and yet patient with the penitent sinner. We come in response to Your bidding to seek Your face. By Your Holy Spirit, possess us entirely and inspire us in this community, that we may worship You in humility and gratitude. We pray in great faith, and in that Spirit of loving trust which we have seen in Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen. (0)

## H. OTHER PUBLIC CELEBRATIONS

### THE NEW YEAR

#### SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Psalm 135:13	Revelations 1:8
Psalm 102:25, 26a, 27	Revelations 21:5
Daniel 2:20-22	Psalm 90:12
Psalm 90:1-2	Psalm 90:14
Psalm 90:4	Romans 8:38-39

#### PRAYERS FOR THE NEW YEAR

46. Eternal God, Who makes all things new and abides forever the same, grant us to begin the year in Your faith, and to continue it in Your favor. And that, being guided against all our wrongdoings and guarded in all our days, we may spend our lives in Your service, and finally by Your grace, attain the glory of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen. (33)
47. Everliving God, by Whose mercy we have come to the gateway of another Year; grant that we may enter it with humble and grateful hearts. Confirm our resolution, O God, to walk more closely in Your way, and labor more faithfully in Your service according to the teaching and example of Your Son, our Savior. Let not errors and offenses of the past cling to us, but cleanse and set us free, that with purer purpose and better hopes we may renew our vows in Your presence, and be set forth under the guidance of Your Spirit, through Christ our Redeemer. Amen. (34)
48. O God, Who holds all ages in Your hands, to Whom a thousand years are as a day, forgive us our waste of time: of days that vanished without a trace, of hours that slipped away unlived, of glory unseen, of joy unfelt, and of all the heights and depths in life which our blindness and our laziness have prevented us from experiencing. Born of the flesh and living in it, time works its will in us; the past haunts us with tasks we did not fulfill, and our future lures us with hopes too often unreal. When the seed which You have sown falls upon our souls, grant that we may have depth enough to nurture it during the year to bring forth its true harvest, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. (35)
49. Thank You for this new year, O God, thank You, too, for the year that has now passed. Forgive our mistakes, our selfish ways, our pride, our moments of giving in to temptations; don't let us be discouraged by these failures we have had. Help us now to think of Your forgiving love; help us to think about those times when we were unselfish, loyal, obedient, and worthy of Your love. Enlarge the goodness that is in us. Teach us how to choose those things which are good in Your sight. Help us each to see where we may serve You best, and be with each of us throughout this coming year. In Christ's Name, Amen. (36)

### THE FAMILY WEEK FESTIVAL

#### SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Psalm 78:1-7	Deuteronomy 6:4-7
Psalm 60:6	I Corinthians 13:4-7
Psalm 127:1	Colossians 3:18-21, 23
Luke 10:5	Colossians 3:12-123

#### PRAYERS FOR FAMILY WEEK

50. Heavenly God Parent, we thank You for the pattern of family life where all experiences are here from the salutation of birth to death's farewell! And here we learn that we belong, and that we can love. But make us



see that our own little family is not an end in itself, but must always be bearing the pain of rebirth into that Greater Family of heaven and earth from which it receives its Name. Amen. (37)

51. Loving God, it is one thing for us to know that our sinning must bring pain to someone, somewhere. But, suppose it is our own parents whose lives we have drained of our own brothers' and sisters' blood which cries to us from the ground; and our own children who must bear the shortcomings of our love? We dare not think of the trouble we have caused, since You, as well as they, receive the pain of all this hurt. We pray that You will forgive us, repair the damage we have done, and allow us all to live again in Your great family. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior, Amen. (38)

52. Loving God, Parent of every family, we lift up to You the family life of our nation. We thank You for all Christian and non-Christian homes where each is loved by all and all by each, and each and all are one in You; where the lovely things grow and flourish; and where evil tempers wilt and wither and die; where difficulties are solved; and irritation melts in an atmosphere of good will and good humor; where little children laugh and live without fear, and indeed, where young people grow into manhood and womanhood in freedom and in joy!

We indeed, sadly pray for all broken homes that they may be repaired in spirit as well as in outward appearances. We pray for all little children wounded in their very souls by quarrelsome parents or violent conditions; and likewise, for all parents who grieve over children who care nothing for the sacred word "home."

Give us today a new ideal of what our homes might be, that putting away all nagging and unkind criticism, all jealousy and suspicion, all desire to dominate and rule another's life, the family life of our land may truly be that wholesome basis of the life of a nation which You can use. O God, bless all the families of our land and of the world. Through Jesus Christ our brother and Friend. Amen. (39)

## THE THANKSGIVING FESTIVAL

### SCRIPTURE TEXTS

Psalm 92:1-2	Exodus 12:14
James 1:17a	Psalm 67:3
Psalm 97:12	Psalm 107:8
Psalm 50:14	Daniel 2:23
Psalm 90:4	Romans 8:38-39
Hebrews 13:15	Deuteronomy 26:11
Psalm 100:4-5	

### PRAYERS FOR THANKSGIVING

53. Almighty God, Who makes the fruits of the earth to minister to the needs of people: we offer to You our thanksgiving that, according to Your promise, seed time and harvest have not failed. At the remembrance of Your bounty, we offer to You the sacrifices of our thanksgiving, and pray that You will feed our souls with the bread of life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.\*

54. Let us give thanks to God.

Let each of us silently name before God those gifts for which we ought to thank God daily . . . (silent prayers of thanks giving):

And now in this quiet moment, let us ask Divine forgiveness:

if we have been blind to God's gifts,  
if we have been neglectful of God's gifts,  
if we have taken God's gifts for granted,  
if we have not used God's gifts wisely, and  
if we have failed to share God's gifts....

Bless us now, O God, and grant us thankful hearts for Your Divine forgiveness. Amen. (40)

55. O Good and Gracious God, we thank You for the lifting of our lives above the limitations of human frailty through and by Your direction and purpose. We thank You, too, for making us co-workers with all Your saints in heaven and on earth, in the establishment of Your Kingdom. For the sanctification of the common place, for the transfiguration of the tragic, and for the hallowing of human joys, accept, O God, our thanks from hearts and lips and hands, through Christ, our Guide and Model. Rejoice, O my soul, and give thanks to God! Amen. (41)
56. O Creator and Sustaining God, if we thank You for food and drink, for the shelter of house and the warmth of clothing, for daily work and thoughtful friends, and reasonable margins of security and comfort, and yet have no pain of heart, no anguish in the midst of our ease, that even now other children of Yours starve, homeless and are hopeless, fearing the morrow more than death, with no sign of human caring—then leave us without Your blessing until we learn the ways of mercy. Indeed, deliver us from the gross sin of indifference and sanctify to us what we enjoy by the courage and kindness with which we share it. Through Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen. (42)

## CHAPTER 6

# WOMEN-INSPIRED RITUAL AND LITURGIES

Women today long for authentic ritual, for liturgies that touch upon their inner truth and support their search for integration with the world of their experience. Women want rituals that take seriously their innate hunger for meaning, their cry for systemic justice, and their need to dwell in God. They want to hear other women's struggles to keep and transmit the faith.\*

Therefore, this updated edition included three celebrations that were inspired and led by women, for a more inclusive community ritual and meaningful experience.

### A. A COSMIC BLESSING OF THE LAND

#### PROCESSIONAL JOURNEY

The women participants went on a pilgrimage to a proposed site of healing and renewal. This is, to the donated land reserved for this purpose. From Maryridge, also a place of healing and renewal owned by the Good Shepherd sisters in Tagaytay. The women gathered worship materials (flowers, cosmic cross, lavender incense from Japan, *agong*, some shells, a piece of cloth symbolizing women's power).

The women dropped by the house of Maria Ikan, an evangelist of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and a native of the place, to ask her to join them. They motored from Maryridge at 8:30 in the morning and reached the place around 10:30. The Pilgrimage was a continuation of their PISTA-LAKBAYAN, "*pistangalaysa kababaihan*," celebrating the land offered to them.

#### PRAISE AND ADORATION

Participants carried symbols of faith and life (white rosal flowers, fruits, Bible, candles) while going down the hilly terrain.

#### SAYING THE INTENT FOR THE LAND

The women paused on the roadside under the santol tree to declare the purpose of the activity, which was the blessing of the place and a celebration of mutuality with other life forms in the area. This was a cosmic gesture where all living beings like the stream, bamboo trees etc., joined in silent communion, and enabled them to go inside their inner selves.

SCRIPTURE READING: HYMN OF WISDOM - Sirach 24:7-8

*Sa lahat ng ito ay naghahanap ako ng mapagpapahingahan; saang lugar ako magtatayo ng aking tirahan?*

*At inatasan ako ng Lumikha sa sanlibutan; itinalaga ng Lumalang sa akin ang lugar na aking pagpapahingalayan.  
(Pahingahan at Himlayan)*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF GOD IN CREATION

In silence, the women appreciated and imbibed the sounds of creation around. A Prayer of Offering followed.

At this junction, Dr. Ruth Hernandez told the story, of how her late father, Bhp. Juan Hernandez of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, donated a five hectare land for the housing need of retired ministers. The donation, up to this time, has not been appropriated by the UCCP, so Ruth decided to donate 1.1 hectares of it to the NCCP for the women's program.

Earlier, at one of the meetings of the Women's Committee of the NCCP, where she is a member, Ruth told the women that she would donate a piece of land. The women—excitedly, planned an ocular inspection of a place as well as the other ecology-friendly places in Cavite like the Mendez Farm of the Institute of Women's Studies, from which the project could be modelled. The date and arrangements were set for the visit, and for the blessing of the land.

*Moving on.* After the brief preliminaries under the tree, the women moved on, crossing a stream and treading an uphill terrain. They stopped at the area where a fallen banana plant was lying along the side of the road. The site was chosen as the altar place, for the banana's significant contribution to sustaining life—dying after it has given its fruit away for the sustenance of life, and where it could give space for a new banana plant to sprout. Indigenous symbols of women's power—such as the diamond shaped native cloth, empty shell, stones, painting of the "*lakas-boob*" in alibata (*baybayin*), the Bible, the cosmic cross—were arranged on top of the fallen banana plant as offerings.

Afterwards, the lavender incense from Japan was lighted and offered, as well as fruits, lavender candle, white ross/—also from a place of healing and renewal that is Maryridge—for healing to flow to the new land. This account demonstrates how the women gave energy to each other, blessing the earth and, in turn, being blessed by the Mother Earth.

READING OF THE WOODLAND MASS

A pleasant place we are today under the mantels of worthy green hazel,  
Listening at day's beginning to the skillful cock thrush,  
Singing a splendid stanza of fluent signs and symbols.  
About him is a setting of flowers of the sweet boughs of May  
Like green mantles. His chasuble was of the wings of the wind.  
There is here, by the great god, nothing but gold in the altar's canopy.  
We hear, in polished language, a long and faultless chanting;  
An unhesitant reading to the people of a gospel without mumbling;  
The elevation on the hill for us there, of a good leaf for a holy wafer.  
Then the slim eloquent nightingale from the corner of a grove nearby,  
Poetess of the valley sings to the many the *Sanctus* bell in lively whistling.  
The sacrifice is raised up to the sky above the bush  
Devotion to God the Father/Mother, the chalice of ecstasy and love.  
The psalmody contents us: it was bred of a birch grove in the sweet woods.

And now, our benediction:

Glorious Lord, we give You greetings!  
Let the chapel and the chancel praise You.  
Let the plain and the hillside praise You, let the world's three wellsprings praise you,  
Two above wind, and one above land.

Let the dark and the daylight praise You, let the light everlasting praise You,  
Abraham, Sarah and Hagar praise You; let the life everlasting praise You.  
Let the birds and honeybees praise You, let the shorn stems and the shoots praise You,  
Aaron, Moses and Miriam praise You, let both male and female praise You,  
Let the seven days and stars praise You, let the air and the ether praise You,  
Let the books and the letters praise You, let the fish in the swift streams praise You,  
Let both thought and action praise You, let the sand-grains and the earth clods praise you,  
Let all the good that has performed praise You, and we shall praise you, God of Glory;  
Glorious Lord, we give You greeting!

As it was, as it is, and as it shall be,  
Evermore, God of grace, God in Trinity!  
With the ebb, with the flow, ever be it so,  
God of grace and Trinity, with the ebb and flow! Amen.

#### COMMUNICATING WITH NATURE

The participants were asked to choose one living thing or being that would tell something about the place, and also to introduce one's self to it (they have been here all along, and they will help us take care of the land).

Romy Peralta, husband of Menchie Karagdag, the only man in the group and recuperating from illness, identified herbal plants found around, and advised all to leave the place as it was with all its living creatures. (This would be the last time that Romy would be with his women friends.)

A game was introduced by Romy to the group—making '*panyo-panyo*' (hanky-shapes) out of a long stem of grass.

Farmers on their way to the market and with their produce of fruits carried by a donkey passed by. Later some school children passed by, who were then asked to join the group for the picture-taking. They took the children's presence to symbolize their looking ahead into the future.

#### RECESSIONAL

The land blessing ritual was affirmed on their way home, when they met the road engineers and their trucks. It led them to reflect that once the land had been offered and blessed, the roads came to make it accessible to all.

## **B. AN ORDER OF THE CELEBRATION OF SOLIDARITY IN MINISTRY IN SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION OF WOMEN MINISTRIES**

#### THE COMMUNITY GATHERS

Greetings ... Relating ... Bonding ... Songs of Fellowship

#### THE ACT OF PRAISE AND ADORATION

Bell Sounds

The Silent Meditation

From before the world began  
And after the end of eternity,  
You are God.

From the sea bursting out of its womb  
To the wind ceasing from its chase,  
You are God.

In the faithfulness of created beings  
And in their weaknesses,  
You are God.

In the vastness of the universe  
And the forgotten corners of our hearts,  
You are God.  
You are our God,  
And we bless You!

#### THE CALL TO WORSHIP

*(Bell sounds and lighting of candles)*

Leader 1: We will light a light in the Name of God  
Who lit the world  
And breathed the breath of life  
Into every creation.

Leader 2: We will light a light in the Name of Jesus Christ  
Who saved the world  
And stretched out His hand to us.

Leaders: We will light a light in the Name of the Spirit  
Who embraces the whole creation  
And blesses each creation with love.

All: We light three lights:  
God above us,  
God beside us,  
God beneath us:  
  
The Beginning,  
The End,  
The Everlasting One.

#### THE HYMN OF PRAISE "Magpuri Sa Dios" (pp. 10-11 APH)

*Entrance of Life, Faith and Cultural Symbols: Lights, Cross, Bible, Floral Offerings, Philippine Flag, Oikoumene Banner, water, salt, products of the earth, peoples' crafts, incense for thanksgiving and cleansing.*

"Magpuring mag-awit tayo sa Diyos, Sa biyayang Kanyang dulot  
Magpuri, magpuri tayo sa Diyos, Sa biyayang Kanyang dulot.

Koro: Pagpapalang di masayod, Sa buong maghapon umagos  
Magpuring, may awit, Magpuri't maglingkod,  
Magpuri sa ating Diyos.

Magpuring may awit tayo sa Diyos, Sa Anak na Kanyang handog  
Magpuring may awit tayo sa Diyos, Sa Anak na Kanyang handog.

Magpuring may awit tayo sa Diyos, Sambahin S'ya at maghandog  
Magpuri't maglingkod tayo sa Diyos, Sa biyayang Kanyang dulot."

\*THE INVOCATION (*unison*)

O God the Holy Spirit, Come to us and among us;  
Come as the wind, and cleanse us;  
Come as the fire, and burn;  
Come as the rain, and refresh;  
Convict, convert and consecrate  
Our hearts and our lives.  
That we may become "lights of the world"  
And "salt of the earth"  
For Your greatest glory! In Christ's sake. Amen.

#### THE COMMUNITY SHARES CONCERNS

*Greetings, Acknowledgment of Women's Circles and Friends*

#### **THE COMMUNITY AFFIRMS MUTUALITY IN THE MINISTRY**

In Words ...

Symbolic acts ...

And song "Ang Bayan Ko."

#### THE COMMUNITY DEDICATES IN SOLIDARITY

\*Testimonials of Celebrators

\*A Psalm of Partnership in the Ministry

You called us, O God, by our names,  
To leave what was comfortable,  
To be your disciples, companions and friends.

All: Let us give thanks for the flow of human kind;  
For mothers and womankind who have nurtured and sustained us;  
For events that have shaped and molded us,  
For those who question the history of the silenced, the forgotten, the unrecorded.

You lift me up, O God,  
Beyond my wildest aspirations;  
You entrust me with Your mission,  
You reveal Your way to me.

In You I take initiative  
To rock the staid foundations,  
Leaving no stone upon a stone  
To any dividing wall.

Let us give thanks for those who have provided inspiration and hope;  
For Miriam, Esther and Mary; for Phoebe, Teresa of Avila, for women thinkers and healers, for reformers,  
rebels and strikers;  
For all food gatherers and migrant workers.

Be with us, O God, when men deliberately or will attempt to render us defenseless, when even women turn  
from women out of hardness of heart or blindness.

All: Ours is the gift of affirming the ways of God Who is working within us.  
Blessed is the partnership rooted in love that spills over, spreads over, covers over everything  
negative and uninspiring!

#### THE BLESSING

*To be led by ordained clergy women and men joined in a circle by all laity*

Pastor: The laying on of hands is the symbolic act whereby the church in every age recognizes God's call to ministry in the lives of faithful women and men, and asks the Holy Spirit to confer upon them the gifts of ministry. We lay hands upon you, *(Ellen, Sammy and Reynan, Eliz and Allan with our prayers and fervent blessings; the celebrators and their love ones. The first woman Bishop of the United Church of Christ on the Philippines and First woman Dean of the Union Theological Seminary)*

Eternal God, You have called these people to serve You in this household of faith and in the world, which you have entrusted to our call and keeping.

Send Your Holy Spirit on them that they may serve Your people and the whole of creation with respect, love and faithfulness.

May their life-styling prove worthy for all of us to follow, as we are united in Christ's ministry, to the glory of Your Name.

Blessed is the partnership that shares with its circle of friends and supporters!

All Clergy: God of Relationships, bless this solidarity, strengthen this partnership, deepen this fellowship. Let it be a symbol of Your mode of Being and a sign of Your own non-competitive ways.

All Laity: God of companionship, may we be supportive and may we be effective, bringing to life all the best in each other so that we might help others see the good in themselves.

All: Thank You, O God, for the gift of solidarity in the ministry and the grace of mutuality in the mystery of bonding together!

All Singing: Amen! (6x) (Jamaican tune)

#### THE DANCE OF JOY AND MUTUALITY

(in groups of 3's, 5's, 7's with celebrators)

#### THE BLESSING AND SHARING OF THE FOOD

In closing, the participants and celebrators will sing "Sa Dulang Ng Ama." or any hymn of praise and dedication!

## C. PISTA-LAKBAYAN

KAGITINGAN SA PAKIKIBAKA TUNGO SA KAPAYAPAAN - "SHALOM" PANDAIGDIGANG ARAW NG KABABAIHAN

ASH WEDNESDAY, THE FIRST DAY OF THE 40-DAY LENTEN SEASON,

Liturhiyang Ekyumenikal at Pagsambang Bayan sa "Pag-angkin at Pagbabahagi ng Pagiging Pari ng Lahat ng mga Mananarnpalataya"

*"Lahing hinirang kayo, isang samahan ng mga kapariang-hari, isang bansang banal, isang bayang nakatalaga sa Diyos upang ipahayag ang kanyang kadakilaan." 1 Peter 2:9*

#### THE COMMUNITY GATHERS

*Preparations - Women, men and children gather from various directions and places and converge, find their places and create a space in this historic place, Plaza Miranda. They set up their banners and streamers and their symbols of faith, life and work.*

*This is amidst the multitudes who gather for Ash Wednesday in Quiapo Church where the Jubilee Cross is presented before it is taken in procession to the Sta. Cruz Church.*

*The Tambuli and Ganza sounds...*

The Call to Community

Tambuli Sounds - Calling us to this Ecumenical Liturgy, Pagsambang Bayan for the Celebration of International Women's Day 2000, the Year of the Great Jubilee.

The community now silently acknowledges with smiles the presence of each one, reaching out and holding hands for bonding. Sa pagtunog ng tambuli at paglatag ng katahimikan, kilalanin ang bawat isa, maghawakan ng kamay biang tanda ng pakikipag-ugnay at pagbubuo.

Ang Pagbabasbas ng Lugar ng Pagsamba –

Pagbabasbas ng Tubig (Asperges)  
Pagbabasbas-Sayaw ng Lugar

#### ANG PAGBUBUKLOD NG SAMBAYANAN - "LUPANG HINIRANG"

Aawit ang madla ng Pambansang Awit.

#### PAPURI AT PAGSAMBA NG PAMAYANAN

Tawag sa Pagsamba - Tambuli Sounds and Community Singing

- a) "Come Holy Spirit, We Need You" Aawitin  
Come, Holy Spirit, we need you,  
Come, Holy Spirit, we pray,  
Come, in Your strength and Your power,  
Come, in Your own gentle way. (2x)

All Pray: "We Come Into Your Presence O Guiding Spirit—in many different ways: some of us seem to skip down the street just like children bouncing with excitement, some of us come hesitantly, fearing to bring changes in society. So, some of us come, stomping down the street needing to ask you why, and to tell You of our anger. Some come into this historic place, PLAZA MIRANDA, replete with our Philippine History with such a heavy load that we can hardly make our own way.

You know, Guiding Spirit, how each of us have come this day from different circumstances. You know what our needs are and what we bring with us as we prepare to worship with others. Grant us Your calming presence. Breathe into us Your breath of life and peace, and to those whom we left behind in our homes and communities. We come together before You, proclaiming the Good News to the poor, during the Year of the Great Jubilee.

#### ***A Psalm of Praise: A Tribute to Divine Majesty and Human Dignity***

O God, how majestic is Your Name in all the earth!  
You have set Your glory above the heavens.  
Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings You have fashioned praise!  
When we behold Your heavens, the work of your fingers  
The moon and the stars which You set in place  
Who are we, human beings, that You are mindful of us?  
Mortals that You care for us?

Yes, we are women,  
Gifted with Your life-giving powers in our bodies:  
Our breasts,  
Supple, tender, warm—  
The most feminine of our body parts:  
Through our warm breasts,  
The body lactates  
Milk—for the baby.  
Life is nurtured and sustained through our flowing breasts.

Our Womb,  
A space for life—



Able to conceive the life of another human being. Life grows here.  
Life expands here.

Because the womb is able to open up  
For the development of the innocent,  
The other womb, blessed,  
Perfect habitat for life.

How wonderful and powerful are You, O God in our women's bodies!  
You have made us a little less than God  
And crown us with glory and honor.  
In Your image ...  
Reflective of Your life—giving reign over us.  
O LORD, our God  
How majestic is Your Name in all of Your Creation!

#### THE MEANINGS AND REASONS FOR THE GATHERING

Women, men and children, drawing from the wellspring of our Scriptural faith and our people's indigenous heritage, come to weave our lives together during the Great Jubilee:

- Reclaiming the Feminist Principle as integral to the Jubilee Call
- People's Declaration of 8 March as Women's Holiday
- Commemoration of 8 March as International Women's Day. On this day, during the Year of the Great Jubilee, women from different churches will live out the call of the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:5-9). Living out this call means acting for the transformation of Church, Society, and the whole *oikaumenein* the entire Household of God, our ecological home.

#### THE COMMUNITY PROCLAIMS THE WORD OF GOD

Joel 2:28 "And afterward, I will pour out My spirit on all people. Your daughters shall prophesy, your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions."

Psalms 51 "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me."

2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2 "So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making this appeal through us . . . on behalf of Christ, and be reconciled to God ... As we work together with Him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For He says, At an acceptable time, I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you ... see, now is the day of salvation."

Matthew 6:1-6; 16-18 "And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting will not be seen by others ... "

#### THE COMMUNITY IN PENITENCE AND CONFESSION (*Pasyon*)

Prayer of Penitence (*unison*): Holy and merciful God, we confess to You and to one another, to the whole community of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned through our own fault in thought and indeed, word and deed—by what we have done and what we have left undone. We have not loved You with all our hearts. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. Accept our repentance for wasting and polluting Your grace, desecrating Your face in women and our lack of concern for those generations who will come after us.

*Songs of Penitence* "God Forgive Our Sins" Words of Recollection and Repentance

"We gather together as women and men, daughters and sons of God, for it is a ritual of repentance and an act of reconciliation, indeed, an act of recalling and an act of reclaiming.

We therefore remember our foremothers of old, whose faces and images were erased from history and from our memory, as well.

We remember teachers, healers, mothers and priests of God who once wore the face of woman.

We remember them who were imprisoned, banished, exiled, and tortured because they continued to serve She Who Is.

We remember the women declared as witches by the Inquisition because they continued to live, believe, and serve the Creator present in nature and in all life, as well as, in the person of Jesus of Galilee.

We remember our *babaylan* ancestors, teachers, healers, mothers, and priests of our indigenous cultures. We remember them because of the marginalization and exclusion they suffered in the name of the new faith.

We also remember the first women converts of the faith as they too underwent pain, difficulty, and suffering in upholding/accepting the new faith. They opened spaces and doors, illumined the dark, not merely for themselves but also for other sisters to see the face of God.

We remember, oh, how we remember! On this first day of Lent, as we remember, let us also repent and make amends in their names and in their memories:

For forgetting them,

For denying them,

For dishonoring them,

We repent as ecumenical women, sharing in the priesthood of all believers.

We remember and honor our foremothers and foresisters for what they had gone through for us.

We therefore pledge to remember, to make them present in our lives and works through God Who Is With Us, God Who Is In Us, and God Who Is For Us.

*Sing: Kyrie Eleison.... (3x)*

*Silent Confession of Sin (all kneeling)*

### ***The Ritual of Crossing the Foreheads with Ashes***

All say: In English: "So God created humankind in the image of God and created them." In Tagalog: "Kapatid, ikaw ay nilikha mula sa ating Inang Luba, kawangis ng Diyos na ating Manlilikha." (cf. Gen. 1:27 and Gen. 2:7)

### THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND THE PROMISE OF JUBILEE

"If my people who are called by My Name shall humble themselves, pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (2 Chron. 7:14)

### THE COMMUNITY DEDICATES ITSELF

Litanya ng Pag-alaala

Ang pagtitipon ng pamayanan—matahimik na pagbubulay-bulay. Ang pagpupuri ng Dios ng mga magigiting na kababaihan (litanya):

Pangulo: "Atin ngayong alalahanin ang mga magigiting na mga babae,  
Mga bayani na hindi kinikilala ng kasaysayan;  
Nguni't buhay na nagpapatotoo na Sila ay tunay na mga anak ng Dios,  
At ang Diyos ay nasa lahat ng ating pagkatao!"

Lahat: Pinupuri namin ang mga magigiting na kababaihan na nagbibigay sa atin ng bagong loob at ng pag-asa;

Pangulo: Eva, unang babae, ina ng lahat!

Lahat: Purihin ang dakilang babae!

Pangulo: Sarah, puso ng pakikipagtipan ng Diyos at ng sangkatauhan ng mga bayan, puno ng galak kahit na sa kanyang katandaan! Lahat: Purihin ang mga dakilang mga babae, matalino at malikhain at nagtuturo ng pakikipag-ugnayan sa lahat!

Pangulo: Rebecca, babaeng matalino at malikhain, at nakamit ang kanyang mabuting mga layunin sa gitna ng maka-patriarkang mundo!

Lahat: Purihin at mabuhay para sa mga babaing matatapang, at may pakikipag-ugnayan sa lahat!

Pangulo: Hannah, saksi sa kapangyarihan ng panalangin at sa tibay at walang hangganang pananampalataya!

Lahat: Purihin at mabuhay ...

Pangulo: Agueda Kaibigan, Teodora Alonzo-Rizal, Nicolasa Dayrit, Georgia Patricio, Maria Orosa—sa kanilang katapangan at pagmamahal sa kanilang bayan.

Lahat: Purihin at mabuhay para sa mga babaing matatapang, at may pakikipag-ugnayan sa lahat!

Pangulo: Sino ba ang makatatagpo ng magiting na babae?

Tinig 1: Tumanaw kayo! Kami ang mga nasa silid-pagawaan ng iba't-ibang industriya, at ng mga kumikilos ng mga bahay-kalakalan, hindi pinakikilala at hindi nakikita, at, sabi pa nga ng iba'y, hindi naman totoong mga buhay at tau-tauhan lamang.

Pangulo: Tumanaw kayo! Kami ang nagbabahagi, nagtatakda ng mga gabay sa buhay, nagbabago ng takbo ng kasaysayan, humahamon sa mga hindi sang-ayon sa aming mga ipinahahayag at sa aming mga kakayahan sa lahat ng gawain!

Tinig 2: Tumanaw kayo! Kami ang mga babaeng matatapang, mapagkaiinga, mapagbigay upang ikabuti ng lahat, kahit na sa kahirapan; kami ay napakarami, may iba't-ibang kakayahan, ngunit iisa at magkatulad ang layunin, pinakinggan rig kasaysayan na kumikilala sa aming diwa at mga kakayahan! HINDING-HINDI KAMI MALILIMUTAN!

Pangulo: Maria Lorna Barros, Purificacion Pedro, Leticia Celestino, Juvelyn Farabilo, Hiosa Hilao, at marami pang iba, na pawang nagsumigasig sa pagsusulong ng pagbabago at sa pagsisilbi ng mga naapi at pinagsamantalahan ng iba noong mga taong rnil nueve sientos sienta at sitenta sa ating bayan!

Lahat: *PURIHIN ANG MGA DAKILANG BABAE: MALIKHAIN AT NAGTUTURO NG PAKIKIPAG-UGNAYAN!*

Pangulo: At ngayon, inaanyayahan namin ang sinumang may nakilala at naalaalang kababaihan na bagay lamang makasama sa ating pagbibigay-pugay ngayon na bigkasin ang kanilang mga pangaihan. Sabay-sabay nating papurihan sila sa ating pagtitipon ngayon!

(Ang sinuman na may naalaalang mga ngalan ay tinatawagan na bigkasin ngayon — na may paggalang at pagmamahal—ang kanilang mga pangalan.)

#### A PSALM OF COMMITMENT

We thank You, O Creator God  
 For making us all Your people;  
 And for inviting us all, Your children,  
 To be just, to be free, to love your creation!

You made us equal,  
 Female and male, and for this truth, this reality,  
 We women are all grateful!

You call our best selves  
 To come to life again today,  
 To redeem us, and to prepare the way for Jubilee!

In You, we are a people, a priesthood of all believers;  
With You, we have purpose;  
Through You, we have potential  
To redeem and to renew  
Our Church and our society!  
Indeed, Your whole creation!  
Help us to lift each other up  
When the going gets rough,  
And we get discouraged in our struggle  
Because the wheels of justice grind so terribly slow.

Indeed, help us to be a world of citizens  
Committed to global freedom for all;  
And to help children, youth, women and men  
To become free, lovable and loving!

Help us to realize that we are one with the cosmos,  
And our existence and our lives are entwined with the stars.  
Surely, the heavens are telling endlessly,  
That We are all one as God has created us as ONE!

#### A JUBILEE COVENANT TOWARDS FREEDOM!

Dios na may Tatlong Persona:  
Ikaw ang aming Dios na Tapat  
Sapagkat lumikha ka ng buhay sa amin,  
Sapagkat iniligtas mo kami mula sa Kamatayan patungo sa muling pagkabuhay,  
Sapagkat-inilabas mo kami mula sa kadiliman patungong kaliwanagan.  
Kami ang iyong bayan!  
Kami ay nagtatapat sa Iyo!  
Kung aming kakalagin — palalayain ang mga alipin,  
Kung aming ibabalik ang kalupaan,  
Kung aming iwawaksi at lilisanin ang di makatarungang paninikil,  
Kung aming pagpapahingahin ang sangkalupaan,  
Kung aming babawiin at angkining muli ang diwang kumikilala sa karapatan at kahulugan ng mga kababaihan.  
Sa taong ito ay isang *Malaking Pagbubunyi*, Dios na aming Pastol:  
Kaisa na si Maria na Ina ni Jesus na sa ami'y umagapay.  
Kami'y nangangako na aming itataguyod ang mga mayayamang simulain sa mga darating na panahon,  
Kaming mga Anak Mo ang gaganap nitong lahat na ito!

#### THE CALL FOR THE SIGNING OF THE RESOLUTION FOR DECLARING WOMEN'S DAY AS A HOLIDAY

##### THE WOMEN'S CREED

Naniniwala kami sa kabutihan at kahalagahan naming kababaihan:  
Sa aming lakas at diwa sa likas naming kakayahan sa paglingap sa kapwa,  
Sa kakayahan sa pagtingin at pagpapalaki ng mga bata sa pagsasabalikat ng buhay.  
Sa aming taos-pusong pagsulong sa pagganap ng mga gawain: pagsisimula ng pagbabago tungo sa katarungan  
at kapayapaan, paggawa ng mga patakaran para sa magandang pagsasamahan, paggawa sa mga pabrika  
upang maging maaliwalas ang gawain sa paggawa.

Kaming mga ina, dalubhasa sa agham, siyentipika, manggagamot, ekonomista;  
Tagapagbigay-buhay at taga-likha, tagapagkalinga at pagmamahal:  
Kami'y nagagalak sa aming iba't-ibang kakayanan, diwa, kaisipan, damdaming babae.  
Inaamin naming ang aming mga kahinaan, pagkukulang at pagkakamali;  
Kasama na ang pagkakamali nang hindi pagtutol sa karahasan labar sa kababaihan,  
At sa hindi makatarungang ugnayan at pakikitungo ng kalaiakihan sa kababaihan;

Sa hinaharap, tumatanaw kami, puno ng pananampalataya at pag-asa, na darating ang kinabukasan na tayong lahat na kababaihan, magkakapatid ay magiging malaya sa pagbabahagi ng ating mga diwa at kakayahan sa ikauunlad ng buhay at gawain ng sangkatauhan. Halina, mga kapatid, at magsama-sama tayo sa pagkamit ng makatotohanang adhikain ng kababaihan!

#### THE COMMUNITY SHARES THE MEAL

The Blessing of the Food:

"Blessed are You, Holy One of Peace:  
For You promised Your people food for the journey,  
And nourishment for the struggle.  
Blessed are you, Holy One of Peace, as You send Your people,  
Manna in the desert; as they wandered about in the desert.  
Blessed are You, Holy One of Peace: Give us this day, our daily food,  
The food of freedom from war and conflicts,  
The food of peace for all peoples."

Let us extend our hands, palms up, and bless this food which God has provided:

"Blessed are You, Holy One of Peace.  
Bless this food with Your gifts of peace, for all children, youth, women and men who work that this food may reach us.  
Bless the fields, oceans, rivers, farms and gardens that yield this food for Your people's use.  
May this food give us strength to go on in our journey towards Shalom, God's Kingdom!  
In Christ's Name. Amen.

*The Partaking and the Sharing of the Meal — Agape — (we share our baon)*

#### The Prayers and Songs of the Faithful

#### THE COMMUNITY MOVES INTO THE WORLD

The Unity Statement of Women "The Pagsanjan Covenant"

Chorus: Here and there, women are rising  
Everywhere, women are rising from the dead.

All: From their silence ... All Women are rising!  
From their bondage ...  
From their exclusion ...  
From exploitation ...  
From rape and incest ...  
From their guilt ...  
From all affliction ...  
From all addiction ...  
Against all odds ...

All: Here and there, women are rising,  
Everywhere women are rising from the dead:

Chorus: Like the sun ...

All: Women are rising!  
Like the moon ...  
Like a kite ...  
Like an eagle ...  
Like the tide ...  
Like a prayer ...  
Just like incense ...

Just like bread ...  
Just like Dorcas ...

All: Here and there, women are rising.  
Everywhere women are rising from the dead:

Chorus: Into hope ...

All: Women are rising!  
Into freedom ...  
Into speech ...  
Into power ...  
Into partnership ...  
Into significance ...  
Into the future ...

All: Here and there, women are rising,  
Everywhere women are rising from the dead.

THE SONG OF UNITY AND COMMITMENT "Ang Bayan Ko"

## CHAPTER 7

# RESOURCES: AFFIRMATIONS OF FAIR

### THE APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God, the Father, the Almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, he was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He went to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again, entered into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life eternal. Amen.

(Re-worded by the Executive Committee,  
Consultation on Church Union, 1968)

### THE NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

We believe in the one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God,  
Son of the Father from all eternity, God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God, begotten, not made,

one in being with the Father. Through Him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation He came from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit.  
He was born of the Virgin Mary, and became Man.

For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
He suffered, died, and was buried. He arose on the third day in fulfillment of the Scriptures.  
He entered into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.  
And His Kingdom will have no end.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the God and the Giver of life; He proceeds from the Father  
Together with the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church,  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins,  
We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.  
Amen.

(Re-worded by the Executive Committee,  
Consultation on Church Union)

## **STATEMENT OF FAITH**

We believe in one God,  
Maker of past and future,  
Lord of all peoples,  
and of their memories and hopes.

And in one Savior Jesus Christ,  
the deed of power and love made flesh,  
act of creation,  
mark of humanness,  
fountain of hope.

God of God,  
Light of Light;  
True Man of True Humanity;  
past of every past,  
future of every future,  
uniting God and humankind.

Who lives in our sheltered world  
suffers with us the death of dreams  
and broken pride, takes the fragments of  
our lives and shapes them into wholeness.  
He rises to give new life to the dead,  
to speak good news to those in despair,  
to liberate the oppressed and oppressor,  
to give sight to those who will not see,  
to proclaim man's future in God.  
He ascends through the weakness of love  
into the power of history,  
coming again and again in glory to endure our  
hatred and bend it to the longer reign of love.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit,  
Who lifts our dying spirits into life,  
brings to our remembrance acts of courageous love,  
and resurrects us to the hope of wholeness.

In this faith we would live toward community in God.

(Phrased by Charles S. McCoy)

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

We believe in God as the ultimate reality and the real ground of our being.

We believe in Jesus Christ, the authentic Man,  
whose honesty and love are the source of our true humanity.  
We accept his revolutionary way for our changing times.

We believe in the Spirit of God,  
whose coming alive in us frees us for genuine love and clear witness to the truth.

We affirm our oneness as God's people for confession, prayer, study and celebration to expose us to one another and to bind us together in Christ. Amen.

(Donald Vroon, The United Methodist Church,  
Crosswicks-Ellsdale, New Jersey)

### STATEMENT OF BELIEF

We believe in one God,  
and led by his Holy Spirit, known Him in His Son.

We confess You, O Father, and your love  
for the world, by whose hand creation is,  
and change and rest are given.

We confess You, Jesus Christ, Son of God,  
Who suffered death on the cross,  
and was raised to set men free; by whom we know the Father.

We confess You, Holy Spirit, who calls, forgives,  
and gathers the faithful into one Church,  
to serve You with thanksgiving, unto the New Life to come.

Father, Son, Holy Spirit, in You do we trust.  
Amen.

(John Arthur in *The Experimental Liturgy* by Hoey)

## NOTES

### I. TOWARDS A FULLER UNDERSTANDING OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

<sup>1</sup> Ian T. Ramsey, "Theology Today and Spirituality Today," in Eric James (ed.), *Spirituality for Today*, p. 82.



- 2 Evelyn Underhill, *Worship*, p. 32.
- 3 Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church*, p. 101.
- 4 Oliver Powell, *Household of Power*, p. 84.
- 5 Underhill, p. 84.
- 6 Wilfred M. Bailey, *Awakened Worship*, p. 65.
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**"him" in italics indicate that it can be replaced by "her,"  
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Christian Educator, writer-enabler, ritual maker, feminist theologian and Church pastor, the Rev. Lydia Nazario Nigidula of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines is the first Filipino who compiled and published a book in Christian Worship.

The fiery, nationalistic, model worker of the TVT (Tribune-Vanguardia-Taliba)—Aquilino Uriarte Nigidula and the enduring, all-giving "Nanay of Pasay," embroiderer Encarnacion Nava Nagario—equally passed on their temperaments and values to their eleventh child, Lydia. Her early interests in writing, sports, accounting, English, photography and the campus ministry prepared her for further studies in Theology and Religious Education in the U.S.

She served as a faculty of Field Education with distinction from 1966-1989, and at one time, acting dean of the Divinity School, Silliman University. Her ordination to the church's ministry was prompted by the exigencies of the Martial Law Regime. So, whether it be in the rural congregations of Visayas and Mindanao or the national and international ecumenical churches, Reverend Nigidula facilitated Christian Nurture, Development Education and Liturgical Renewed programs of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, the Christian Conference of Asia, the World Council of Churches, the Church of Sweden Mission and the United Evangelical Mission.

Her commitment to women's-consciousness and the building of a community of women and men goes on, having been a pioneer-formator of the Association of Women in Theology (AWT) and the Asian Network of Association of Women in Ministry and Theology (ANAWIMT). Today, despite failing health, her home in Antipolo, Rizal is sanctuary to some of "the least, the victimized and the rejected" as well as to certain transformers and healers.

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