



HOLY

MONDAY

## INTRODUCTION

The ancient office of Compline, or Night Prayer, derives its name from a Latin word meaning 'completion' (completorium). It is above all a service of quietness and reflection before rest at the end of the day. It is most effective when the ending is indeed an ending, without additions, conversation or noise. If the service is in church, those present depart in silence.

The service is designed to be used easily by one person. If there is more than one person participating, either everyone present may join in with all the words, or the words may be divided up into different sections. If so, it is wise to work out before starting, who is doing what.

Consider how you have set up your space: check you are going to be free from interruptions. You may wish to light a candle, if it is safe to do so. Some may wish to play some music before the service and at the end. Take time to be quiet before you begin and read the service in an unhurried way. Similarly, when you are asked to pause and reflect, consider allowing yourself a good thirty minutes to do this.

The sections in *red italics* are rubrics: these explain what needs to happen at various points.

# NIGHT PRAYER

The eternal God is your refuge,  
and underneath are the everlasting arms.      *Deuteronomy 33.27*

## OPENING SENTENCES

The Lord almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end.  
**Amen.**

Our help is in the name of the Lord  
**who made heaven and earth.**

*Pause and reflect on the day that is past and anything else that is on your mind at this moment.*

Save us, O Lord, while waking,  
and guard us while sleeping,  
that awake we may watch with Christ  
and asleep may rest in peace.

## **BIBLE READING**

### **MARK 11:12-19**

*<sup>12</sup> On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. <sup>13</sup> And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. <sup>14</sup> And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it.*

*And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. <sup>16</sup> And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. <sup>17</sup> And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." <sup>18</sup> And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching. <sup>19</sup> And when evening came they went out of the city.*

**Glory to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning is now  
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

## **REFLECTION: NOTHING BUT A SHELL**

### **CARING OR CURSING**

The Jesus that most people know is the baby Jesus we meet at Christmas, the Jesus who is meek and mild. This image is then enhanced when we hear the words of Jesus “love your neighbour as yourself” (Matt. 22:38), “love one another” (Jn. 15:12) and his care for children “let the children come to me; do not hinder them” (Mk 10:11). We get a picture of Jesus who is all about love and care. So it can come as quite a shock when we recount the events of Holy Monday and see a Jesus that is in stark contrast to this image - one who curses fig trees and overturns tables. But this is the same Jesus. How do we reconcile these two personas - is Jesus someone who cares or someone who curses?

### **FIGS, EGGS, AND PRIESTS**

The two events, the cursing of the fig tree and the overturning of the tables in the temple are connected, they reveal the failure of Israel to be the people that God has called them to be. These days, if you asked a child to name one thing about Easter I imagine the first thing you would hear is ‘eggs!’ Now, for most Christians, the hollow chocolate egg is a reminder of the empty tomb, of Jesus’ resurrection. But imagine now that the egg is not a chocolate egg, but a hen’s egg. You take it out of the box looking forward to a fried egg for breakfast, crack it open, and find nothing - no yolk, no white, nothing. Then imagine it is not just the one egg but the entire box. The disappointment would be awful. The parallel to the story of the fig tree is clear.

This is how Jesus viewed the temple officials and priests - they looked promising on the outside wearing all the right gear, offering sacrifices, and praying; but in fact there was no goodness inside them - they were nothing but a shell. This emptiness could be best seen in the Temple in Jerusalem.

### **COME TO THE SHOW!**

At Passover the temple would have been filled with pilgrims, it would have been packed. Not just with Jews though. This was a

real spectacle to behold, it would have drawn people from across the known world to see the events of the Passover celebration unfold. It would have been an event on the scale of the Olympic games.

At any major event today there would be people selling food and souvenirs, things that might enhance our experience of the event sold at highly inflated prices. Well, the temple officials were doing the same, only with the animals required for sacrifices - the officials were exploiting the worship of God for their own gain. No wonder Jesus cries "you have made it a den of robbers."

Not only this but in setting up all these stalls and tables the Jews had taken up a large amount of the space in the court of the Gentiles, the place designed for those outside the Jewish faith to come and find God. The temple was supposed to be 'a house of prayer for all the nations', it was supposed to be a place that reflected God's kingdom fulfilling the promise made to Abraham that through the Jewish people "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The Jews had forgotten this.

### **CARING AND CURSING**

This reflection started talking about the two personas of Jesus we see in the Gospels and asked the question 'Is Jesus someone who cares or someone who curses?' Well the answer is both, Jesus curses because he cares. The overturning of the tables is a sign for the God's love of the Gentile, the one who has come to the feast of Passover to explore their faith and to seek out God. Christ, in clearing the temple, has acted in love by making room for this to happen.

One of the passages I quoted to describe Jesus' meek and mild character was Mark 10:13-16 where Jesus tells the disciples not to hinder children from coming to him. Jesus is described as being indignant or angry at his disciples for their attitude. In this act of anger at his disciples, Jesus shows his love for the children. It is the same at the overturning of the tables: Jesus is angry with the emptiness of the Jewish faith and their obstruction to the Gentiles

coming to God, and at the same time he reveals his love for those who do not yet know God by removing an obstacle to their faith.

Here is the question we must ask ourselves this Holy Monday: Are we reflecting the love of God for all people and allowing them to come and meet with God or are we like a hollow egg or a fig tree with no fruit - an inviting prospect to look at, but on closer examination, people who care more about themselves than for God's plan for all nations to be blessed through his people?

## **PRAYERS**

Merciful God,  
we entrust to your unfailing and tender care this night  
those who are ill or in pain,  
knowing that whenever danger threatens  
your everlasting arms are there to hold us safe.  
Comfort and heal them,  
and restore them to health and strength;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Be present, O merciful God,  
and protect us through the silent hours of this night,  
so that we who are wearied  
by the changes and chances of this fleeting world,  
may rest upon your eternal changelessness;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Visit this place, O Lord, we pray,  
and drive far from it the snares of the enemy;  
may your holy angels dwell with us in peace,  
and may your blessing be always upon us;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father,  
who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from Evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

## THE CONCLUSION

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,  
and keep us in eternal life.

**Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**