

My whole being hopes and I wait for God's
promise

Psalm 130:5

Meaning of the colors of the candles

The Candles symbolize that Jesus is the Light of the World.

There are four candles, one for each Sunday leading to Christmas and a fifth candle for Christmas day. There are variations in the coloring of the candles, often there are three purple and one pink candle. The central candle is usually a large white pillar candle.

The purple represents repentance. The pink symbolizes joy. The central candle is called the Christ candle and is not lit until Christmas day.

The First Candle (The Candle of Hope)

The first candle is sometimes called the candle of prophecy because it symbolizes the promises the prophets delivered as messages from God; promises that foretold Christ's birth. Others consider the candle to be a symbol of the hope we have in Christ and so it is called the Hope candle.

The Second Candle (The Candle of the Way)

The second candle shows that Christ is the Way. Christians are lost in sin and Christ is the Light sent into the world to show them the way out of darkness.

The Third Candle (The Candle of Joy)

The third candle indicates that the only lasting Joy to be found in life on earth is through Christ. All other joy is fleeting and does not last.

The Fourth Candle (The Candle of Peace)

The fourth candle reminds that Jesus comes to bring Peace to both the world and to people's hearts. Without Christ there is no peace in this world.

The Fifth Candle (The Christ Candle or Christmas Candle)

The fifth candle represents Christ himself who is born to save people from their sins. It is a celebration of the fulfillment of prophecy as represented in Christ's birth and hope in the final fulfillment when Christ comes again and Christians join him.



ADVENT SONG (II)

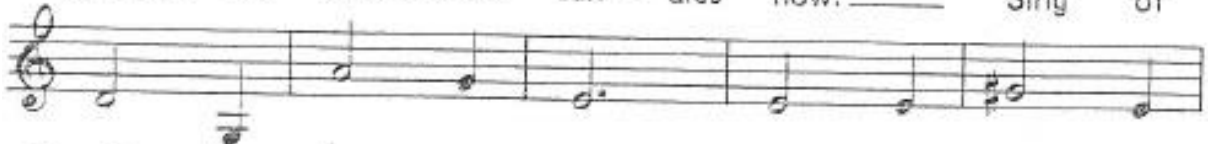
(Organ: p. 20 // Guitar)

Mary Lu Walker

VERSES:



- 1. Light the Ad - vent can - dle one. _____ Now the
- 2. Light the Ad - vent can - dle two. _____ Think of
- 3. Light the Ad - vent can - dle three. _____ Think of
- 4. Light the Ad - vent can - dle four. _____ Think of
- 5. Light the Christ - mas can - dles now. _____ Sing of



- 1. wait - ing has be - gun. We have start - ed
- 2. hum - ble shep - herds who filled with won - der
- 3. hap - py har - mo - ny. An - gels sing - ing
- 4. joy for - ev - er - more. Christ - child in the
- 5. don - key, sheep, and cow. Birth - day can - dles

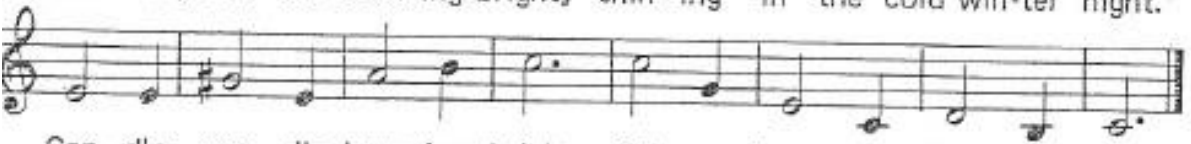


- 1. on our way. _____ Time to think of Christ - mas Day.
- 2. at the sight _____ of the Child on Christ - mas night.
- 3. "Peace on earth" _____ at the Sav - ior's bless - ed birth.
- 4. sta - ble born. _____ Gift of love that Christ - mas morn.
- 5. for the King. _____ Let the "Al - le - lu - ias" ring.

REFRAIN:



Can - dle, can - dle burn - ing bright, shin - ing in the cold win - ter night.



Can - dle, can - dle, burn - ing bright, fill our hearts with Christ - mas light.

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Season of Advent - Holy Eucharist

Liturgy of the Word

Entrance Rite

At the sound of the bell, all stand for the Entrance of the Ministers into the church.

Processional Hymn

O come, O come, Emmanuel

Hymnal 56



(Dec. 23) 1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som
(Dec. 17) 2 O come, thou Wis - dom from on high, who or - derest
(Dec. 18) 3 O come, O come, thou Lord of might, who to thy
(Dec. 19) 4 O come, thou Branch of Jes - se's tree, free them from
(Dec. 20) 5 O come, thou Key of Da - vid, come, and o - pen
(Dec. 21) 6 O come, thou Day - spring from on high, and cheer us
(Dec. 22) 7 O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind in one the
(Dec. 23) 8 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som



1 cap - tive Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile
2 all things might - i - ly; to us the path of know - ledge
3 tribes on Si - nai's height in an - cient times didst give the
4 Sa - tan's ty - ran - ny that trust thy might - y power to
5 wide our heaven - ly home; make safe the way that leads on
6 by thy draw - ing nigh; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of
7 hearts of all the man - kind; bid thou our sad di - vi - sions
8 cap - tive Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile



1 here un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
2 show, and teach us in her ways to go.
3 law, in cloud, and ma - jes - ty, and awe.
4 save, and give them vic - tory o'er the grave. Re - joice! Re - joice!
5 high, and close the path to mis - er - y.
6 night, and death's dark shad - ow put to flight.
7 cease, and be thy - self our King of Peace.
8 here un - til the Son of God ap - pear.



The stanzas may be used as antiphons with "The Song of Mary" on the dates given.

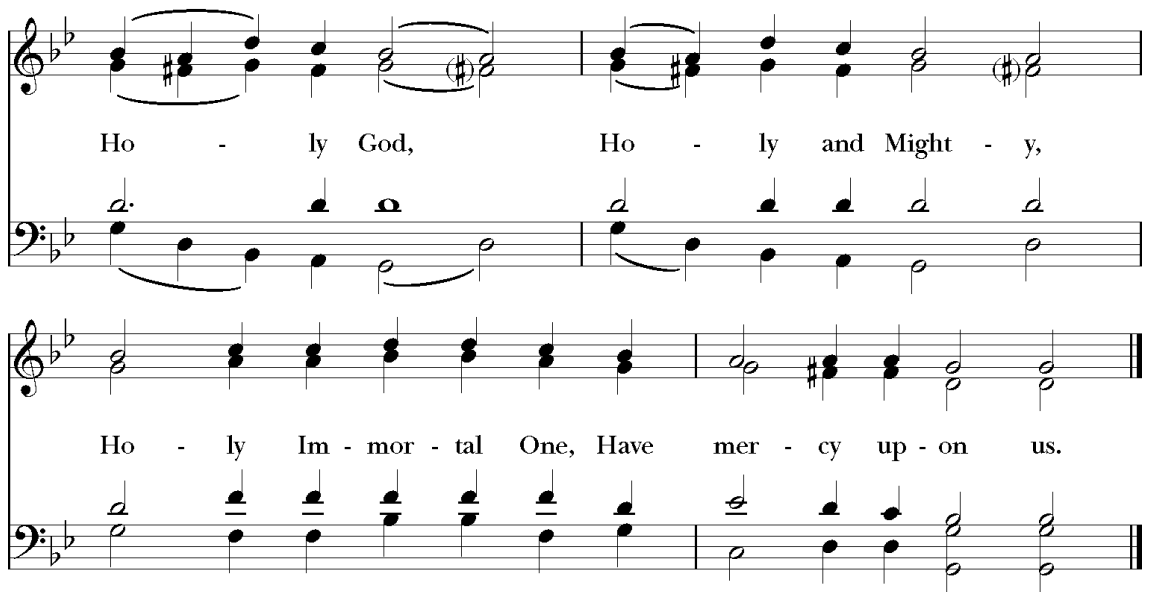
All standing, the Celebrant says

Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 People And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.
 Amen.

The Celebrant says the Collect for Purity

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The following is sung, all standing (Three times)



Collect of the Day

Celebrant The Lord be with you.
 People And also with you.

Celebrant Let us pray.

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

First Reading - Isaiah 7:10-16

All sit.

A Reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, "Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test." Then Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted."

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

Psalm 80:1-7,16-18

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Qui regis Israel

- 1 Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; *
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.
- 2 In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, *
stir up your strength and come to help us.
- 3 Restore us, O God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
- 4 O LORD God of hosts, *
how long will you be angered
despite the prayers of your people?
- 5 You have fed them with the bread of tears; *

- you have given them bowls of tears to drink.
- 6 You have made us the derision of our neighbors, *
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.
- 7 Restore us, O God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
- 16 Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, *
the son of man you have made so strong for yourself.
- 17 And so will we never turn away from you; *
give us life, that we may call upon your Name.
- 18 Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

Second Reading

Romans 1:1-7

A Reading from Paul's letter to the Church in Rome.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reader The Word of the Lord.
People Thanks be to God.

Sequence Hymn

All stand.

Mary, when the angel's voice

1 Ma - ry, when the an - gel's voice called you high - ly fa - vored,
 2 Jo - seph, in your dark - est night, an - gel mes - sage hear - ing,
 3 Old and sage E - liz - a - beth, birth an - ti - ci - pat - ing,
 4 God whose name we mag - ni - fy, all your child - ren mat - ter.

dread and joy in your heart mixed, pon - dered there and sa - vored.
 you cast not your love a - side, scorn and an - ger fear - ing.
 nur - tur - ing your cous - in's will, you taught hope - ful wait - ing.
 From op - pres - sion raise the poor; proud and might - y scat - ter.

May we learn to wel - come all that our life is bring - ing,
 When a loved one brings us grief, rips our world a - sun - der,
 So, as wo - men long have done, may we nev - er fal - ter
 Seeds be - neath the win - ter snow live, 'tho all seems bar - ren.

e - ven when in pain we feel birth with - in us spring - ing.
 dream - er, may we have your heart, o - pen to God's won - der.
 to ex - tend a gen - tle touch, fears to cour - age al - ter.
 Lift a car - ol, sing of hope for the Rose of Shar - on.

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 Music: *Tempus adest florum*, melody from *Piae Cantiones*, 1582; harm. Tom Whittemore © Tom Whittemore. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Holy Gospel

All stand.

Celebrant The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

People Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Celebrant The Gospel of the Lord.

People Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Sermon

Nicene Creed

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All stand and together say

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,

of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended 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 Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped 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 for the resurrection of the dead, and
the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People

All remain standing.

Celebrant

Brothers and sisters, as we joyfully await the full manifestation of God's reign in Christ, let us pray for the needs of the church and the world.

O Wisdom, you come forth from the mouth of the Most High and reach from beginning to end, mightily and sweetly ordering all things. Behold and bless your church, remembering especially Michael our Presiding Bishop, Jennifer our Bishop, Christopher our priest, Caroline and Chris our Wardens, our Bishop's Committee, and in the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer we pray for..., and in the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, we

pray for.... We pray for our companion diocese of Brasilia and their bishop, Mauricio. We pray for St. Andre's in Mithon and the people of the Diocese of Haiti. Be present in ordering the life of this and every congregation.

Come and teach us the way of prudence.

O Adonai, God of the Covenant, ruler of the house of Israel, you appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush and on Mount Sinai gave your law. We pray for those working to become beloved community and for a just and proper use of the land through our Care of Creation ministries. Forgive us when we stray from your guidance and will. During this season of Advent, we pray for the wall that surrounds Bethlehem to come down. Almighty God, Creator of the wonderful complex diversity of humanity; you have fashioned us in your image and commanded us to love one another; reach down your divine hand so that the wall shall come down in Bethlehem, the birth place of your Son, the Prince of Peace; and may the crumbling walls herald the fall of all barriers that divide us. Bind us together so that love gives rise to an abundance of tenderness among all people; and may our hearts like Mary's magnify the Lord, and may your love shower down throughout the world so all divisions are scattered and washed away.

Come and redeem us for our life together.

O Root of Jesse, you stand as an ensign to humankind; before you rulers will shut their mouths, and nations bow in worship: We pray for your peace and justice in every nation and throughout the world; be present to all whose lives are ravaged by war and strife. Guide the leaders of this and every land into the paths of peace and goodwill.

Come save us and do not delay.

O Key of David, and scepter of the house of Israel, you open and no one can shut, you shut and no one can open: Guide us in opening the doors of opportunity for the unemployed, for the homeless, for prisoners, and for all who are oppressed; and lead us in closing the doors that lead to poverty, bigotry, and injustice.

Come and bring the captives out of the prison house.

O King of the Nations, you are the cornerstone that makes us one: We lift up all who are suffering and in need, especially.... Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous and help us minister to them in your love.

Come and save us whom you have fashioned out of clay.

O Dayspring, radiance of the Light Eternal and Sun of Righteousness: Shine your light on those who have died; remember especially those we now name..., and bring comfort to all those who mourn.

Come and enlighten all who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.

O Emmanuel, God with us, Expected One and Saviour, We give thanks for all the blessings of this life; for all those who today celebrate birthdays... and anniversaries...; and for the other blessings we now name silently or aloud [pause]. Make each of us ready to receive you into our hearts, to serve you in all whom we meet, and to greet you in the fullness of your glory in the day of your appearing.

Come and save us, O Lord our God.

The Priest adds the following concluding Collect

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth: Grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may always be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer, and know ourselves to be surrounded by their witness to your power and mercy. We ask this for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whom all our intercessions are acceptable through the Spirit, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Confession of Sin

All kneel.

The Celebrant says

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *1 John 1:8, 9*

The Celebrant says

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Silence.

Minister and People together say

God of all mercy,
we confess that we have sinned against you,
opposing your will in our lives.
We have denied your goodness in each other,
in ourselves, and in the world you have created.
We repent of the evil that enslaves us,
the evil we have done,
and the evil done on our behalf. Forgive,
restore, and strengthen us through our
Savior Jesus Christ,
that we may abide in your love
and serve only your will. ***Amen.***

The Priest stands and says

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. ***Amen.***

Peace

All stand.

Celebrant The peace of the Lord be always with you.
People And also with you.

Then the Ministers and the People may greet one another in the name of the Lord.

Announcements

Announcements may be made at this point in the service.

Liturgy of the Table - Holy Communion

Offertory Hymn – see insert

Mary heard the angel's message

Voices Found 4

Em D/E Em A/E

1 Ma - ry heard the an - gel's mess - age:
2 When she heard her cou - sin's greet - ing,
3 Ma - ry heard the shep - herds' sto - ry,
4 Ma - ry heard, "Who is my moth - er?
5 When they learned the Lord had ris - en,

Em Em/G G/B Em

"Greet - ings Ma - ry, fa - vored one.
Ma - ry's heart was filled with joy,
words she trea - sured with de - light.
Who is in my fa - mi - ly?
Christ's dis - ci - ples met to pray.

Em Bm7 Em D

Do not fear, for God is with you;
 so she sang of God's great blessing
 Then an angel gave the warning:
 All who do my Father's bidding,
 Ma - ry was a - mong the faith - ful,

Am Bm Am Em

you will one day bear God's Son."
 prom - ised in her ba - by boy:
 "Flee with Je - sus in the night!"
 all these ones be - long to me."
 bound in love, on Je - sus' Way.

Am F Am Em

Filled with que - stions, filled with won - der,
 "God has looked on me with fa - vor,
 Ma - ry won - dered in her an - guish,
 Lat - er, on the hill she heard him,
 God, we see her, Christ's dis - ci - ple,

Am F#m7 Em Bm7

she pro - claimed her faith in God:
 so I sing this song of praise.
 what would be the pain he'd know?
 "Wom - an, see your new son there!
 lov - ing, learn - ing, serv - ing, too.

Em Am7 Em D

"May it be as you have spok - en;
 God has worked, the proud to scat - ter;
 Flee - ing then, she held him close - ly.
 You, my friend, be - hold your moth - er!"
 Like her, may we hear and an - swer,

G Am C D Em

I'm the ser - vant of the Lord!"
 hum - ble, hung - ry ones to raise."
 One day she would let him go.
 So Christ formed new bonds of care.
 "We, your ser - vants, live for you."

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Representatives of the congregation bring the people's offerings of bread and wine, and money or other gifts, to the

Ho - ly, ho - ly,
 ho - ly Lord, God of power and might,
 heaven and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho-san-na in the
 high - est. Bless - ed is he who
 comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san-na in the high-est.

The people stand or kneel.

We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son. For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ 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 for the remembrance of me." After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me." Therefore, according to his command, O Father,

Celebrant and People

We remember his death,
We proclaim his resurrection,
We await his coming in glory;

The Celebrant continues

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine.

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with Blessed Peter and all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.

By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. *AMEN.*

The Celebrant then continues

And now, as our Savior
Christ has taught us, we
are bold to say,

People and Celebrant

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,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

A period of silence is kept.

Je - sus, Lamb of God: have mer - cy on us.

The first system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The lower staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The lyrics are written below the upper staff.

Je - sus, bear - er of our sins: have mer - cy on us.

The second system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The lower staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The lyrics are written below the upper staff.

Je - sus, re - deem - er, re - deem - er of the world:

The third system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The lower staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The lyrics are written below the upper staff.

give us your peace, give us your peace.

A musical score for a hymn. The top staff is a vocal line in G major, 4/4 time, with lyrics 'give us your peace, give us your peace.' The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in G major, 4/4 time, featuring a steady bass line and chords.

The Celebrant says

The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

All baptized persons are welcome to receive Holy Communion.

Communion Hymn – see insert

Star child, earth child

Voices Found # 35

1	Star - child,	earth - child,	go - be - tween of	God,
2	Street child,	beat child,	no place left to	go,
3	Grown child,	old child,	mem - ory full of	years,
4	Spared child,	spoiled child,	hav - ing, want - ing	more,
5	Hope - for	peace child,	God's stu - pen - dous	sign,

A musical score for a hymn. The top staff is a vocal line in G major, 3/4 time. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in G major, 3/4 time. The lyrics are arranged in five numbered lines corresponding to different voice parts.

love child,	Christ child,	hea - ven's light - ning	rod,
hurt child,	used child,	no one wants to	know,
sad child,	lost child,	sto - ry told in	tears,
wise child,	faith child,	know - ing joy in	store,
down - to	earth child,	star of stars that	shine,

A musical score for a hymn. The top staff is a vocal line in G major, 3/4 time. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in G major, 3/4 time. The lyrics are arranged in five numbered lines corresponding to different voice parts.

Refrain

This year, this year, let the day ar - rive, when

Christ-mas come for ev - ery - one, ev - ery - one a - live!

After the Communion Hymn, the Celebrant says

Let us pray.

Celebrant and People

Postcommunion Prayer

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Eternal God, heavenly Father,
 you have graciously accepted us as living members
 of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
 and you have fed us with spiritual food
 in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.
 Send us now into the world in peace,
 and grant us strength and courage
 to love and serve you
 with gladness and singleness of heart;
 through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessing

The priest blesses the people, saying

May Almighty God, by whose providence our Savior Christ came among us in great humility, sanctify you with the light of his blessing and set you free from all sin. *Amen.*

May he whose second Coming in power and great glory we await, make you steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and constant in love. *Amen.*

May you, who rejoice in the first Advent of our Redeemer, at his second Advent be rewarded with unending life. *Amen.*

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. *Amen.*

Recessional Hymn – see insert

Come, thou long-expected Jesus

Hymnal 66

1 Come, thou long - ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo - ple free;
2 Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art;
3 Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and yet a king,
4 By thine own e - ter - nal Spi - rit rule in all our hearts a - lone;

from our fears and sins re - lease us, let us find our rest in thee.
dear de - sire of ev - ery na - tion, joy of ev - ery long - ing heart.
born to reign in us for ev - er, now thy gra - cious king - dom bring.
by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

Dismissal

Celebrant
People

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

A Note on Today's Readings

The Third Sunday of Advent—Year A

Welcome to our parish. The Third Sunday of Advent again has as its central theme the ministry of John the Baptist. Jesus said of him, “Among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist...” In today’s Gospel, John, who has been imprisoned by Herod Antipas, is facing death and wishes to know before he dies that he was correct in identifying Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus’ reply is to quote from the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah, demonstrating that he is indeed fulfilling the Messiah’s ministry as Isaiah had foretold.

The Old Testament reading is the passage Jesus quotes in the Gospel reading. The sign of the Messiah is a new order of existence—God’s Kingdom—in which health and salvation spring forth. The second reading is a call to patient waiting for the Lord to appear to inaugurate the kingdom of God.

The distinction between John and even the least in the kingdom—ourselves—who are even greater, is that our birth is more than natural—it is the new birth by water and the spirit in Holy Baptism, which has made us members of the Body of Christ. We are commissioned for ministry in Baptism; a ministry like that of Jesus. In Holy Eucharist, we affirm our commitment to that ministry to all people, which is the ongoing sign of Christ in the world.

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Music: Published by permission of the Executors of the late Dr. Basil Harwood. Originally composed for the hymn, “Thy hand, O God, has guided.”V

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