

*Blue Christmas*  
*St. Aidan's*  
*December 21, 2020*

*Celebrant: Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**All: Thanks be to God.**

*Celebrant: Let us pray.*

*Almighty God, we give you thanks for surrounding us, as daylight has faded, with the brightness of the vesper light; and we implore you of your great mercy that, as you enfold us with the radiance of this light, so you would shine into our hearts the brightness of your Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Everliving God, who strengthened your apostle Thomas with firm and certain faith in your Son's resurrection: Grant us so perfectly and without doubt to believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, that our faith may never be found wanting in your sight; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.*

**All: Amen.**

*Celebrant: Let us pray; God first loved us, and drew us to himself that we might know love and come alive,*

**ALL: And so we come again to find the heart of God.**

*Celebrant: We gather to praise God for the gift of life,*

**ALL: And so we come again to find the heart of God.**

*Celebrant: We gather remembering the loss of our loved ones,*

**ALL: And so we come again to find the heart of God.**

*Celebrant: We gather in joy for the gift of love,*

**ALL: And so we come again to find the heart of God.**

## ***First Candle***

Reader 1:

We light the first candle for all our human frailty.

For sorrow and regret.

Loneliness and pain.

Disillusionment and disappointment.

Bitterness and fear.

We light this first candle to remember those persons we have loved and lost through death. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices (moment of silence) We hold them before God, grateful for the gift of having them in our lives, and we give thanks for the memory that binds them to us this season. We offer up the tender burden of our ongoing grief, made more acute in this season.

**All: May God's eternal love surround those who have died and us who remain.**

*Song for Reflection "In the Bleak Midwinter" #112 (Blue Hymnal) vs. 1, 2, and 4. Christina Rossetti, 1830-1894, Public Domain*

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

**2 Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain; heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign. In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.**

**4 What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb; if I were a Wise Man, I would do my part; yet what I can I give him: give my heart.**

## *Second Candle*

Reader 2: With a second candle, the light grows. Filling our lives with love.

We light this second candle to redeem the pain of loss we feel – the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs with the security and satisfaction they bring, the loss of health in ourselves or in family and friends, the loss of joy and peace in our lives from the stresses that surround us. As we gather up the pain of the past, we offer it to you, O God, asking that you place the gift of peace into our hearts.

We light the second candle for those separated from us by broken and ended relationships. For those separated from us by this terrible pandemic, family, loved ones, friends, and especially those in hospitals and nursing homes.

**All: Refresh, restore, renew us, Oh God, and lead us into Your future.**

*Song for Reflection: "I'll Be Home for Christmas,"*

*August 24, 1943, by Walter Kent (music) and James "Kim" Gannon (words).*

*Dr. Marl Pretzel*

## *Third Candle*

Reader 3:

With a third candle, the light grows greater still. We light the third candle for ourselves. For what we have been, what we are and what we will be. For the gifts and talents yet to be developed in our lives. For the courage and strength that we show. For the weakness and fear that we hide. For our accomplishments and joys. For disappointments and sorrow.

We want so much to understand our purpose and have clear direction in our lives, but the darkness and the questions remain. Your words are clear, O God, “Do not fear! I go before you!” We long to deeply trust that you are our wisdom and guide.

**All: Let us remember that dawn defeats the darkness. We give thanks, Lord of all, for all that You have given us. We open our hearts to You so we may receive what we need.**

**We pray that we may always share Your light with others. Great or small, complete or imperfect, powerful or weak, we are all a gift from God. You, Lord, have given us the capacity to love and be loved. We honor You for the gift of Your presence, the light of Your Word, and the love that will soon be born.**

*Hymn: “Come my Way, my truth, my life.” #487 (Blue Hymnal)*

*vs. 1-3 George Herbert, 1593-1633, Public Domain*

**1. Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life: such a way as gives us breath; such a truth as ends all strife; such a life as killeth death.**

**2. Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength: such a light as shows a feast; such a feast as mends in length; such a strength as makes his guest.**

**3. Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart: such a joy as none can move; such a love as none can part; such a heart as joys in love**

*Psalm 40: 1-6 (in unison)*

**I waited patiently upon the Lord; he stooped to me and heard my cry.**

**He lifted me out of the desolate pit, out of the mire and clay; he set my feet upon a high cliff and made my footing sure.**

**He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; many shall see, stand in awe, and put their trust in the Lord.**

**Happy are they who trust in the Lord!**

**They do not resort to evil spirits or turn to false gods. Great things are they that you have done, O Lord my God!**

**How great your wonders and your plans for us! There is none who can be compared with you.**

**Oh, that I could make them known and tell them!**

**But they are more than I can count.**

*Celebrant: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John (11:1-6)*

## **All: Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. 3 So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” 4 But when Jesus heard it, he said, “This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” 5 Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, 6 after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

7 Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” 8 The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?” 9 Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. 10 But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.” 11 After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” 12 The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.” 13 Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. 14 Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. 15 For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” 16 Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

*Celebrant: The Gospel of the Lord.*

**All: Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

*Meditation: "Strength to touch our grief" Fr. Tom Baker*

## *Fourth Candle*

Reader 4:

We light the fourth candle to remember our faith and the gift of hope that God offers to us in the Christmas story. We remember that God, who shares in our life through the incarnation of Jesus, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering, when all our tears shall be wiped away.

With the fourth candle, we see that the light shines and the darkness will not overcome it. We light the fourth candle for hope. For possibilities that we do not yet know. For gifts that are yet to come. For the promise of joy and goodness. For fullness and perfection that we do not see but believe can be.

Even when we cannot rejoice. Even when we feel empty. Even when we fear that we are alone. Even then – and especially then – we hope for something more. We honor the hope we find in community, in our faith, and in You, Lord of light.

*Canticle: A Song of Christ's Goodness, Anselm of Canterbury (in unison)*

**Jesus, as a mother you gather your people to you; you are gentle with us as a mother with her children.**

**Often you weep over our sins and our pride, tenderly**

you draw us from hatred and judgment.

You comfort us in sorrow and bind up our wounds, in sickness you nurse us and with pure milk you feed us.

Jesus, by your dying, we are born to new life; by your anguish and labor we come forth in joy.

Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness; through your gentleness, we find comfort in fear.

Your warmth gives life to the dead, your touch makes sinners righteous.

Lord Jesus, in your mercy, heal us; in your love and tenderness, remake us.

In your compassion, bring grace and forgiveness, for the beauty of heaven, may your love prepare us.

## *The Prayers*

*Celebrant* Let us now ask God for what we need for ourselves as we approach the Christmas season with tender hearts. O God, we come to you as Christmas dawns. On this the longest of nights we offer to you the pain in our hearts, our signs too deep for words.

*(Silence)* Loving God, hear our Prayer

**All** And in your merciful love, comfort us.

*Celebrant:* Compassionate God, we pray to you for those among us who are grieving over what might have been, of dreams unfulfilled.

*(Silence)* Loving God hear our prayer.

**All** And in your merciful love, comfort us.

*Celebrant:* For those we have loved who have died. For all the losses

*that we know, that all may be redeemed by your Easter promise.  
(Silence) Loving God, hear our Prayer*

**All And in your merciful love, comfort us.**

*Celebrant For the peace proclaimed by the Christmas angels, to come throughout this whole world that knows far too much violence, conflict and destruction. Loving God, hear our prayer*

**All And in your merciful love, comfort us**

*Celebrant Keep watch, dear Lord, with all those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake.*

*Celebrant: As our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,*

**All: 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.**

*Blessing*

*Celebrant: As you go to rest this night, may you be wrapped in God's loving presence; may you be warmed by the Light of Christ; may you find peace and joy. And the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be upon you and all whom you love, this night and forever more.*

**All: Amen.**

*Closing Hymn "Silent Night," #111 (Blue Hymnal) Joseph Mohr,*

*1792-1848, Public Domain*

**Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright round  
yon virgin mother and child. Holy infant, so tender  
and mild, sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight,  
glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing  
alleluia; Christ, the Savior, is born!**

**Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light  
radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of  
redeeming grace, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.**