

Night Prayer

from A New Zealand Prayer Book, He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa

The offering of prayer late in the evening, by laity, religious orders or clergy, often called Compline, has sometimes been described as the 'goodnight prayer of the Church'. It rounds off the day and prepares us for a quite night. As the psalmist wrote:

*I lie down in peace and take rest my rest
for it is in God alone that I dwell unafraid.*

Night Prayer derives its content from the wisdom of the centuries in Scripture and above all in the psalms, but also from contemporary Christian experience of God. It celebrates the awareness that each of us who tries to pray is a part of the human whole. So we are taken over the threshold from daytime, not in a mood of self-centred spirituality, but as representatives of humanity, acknowledging our creaturehood before God.

Invocation

Eternal Spirit, flow through our being and open our lips,
that our mouths may proclaim your praise.

Let us worship the God of love.
Alleluia, alleluia.

Psalm

Psalm 121

I will lift up my eyes to the mountains,
but where shall I find help?

From you alone, O God, does my help come,
creator of the ever changing hills.

You will not let me stumble on the rough pathways,
you care for me and watch over me without ceasing.

I am sure that the Guardian of my people
neither slumbers nor sleeps.
The God of all nations keeps watch,
like a shadow spread over me.

So the sun will not strike me by day,
nor the moon by night.

You will defend me in the presence of evil,
you will guard my life.

You will defend my going out and my coming in,
this night and always.

Reading

2 Corinthians 4:6-10

It is the God who said, Let light shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body.

Hymn

Be thou my vision, O Christ of my heart,
Be all else but naught to me save that thou art,
Be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
Both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Riches I heed not, nor folk's empty praise,
Be thou my inheritance now and always,
Be thou and thou only the first in my heart,
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

Prayers

I.

Into your hands, O God, I commend my spirit,
for you have redeemed me, O God of truth and love.

Keep me, O God, as the apple of your eye;
hide me under the shadow of your wings.

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

II.

Praise be to God, I have lived to see this day.
God's promise is fulfilled, and my duty done.

At last you have given me peace,
for I have seen with my own eyes
the salvation you have prepared for all nations -

a light to the world in its darkness,
and the glory of your people Israel.

Glory be to God, sustaining, redeeming, sanctifying,
as in the beginning, so now, and for ever.

Amen.

Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

Lord have mercy.

III.

Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples
of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and for ever. Amen.

IV.

I will lie down in peace and take my rest,
for it is in God alone that I dwell unafraid.

Let us bless the Earth-maker, the Pain-bearer, the Life-giver,
let us praise and exalt God above all for ever.

May God's name be praised beyond the furthest star,
glorified and exalted above all for ever.

V.

Lord,
it is night.

The night is for stillness.
Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day.
What has been done has been done;
what has not been done has not been done;
let it be.

The night is dark.
Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives
rest in you.

The night is quiet.
Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,
all dear to us,
and all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn.
Let us look expectantly to a new day,
new joys,
new possibilities.
In your name we pray.
Amen.

VI.

Christ be within us to keep us,
beside us to guard,
before us to lead,
behind us to protect,
beneath us to support,
above us to bless.

Final Versicle

The divine Spirit dwells in us.

Thanks be to God.