

# Night Prayer (Compline)

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# An Order for Night Prayer (Compline)

## Introduction

The ancient office of Compline 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 there is an address, or business to be done, it should come first. If the service is in church, those present depart in silence; if at home, they go quietly to bed.

# Night Prayer (Compline)

## Structure

### Preparation

The minister **asks a blessing** on the life of all God's holy people.

**Authorized Prayers of Penitence** may be used.

A **hymn** may be sung.

### The Word of God

This includes

- † **psalmody**
- † a **short reading from Holy Scripture**
- † a **responsory**, committing oneself into the hands of God
- † the **Gospel Canticle: *Nunc dimittis***

### Prayers

**Intercessions and thanksgivings** may be offered.

**The Collect** is said.

**The Lord's Prayer** may be said.

### The Conclusion

The service concludes with

- † a **calling on God for protection** through the coming night
- † a simple **blessing**

## ¶ Notes

### 1 **Daily, Seasonal and Other Variations**

The Order for Night Prayer that follows may be used on any day throughout the year. Alternatively, the psalm, Scripture reading and Collect may be varied daily; and the hymn, the Scripture reading, the refrain to the Gospel Canticle, the Collect and the blessing may change seasonally and on Holy Days. Texts for daily and seasonal variation and for use on Holy Days are provided on pages 344–357.

### 2 **Gospel Reading**

On suitable occasions, particularly Saturday night and before other festivals, the Gospel for the following day may be read before Night Prayer or in place of the set reading.

### 3 **Thanksgiving**

Reflection on the past day may lead into thanksgiving in addition to penitence. In such case one of the Prayers of Thanksgiving from the seasonal forms of Morning and Evening Prayer (pages 198–302) or the Prayer of Thanksgiving on page 40 of *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England* may be used.

### 4 **Penitence**

When the confession is used, it may be replaced by another act of penitence. However, all that precedes ‘O God, make speed to save us’ may be omitted; this is particularly appropriate if Holy Communion has been celebrated in the evening.

### 5 **Alleluia**

The Alleluias included in the Easter form of the Responsory are for use from Easter Day until the Day of Pentecost, not at other times. The Alleluia following the opening versicles and responses is always used, except in Lent.

### 6 **Conclusion**

The response in square brackets [ ] is normally used only if Holy Communion is to be celebrated the following morning.

# An Order for Night Prayer (Compline)

## Preparation

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

*All* **Amen.**

Our help is in the name of the Lord

*All* **who made heaven and earth.**

*A period of silence for reflection on the past day may follow.*

*The following or other suitable words of penitence may be used*

*All* **Most merciful God,  
we confess to you,  
before the whole company of heaven and one another,  
that we have sinned in thought, word and deed  
and in what we have failed to do.  
Forgive us our sins,  
heal us by your Spirit  
and raise us to new life in Christ. Amen.**

O God, make speed to save us.

*All* **O Lord, make haste to help us.**

*All* **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.  
Alleluia.**

*The following or another suitable hymn may be sung*

Before the ending of the day,  
Creator of the world, we pray  
That you, with steadfast love, would keep  
Your watch around us while we sleep.

From evil dreams defend our sight,  
From fears and terrors of the night;  
Tread underfoot our deadly foe  
That we no sinful thought may know.

O Father, that we ask be done  
Through Jesus Christ, your only Son;  
And Holy Spirit, by whose breath  
Our souls are raised to life from death.

## **The Word of God**

### *Psalmody*

*One or more of the following psalms may be used.*

### *Psalm 4*

- 1 Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness; ♦  
you set me at liberty when I was in trouble;  
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.
- 2 How long will you nobles dishonour my glory; ♦  
how long will you love vain things and seek after falsehood?
- 3 But know that the Lord has shown me his marvellous kindness; ♦  
when I call upon the Lord, he will hear me.
- 4 Stand in awe, and sin not; ♦  
commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.
- 5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness ♦  
and put your trust in the Lord.
- 6 There are many that say, 'Who will show us any good?' ♦  
Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us.

- 7 You have put gladness in my heart, ♦  
more than when their corn and wine and oil increase.
- 8 In peace I will lie down and sleep, ♦  
for it is you Lord, only, who make me dwell in safety.

*Psalm 91*

- 1 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High ♦  
and abides under the shadow of the Almighty,
- 2 Shall say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my stronghold, ♦  
my God, in whom I put my trust.'
- 3 For he shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler ♦  
and from the deadly pestilence.
- 4 He shall cover you with his wings  
and you shall be safe under his feathers; ♦  
his faithfulness shall be your shield and buckler.
- 5 You shall not be afraid of any terror by night, ♦  
nor of the arrow that flies by day;
- 6 Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, ♦  
nor of the sickness that destroys at noonday.
- 7 Though a thousand fall at your side  
and ten thousand at your right hand, ♦  
yet it shall not come near you.
- 8 Your eyes have only to behold ♦  
to see the reward of the wicked.
- 9 Because you have made the Lord your refuge ♦  
and the Most High your stronghold,
- 10 There shall no evil happen to you, ♦  
neither shall any plague come near your tent.
- 11 For he shall give his angels charge over you, ♦  
to keep you in all your ways.
- 12 They shall bear you in their hands, ♦  
lest you dash your foot against a stone.

- 13 You shall tread upon the lion and adder; ♦  
the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.
- 14 Because they have set their love upon me,  
therefore will I deliver them; ♦  
I will lift them up, because they know my name.
- 15 They will call upon me and I will answer them; ♦  
I am with them in trouble,  
I will deliver them and bring them to honour.
- 16 With long life will I satisfy them ♦  
and show them my salvation.

### *Psalm 134*

- 1 Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, ♦  
you that by night stand in the house of the Lord.
- 2 Lift up your hands towards the sanctuary ♦  
and bless the Lord.
- 3 The Lord who made heaven and earth ♦  
give you blessing out of Zion.

*At the end of the psalmody, the following is said or sung*

**All** **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.**

## Scripture Reading

*One of the following short lessons or another suitable passage is read*

You, O Lord, are in the midst of us and we are called by your name;  
leave us not, O Lord our God. *Jeremiah 14.9*

*(or)*

Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil is prowling  
round like a roaring lion, seeking for someone to devour. Resist him,  
strong in the faith. *1 Peter 5.8, 9*

*(or)*

The servants of the Lamb shall see the face of God, whose name will  
be on their foreheads. There will be no more night: they will not  
need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for God will be their  
light, and they will reign for ever and ever. *Revelation 22.4, 5*

*The following responsory may be said*

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

**All Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.**

For you have redeemed me, Lord God of truth.

**All I commend my spirit.**

Glory to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit.

**All Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.**

*Or, in Easter*

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Alleluia, alleluia.

**All Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.**

**Alleluia, alleluia.**

For you have redeemed me, Lord God of truth.

**All Alleluia, alleluia.**

Glory to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit.

**All Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.**

**Alleluia, alleluia.**

Keep me as the apple of your eye.

**All Hide me under the shadow of your wings.**

## Gospel Canticle

*The Nunc dimittis (The Song of Simeon) is said or sung*

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

1 Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace: ♦  
your word has been fulfilled.

2 My own eyes have seen the salvation ♦  
which you have prepared in the sight of every people;

3 A light to reveal you to the nations ♦  
and the glory of your people Israel.

*Luke 2.29-32*

**All** 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.

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

## Prayers

*Intercessions and thanksgivings may be offered here.*

### *The Collect*

*Silence may be kept.*

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

**All** Amen.

*The Lord's Prayer may be said.*

## The Conclusion

In peace we will lie down and sleep;

*All* **for you alone, Lord, make us dwell in safety.**

Abide with us, Lord Jesus,

*All* **for the night is at hand and the day is now past.**

As the night watch looks for the morning,

*All* **so do we look for you, O Christ.**

[Come with the dawning of the day

*All* **and make yourself known in the breaking of the bread.]**

The Lord bless us and watch over us;

the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us;

the Lord look kindly on us and give us peace.

*All* **Amen.**

# Daily, Seasonal and Other Variations for Night Prayer

*This Collect may be used at Night Prayer on any day throughout the year*

Lighten our darkness,  
Lord, we pray,  
and in your great mercy  
defend us from all perils and dangers of this night,  
for the love of your only Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.

## ¶ Ordinary Time

### Sunday

*Psalms* 104.1,21-33; 134

*Short Reading: the following or some other*

You, O Lord, are in the midst of us, and we are called by your name;  
leave us not, O Lord our God. *Jeremiah 14.9*

### *Collect*

Almighty God,  
by triumphing over the powers of darkness  
Christ has prepared a place for us in the new Jerusalem:  
may we, who have this day given thanks for his resurrection,  
praise him in the eternal city  
of which he is the light;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Monday

### *Psalm 4*

#### *Short Reading: the following or some other*

Thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.

*Isaiah 30.15*

#### *Collect*

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.

## Tuesday

### *Psalm 143*

#### *Short Reading: the following or some other*

Jesus said, 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

*Matthew 11.28-end*

#### *Collect*

Look down, O God, from your heavenly throne,  
illuminate the darkness of this night with your celestial brightness,  
and from the children of light banish the deeds of darkness;  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

## Wednesday

*Psalm* 31.1-5, [19-end]

*Short Reading: the following or some other*

Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. *1 Peter 5.6,7*

*Collect*

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

## Thursday

*Psalm* 16

*Short Reading: the following or some other*

Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil is prowling round like a roaring lion, seeking for someone to devour. Resist him, strong in the faith. *1 Peter 5.8,9*

*Collect*

Keep watch, dear Lord,  
with those who wake, or watch, or weep this night,  
and give your angels charge over those who sleep.  
Tend the sick,  
give rest to the weary,  
sustain the dying,  
calm the suffering,  
and pity the distressed;  
all for your love's sake, O Christ our Redeemer.

## Friday

*Psalm* 139.1-18

*Short Reading: the following or some other*

God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. *1 Thessalonians 5.9,10*

*Collect*

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God,  
who at this evening hour lay in the tomb  
and so hallowed the grave  
to be a bed of hope for all who put their trust in you:  
give us such sorrow for our sins,  
which were the cause of your passion,  
that when our bodies lie in the dust,  
our souls may live with you for ever.

## Saturday

*Psalm* 91

*Short Reading: the following or some other*

A sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; for those who enter God's rest also cease from their labours as God did from his. Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest.

*Hebrews 4.9-11a*

*Collect*

Stay with us, O God, this night,  
so that by your strength  
we may rise with the new day  
to rejoice in the resurrection of your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Saviour.

## Advent

*Psalm* 143

*Short Reading: the following or some other*

Keep awake – for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake. *Mark 13.35-end*

*Nunc dimittis*

*Refrain:*

*All* **Come, O Lord, and visit us in peace;  
that we may rejoice before you with a perfect heart.**

*Collect*

Stir up your power, O God,  
and come among us.  
Heal our wounds,  
calm our fears  
and give us peace;  
through Jesus our Redeemer.

*Blessing*

Restore us again, O God of hosts;  
show us the light of your countenance  
and we shall be saved.  
Bless and keep us, this night and always.

## Christmas

*Psalm* 31.1-5, [19-end]

*Short Reading: the following or some other*

In him was life and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.

*John 1.4,5*

*Nunc dimittis*

*Refrain:*

*All* **Alleluia. The Word was made flesh, alleluia, and dwelt among us. Alleluia, alleluia.**

*Collect*

We give you thanks, O God,  
for the gift to the world of our Redeemer;  
as we sing your glory at the close of this day,  
so may we know his presence in our hearts,  
who is our Saviour and our Lord,  
now and for ever.

*Blessing*

May the love of the Word made flesh enfold us,  
his joy fill our lives,  
his peace be in our hearts;  
and the blessing of God be with us  
this night and always.

## Epiphany

*Psalm 16*

*Short Reading: the following or some other*

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all. *Titus 2.11*

*Nunc dimittis*

*Refrain:*

*All* **Alleluia. Christ the light of the world, alleluia,  
has manifested his glory. Alleluia, alleluia.**

*Collect*

King of kings and Lord of lords,  
making the true light to shine:  
lighten our darkness now and evermore  
that with our lips and in our lives  
we may praise you;  
for you are our God, now and for ever.

*Blessing*

May the living waters of Christ cleanse us,  
may the Spirit descend upon us,  
and the blessing of God be with us  
this night and always.

## Lent

*Psalm* 139.1-18

*Short Reading: the following or some other*

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

*Isaiah 58. 6,7*

*Nunc dimittis*

*Refrain:*

*All* **Christ died for us,  
so that, whether we wake or sleep,  
we might live with him.**

*Collect*

Almighty God,  
may we, by the prayer and discipline of Lent,  
enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings;  
that by following in the Way,  
we may come to share in the glory;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Blessing*

May God bless us,  
that in us may be found love and humility,  
obedience and thanksgiving,  
discipline, gentleness and peace.

## Passiontide

*Psalm* 139.1-18

*Short Reading: the following or some other*

I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that, when they look on the one whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

*Zechariah 12.10*

*Nunc dimittis*

*Refrain:*

**All Christ himself bore our sins in his body on the tree,  
that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.**

*Collect*

Almighty God,  
as we stand at the foot of the cross of your Son,  
help us to see and know your love for us,  
so that in humility, love and joy  
we may place at his feet  
all that we have and all that we are;  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

*Blessing*

May God bless us,  
that in us may be found love and humility,  
obedience and thanksgiving,  
discipline, gentleness and peace.

## Easter

*Psalm* 104.1,21-33

*Short Reading: the following or some other*

The servants of the Lamb shall see the face of God, whose name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night: they will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever. *Revelation 22.4, 5*

*Nunc dimittis*

*Refrain:*

*All* **Alleluia. The Lord is risen, alleluia,  
as he promised to you. Alleluia, alleluia.**

*Collect*

Almighty God,  
by triumphing over the powers of darkness  
Christ has prepared a place for us in the new Jerusalem:  
may we, who have this day given thanks for his resurrection,  
praise him in the eternal city  
of which he is the light;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Blessing*

May the risen Lord Jesus bless us.  
May he watch over us and renew us  
as he renews the whole of creation.  
May our hearts and lives echo his love.

## From the day after Ascension Day until the Day of Pentecost

*Psalm 86*

*Short Reading: the following or some other*

I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. The old shall dream dreams and the young shall see visions.

*Joel 2.28*

*Nunc dimittis*

*Refrain:*

*All* **Alleluia. The Holy Spirit, the Advocate, alleluia, shall teach you all things. Alleluia, alleluia.**

*Collect*

Come, O Spirit of God,  
and make within us your dwelling place and home.  
May our darkness be dispelled by your light,  
and our troubles calmed by your peace;  
may all evil be redeemed by your love,  
all pain transformed through the suffering of Christ,  
and all dying glorified in his risen life.

*Blessing*

May the Holy Spirit of God bless and sanctify us  
so that we may be consecrated in the truth.

**From All Saints' Day  
until the Friday  
before the First Sunday of Advent**

*Psalms as in Ordinary Time*

*Short Reading: the following or some other*

The one who endures to the end will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations. *Matthew 24.13,14a*

*Nunc dimittis*

*Refrain:*

*All*    **O King most blessed,  
on the day of judgement  
number us among your chosen.**

*Collect*

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
bring us to the dwelling which your Son is preparing  
for all who love you;  
give us the will each day to live in life eternal;  
let our citizenship be in heaven with the blessed,  
with the whole company of the redeemed  
and with countless angels,  
praising, worshipping and adoring your Son,  
our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who sits upon the throne for ever and ever.

*Blessing*

May the light of Christ, the King of all,  
shine ever brighter in our hearts,  
that with all the saints in light  
we may shine forth as lights in the world.

## The Blessed Virgin Mary

*Psalms as in Ordinary Time or of the season*

*Short Reading: the following or some other*

Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'

*Luke 1.38a*

*Nunc dimittis*

*Refrain:*

**All Blessed is she whose soul was pierced  
by the sword of the cross.**

*Collect*

We give you thanks, O God,  
for the gift to the world of our Redeemer;  
as we sing your glory at the close of this day,  
so may we know his presence in our hearts,  
who is our Saviour and our Lord,  
now and for ever.

*Blessing*

May the love of the Word made flesh enfold us,  
his joy fill our lives,  
his peace be in our hearts;  
and the blessing of God be with us  
this night and always.

## Other Saints

*Psalms, Collect and Blessing as in Ordinary Time or of the season*

*Short Reading: the following or some other*

### *Apostles and Evangelists*

You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. *Ephesians 2.19-21*

### *Martyrs*

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. *Song of Solomon 8.6,7a*

### *Teachers of the Faith, Bishops and other Pastors*

Wisdom guided the righteous on straight paths; she showed them the kingdom of God, and gave them knowledge of holy things.

*Wisdom 10.10a*

### *Members of Religious Communities*

Jesus said, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.'

*Matthew 5.3,8*

### *Any Saint*

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. *Philippians 4.8,9*

## *Nunc dimittis*

### *Refrain:*

**All Grant us your light, O Lord,  
that the darkness of our hearts being overcome,  
we may receive the true light,  
even Christ our Saviour.**

