

## ***A Service of Preparation for Holy Communion***

This service of preparation for Holy Communion, based on the Beatitudes and adapted from the 1946 *Book of Common Worship*, provides a way for congregations to prepare for the celebration of the Lord's Supper in keeping with the principles of the Directory for Worship (below, *see especially italicized sentences*). It is especially appropriate for the Season of Lent and other penitential occasions. The section from the Beatitudes (following the sermon) might be excerpted for personal or small group use.

### **W-3.3609 Lord's Supper: Preparing**

*The congregation should prepare themselves to celebrate the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.* (W-2.4006; W-2.4011; W-5.2001) If the Lord's Supper is celebrated less frequently than on each Lord's Day, public notice is to be given at least one week in advance. When the Lord's Supper is celebrated, the Table should be prepared and the elements provided to be placed on the Table before worship begins or during the gathering of the tithes and offerings.

### **W-2.4006 Communion of the Faithful**

Around the Table of the Lord, God's people are in communion with Christ and with all who belong to Christ. Reconciliation with Christ compels reconciliation with one another. All the baptized faithful are to be welcomed to the Table, and none shall be excluded because of race, sex, age, economic status, social class, handicapping condition, difference of culture or language, or any barrier created by human injustice. *Coming to the Lord's Table the faithful are actively to seek reconciliation in every instance of conflict or division between them and their neighbors.* Each time they gather at the Table the believing community (a) are united with the Church in every place, and the whole Church is present; (b) join with all the faithful in heaven and on earth in offering thanksgiving to the triune God; (c) renew the vows taken at Baptism; and they commit themselves afresh to love and serve God, one another, and their neighbors in the world.

### **W-2.4011 Who May Receive**

The invitation to the Lord's Supper is extended to all who have been baptized, remembering that access to the Table is not a right conferred upon the worthy, but a privilege given to the undeserving who come in faith, repentance, and love. *In preparing to receive Christ in this Sacrament, the believer is to confess sin and brokenness, to seek reconciliation with God and neighbor, and to trust in Jesus Christ for cleansing and renewal.* Even one who doubts or whose trust is wavering may come to the Table in order to be assured of God's love and grace in Christ Jesus.

### **W-5.2001 Daily Personal Worship**

Daily personal worship is a discipline for attending to God and accepting God's grace. The daily challenge of discipleship requires the daily nurture of worship. Daily personal worship may occur in a gathered community of faith (W-1.1005; W-1.3012; W-3.4000), in households and families (W-5.7000), or in private. Scripture, prayer, self-offering, and commitments to service are elements of daily personal worship. *Baptism and the Lord's Supper are by their nature communal, but preparing for and remembering these Sacraments are important in daily personal worship.* An aspect of the discipline of daily personal worship is finding the times and places where one can focus on God's presence, hear God's Word, and respond to God's grace in prayer, self-offering, and commitment to service.

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Adapted from the 1946 *Book of Common Worship*

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

With what shall we come before the LORD,  
and bow ourselves before God on high?

Micah 6:6, 8

God has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the LORD require of you?

**To do justice, to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with our God.**

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit.

Psalm 51:17

**A broken and contrite heart God will not despise.**

## **OPENING PRAYER**

Almighty God, Holy One,  
look upon us with your mercy  
and grant us a vision of your glory  
so that, with humble and penitent hearts,  
we may receive the good gifts  
that you are more ready to give  
than we are to receive or even desire;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **CONFESSION**

Let us humbly confess our sin to Almighty God.

**Holy and merciful God,  
we acknowledge and confess before you our sinful nature,  
prone to evil and slow to do good,  
and all our shortcomings and offenses.**

**You alone know how often we have sinned—  
in wandering from your ways,  
in wasting your gifts,  
in forgetting your love.**

**We confess our sins against our brothers and sisters—  
the hardness of our hearts toward those in suffering and need,  
our indifference toward justice and mercy,  
our arrogance and all the evil ways of our selfishness and pride.**

**Have mercy on us, O God,  
according to your loving kindness.**

Psalm 51:1-3, 10-12

**In your tender mercy blot out our transgressions.**

**Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity  
and cleanse us from our sin.**

**Create in us clean hearts, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within us.**

**Do not cast us away from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from us.**

**Restore to us the joy of your salvation  
and uphold us with your Spirit;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

May Almighty God forgive your sins,  
grant you full assurance of pardon,  
strengthen and confirm you in all good works,  
and bring you to everlasting life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**SCRIPTURE**

**SERMON PREPARATORY TO HOLY COMMUNION**

**THE BEATITUDES**

Matthew 5:3-9

Let us examine ourselves  
in the light of the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
as given in the beatitudes.

**Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

*Silence*

Lord Jesus Christ,  
for our sake you became poor  
in order that we might be made rich.  
Increase our desire for the gifts of your Spirit.  
Prevent us from putting our trust in riches  
and deliver us from pride in wealth.  
Grant us grace to use your gifts  
so that we may be rich in good works,  
ready to distribute and eager to share.  
By the abundant riches of your grace,  
bring us to your heavenly kingdom;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.**

*Silence*

Give us, O Lord, sorrow for our sins,  
and for the sins of the whole world,  
that through our sorrow there may be joy  
in the presence of the heavenly host.  
In our suffering, give us the wisdom  
to look to Christ and seek his grace,  
trusting in your tender mercy.  
Give us, O Lord, the Spirit of your Son,  
so that we may weep with those who weep  
and rejoice together in the promise of the gospel;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.**

*Silence*

Teach us, O Lord, not to think of ourselves  
more highly than we ought to think.  
Help us to overcome the impulse  
to put ourselves first at the expense of others.  
Grant that we may never boast of ourselves,  
as though our accomplishments came  
without your aid or the help of others.  
Make us eager to learn to be your servants,  
so that we may do the work of your Son.  
May we delight to do your will  
so that we may find in your service  
perfect freedom and fullness of joy;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.**

*Silence*

Give us, O Lord, a reverence for your truth,  
the desire to think and to speak what is right.  
Grant us an appreciation of beauty  
and all things that show your glory.  
Help us to see in these things—  
beauty, truth, and righteousness—  
the revelation of who you are.  
Awaken in us the desire to see justice  
established for all people.  
Let the day quickly come  
when love will prevail in human life,  
when none enrich themselves at another's expense,  
nor live with indifference to others' needs and rights;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will receive mercy.**

*Silence*

Help us, O Lord,  
to look for the good in others, and not the evil.  
Enable us to understand before we condemn.  
Make us quick to forgive,  
knowing how greatly we stand in need of forgiveness.  
Help us to remember  
that it is often lack of thought  
rather than lack of love  
that leads others to do wrong.  
And make us mindful of the snares  
that entangle our own feet.  
Make us truly worthy to pray:

“Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.”  
And may we receive your mercy;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.**

*Silence*

Most holy God, grant that we may never be satisfied  
with anything less than your holiness and purity.  
Teach us to care for our bodies  
as temples of the Holy Spirit.  
Grant that we may think clean, generous, humble thoughts,  
and harbor none that stain the mind  
or dim our vision of you.  
So cleanse our hearts  
that we may see you face to face;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.**

*Silence*

Keep our hearts, O Lord, always open to you,  
so that we may be constantly renewed by your grace,  
amid all the perils, dangers,  
restlessness, and complexity of our days.  
Give us the peace of those  
whose minds are always fixed on you.  
Help us to live as children of the light.  
Keep us from discord and bitterness  
in our earthly relationships,  
and grant us, we pray, kind and forbearing spirits,  
so that we may be makers of peace;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

#### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Merciful Savior,  
dwell forever in our hearts.  
Inspire us with your purity,  
strengthen us with your might,  
perfect us in your ways,  
guide us in your truth,  
unite us to yourself  
and to your whole church  
by your holy mysteries,  
so that we may overcome evil  
and be wholly devoted to your service  
and conformed to your will,  
all for the sake of your glory.

God of grace,  
you call us to the holy table of the Lord,  
to proclaim his death  
and receive his gift of life.  
Enable us to come with earnest faith  
and kindled devotion.  
Help us to remember Christ's self-offering  
with thanksgiving and praise.  
Open our hearts and minds  
to a vision of his love,  
and pour into our souls  
the fullness of his grace.  
As we offer ourselves to you,  
let us go forth to live and serve  
as those whose lives are not our own  
but belong to you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit  
be all honor and glory,  
now and forever. **Amen.**

#### **BLESSING**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit  
be with you all. **Amen.**