

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2022

Daily Scripture & Prayer Guide

“We saw the star in the east, and we came to worship him.” *cf. Matthew 2:2*

Day 1

Raise us up and draw us to your perfect light. “We observed his star in the East.”
(Matthew 2:2)

Scriptures

2 Timothy 1:7-10.. This grace... has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus.

John 16:7-14... When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.

Meditation

In this fragile and uncertain world, we look for a light, a ray of hope from afar. In the midst of evil, we long for goodness. Our confidence rests in the God we worship. God, in wisdom, enabled us to hope for divine intervention; but we had not anticipated that God’s intervention would be a person, and that the Lord himself would be the light in our midst. This exceeded all our expectations. God’s gift to us is a “spirit of power, and love.”

In the midst of humanity’s darkness, the star from the East shone. The star’s light was not only an illumination at a particular historical moment but it continues to shine and change the face of human history. Despite the vicissitudes of history and the changing of circumstances, the Risen One continues to shine, moving within the flow of history like a beacon guiding all into this perfect light and overcoming the darkness which separates us from one another.

The desire to overcome the darkness that separates us compels us to pray and work for Christian unity.

Prayer

Lord God, illumine our path by the light of Christ who moves us and leads us. Guide us to discover a small manger in our hearts where a great light still sleeps. Creator of light, we thank you for the gift of that unfading Star, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Heal our divisions and draw us

closer to the Light that we may find our unity in him. Amen.

Day 2

Humble leadership breaks down walls and builds up with love. “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?”
(Matthew 2:2)

Scriptures

Philippians 2:5-11. Who... did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited.

Matthew 20:20-28. The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve.

Meditation

Jeremiah denounces the bad leadership of the kings of Israel who divided and scattered the people. In contrast, the Lord promises a shepherd-king who will “execute justice and righteousness in the land” and gather together the members of his flock.

Our world craves good leadership and is constantly seeking someone who will fulfill this desire. Only in Christ have we seen the example of a king or leader after God’s heart. As we are called to follow him, we are also called to emulate his way of servant-kingship in the world and in the Church. In Christ we encounter one who does not tear down and divide but builds up and makes whole for the glory of God’s name. He is one who comes to serve, rather than be served, and his followers are called to do the same.

Today, the Middle East is experiencing the loss of its people to exile as “righteousness and justice” are becoming scarce commodities not only there but throughout the world.

Leaders, both in the world and in the Church, have responsibility to bring together rather than to scatter or divide the people of God. The more faithfully Christians emulate the servant leadership of Christ, the more division in both the world and the Church will be overcome.

“WE SAW THE STAR IN THE EAST, AND
WE CAME TO WORSHIP HIM.”

CF. MATTHEW 2:2

Prayer

God, our only refuge and strength, help us to seek our Lord Jesus Christ not in the palaces of the powerful but in the humble manger and to emulate him in his meekness. Encourage us to empty ourselves as we serve each other in obedience to you.

We pray in the name of Christ who with you and with the Holy Spirit reigns forever in glory. Amen.

Day 3

The presence of Christ, turning the world upside down. "When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him." (*Matthew 2:3*)

Scriptures

2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5. But the Lord is faithful, he will strengthen you.

Matthew 2:1-5... He was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

Meditation

Christ's coming disturbs the ways of the world. In contrast to so many political leaders, the Lord comes in humility denouncing the evil of injustice and oppression that accompanies the ambition for power and status. Jesus' presence creates disturbance precisely because He rocks the boat of those rich and the powerful that work only for their own interests and neglect the common good. But, for those who work for peace and unity, Christ's coming brings the light of hope.

We all need to acknowledge the instances when our ways are not God's ways of justice and peace. When Christians work together for justice and peace our efforts are more powerful. And when Christians work together in this way, the answer to our prayer for Christian unity is made visible such that others recognize in us Christ's presence in the world today. The Good News is that God is faithful, and he is always the one strengthening us and protecting us from harm, and inspiring us to work for the good of others, especially those living in the darkness of suffering, hatred, violence and pain.

Prayer

O Lord, you have illumined the star of hope in our lives. Help us to be united in our commitment to bring about your Reign of love, justice and peace and so to be the light of hope to all those living in the darkness of despair and disillusionment. Shine your light upon us and set our hearts on fire so that your love surrounds us with warmth. Lift us up to you, you who have emptied yourself for our sake, so that our lives may glorify you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Day 4

Though small and suffering, we lack nothing. "And you, Bethlehem... are by no means least" (*Matthew 2:6*)

Scriptures

Micah 5:2-5a, 7-8.. From you shall come forth... one who is to rule Israel.

Luke 12:32-40... Do not be afraid, little flock.

Meditation

From the small and lowly city of Bethlehem, the Lord, the Son of God, made his entrance into the world. From the womb of a humble village girl, he took human flesh, and chose to live his humanity in obscurity and simplicity. Out of the obscurity has come a ruler, the shepherd and guardian of our souls. And though he is our shepherd, he became the Lamb who carried the sins of the world that we might be healed.

Bethlehem, a name that means the "house of bread", can be a metaphor for the Church that brings to the world the bread of life. The Church continues to be a place where the weak, the powerless and the small are welcome because in her each has a place.

In the midst of political turmoil, Christians, like others in the Middle East, suffer persecution and experience a sense of marginalization, living in fear of violence and injustice. In Christ they find a model of humility, and from him they hear a call to overcome divisions and to be united in one flock. Though they are few, in their suffering they follow in the steps of the Lamb who suffered for the world's salvation. Though few, they are sure in hope, lacking nothing.

Prayer

Good Shepherd, the fragmentation of the little flock grieves your Holy Spirit. Forgive our weak efforts and slowness in pursuit of your will. Give us wise shepherds after your own heart who recognize the sin of division, and who will lead the churches with righteousness and holiness, to unity in you. We ask you, Lord, to hear our prayer. Amen.

Day 5

Guided by the One Lord "Ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising." (*Matthew 2:9*)

Scriptures

Revelation 22:5-9... For the Lord God will be their light.

Matthew 2:7-10... Ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising.

Meditation

Again and again the scriptures tell us how the Lord God walks with God's people, protects them, and watches over them day and night. In all our journeying through life, we can be confident that God, who neither "sleeps nor slumbers", protects us lest our feet slip and we fall.

Even in the greatest darkness, Christ is the guiding light for all nations, the glory of God in the world, the source of divine life, sealing a new covenant in his blood.

The way ahead into unity with one another, and so into closer union with Christ, is not always clear. In our earnest attempts to build unity ourselves, it is all too easy to lose sight of this fundamental message of the scriptures: God does not abandon God's people even in their failures and divisiveness. As the story of the Magi reminds us, God guides people of all kinds, with the light of the star, to where Christ, the light of the world, is to be found.

God sends the Holy Spirit whose light enables us to see with the eyes of faith the truth of the divine Child, and the call to unity and reconciliation of all things in him. It is this Spirit that leads us from darkness and tragedy into Christ's light and life.

Prayer

O Lord God our Father, increase our hope in you and let us know at all times that you are walking with us, watching over your people. Open our eyes to your Spirit, and encourage us in our faith, so that we may confess that Jesus is Lord, and worship and rejoice in him as the Magi did in Bethlehem. We ask you these blessings in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

Day 6

Gathered in worship around the One Lord "They saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage." (*Matthew 2:11*)

Scriptures

Exodus 3:1-6... Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Matthew 28:16-20... When they saw him, they worshipped him.

Meditation

When the Magi arrived at Bethlehem and saw the child with his mother, they worshipped him. Similarly at the sight of the burning bush, Moses hid his face, afraid to look at God. When the disciples saw the risen Christ on the mountain in Galilee, they worshipped him. In the heavenly liturgy, the twenty-four elders fall before him who sits on the throne. Encountering God's presence, we respond thus: gazing, followed by amazement, leading to worship.

Do we see? Are we amazed? Are we truly worshipping? In our narrow vision, too often we see only our tangled disagreements, forgetting that the one Lord has given his saving grace to us all, and that we share in the one Spirit who draws us into unity.

As communities enlivened by the Holy Spirit, our churches call us to walk together towards the Christ Child to offer him homage as one people. The Spirit of compassion guides us to each other, and together guides us to our one Lord.

Prayer

Compassionate God, you gave the blind the insight to recognize you as their Savior, enable us to repent. In your mercy, remove the scales from our eyes and lead us to

worship you as our God and Redeemer. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be upon us, so that together we glorify you in the Spirit's fellowship, and witness to all those around us. Amen.

Day 7

The gifts of communion. "Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh." (Matthew 2:11)

Scriptures

Hosea 6:1-6... For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice.

Matthew 6:19-21... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Meditation

In our journey to Bethlehem, the city of bread, we contemplate the wise men who came to pay homage to the Christ Child. They opened their treasures, and offered the new-born king their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

What gifts have we prepared to offer the king who comes to illuminate our lives and lead us to the grace of unity? We know that God does not want our riches and burnt offerings, but rather that his power works through our poverty. Let us then prepare for him the gift of a heart full of love. Kneeling in worship requires hearts that are contrite for the sin that divides us and obedient to the One we serve. This obedience revives, heals and reconciles everything that is broken or wounded in us, around us, and among us as Christians.

Prayer

Lord God, you have revealed yourself in the epiphany of your Son both to those who have long awaited for your coming, and to those who were not expecting you. You know the suffering that surrounds us, the pain caused by our divisions. We ask you to enable our hearts and our minds to know you. As we join the wise men coming from afar, we pray that you open our hearts to your love and to the love of our brothers and sisters around us. Receive our

prayer in the name of your Son Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Day 8

Beyond the familiar routes of separation to God's new paths. "They left for their own country by another road." (Matthew 2:12)

Scriptures

Jeremiah 31:31-34... I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel.

Matthew 11:25-30... Because you have hidden these things...

Meditation

We do not know what the wise men thought – they who were experts in astronomy and navigation – when they were warned to return by another road. They may well have been very confused, but the same light that illumined their journey showed them that there was another road, another possibility. They were called to change direction.

God's divine providence is always there to show us that there is another way prepared for us. God is there to renew his covenant and lift us up from the frustration we experience when we meet an obstacle. A fresh start is always possible when we are willing and open to the work of the Spirit.

On the old familiar roads, Christian communities have walked apart from one another. On the new roads to which God calls us, Christians walk together and become pilgrim companions.

Prayer

Gracious God, when we think that all roads are blocked, and we fall into despair, we always find you there. We find you creating a new path before us, one that we did not expect. We thank you because your creative paths open up unforeseen possibilities. Help us to always find you, who lead us yet by a more excellent way. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, that you will always lead us back to you. Amen.

God of every nation, the Lord Jesus Christ has been made manifest by becoming one of us and one with us. Born in homelessness, he is our King and Lord. The Magi bore witness to the Light of hope coming into the world as they faithfully followed the star.

The communion of God with created humanity in Epiphany calls us to a life of solidarity with the homeless, the refugee, the weakest and the rejected. Help us, O gracious Lord, to do this in unity and peace.

As we who bear the name of Christian hold a special place in our hearts for the ancient Christian communities in the land we call holy, remind us of our baptismal commitment to love.

Help your Church, merciful One, to be a light for unity within itself and a beacon of hope for all humanity. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit reign as One God for ever and ever. Amen.

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