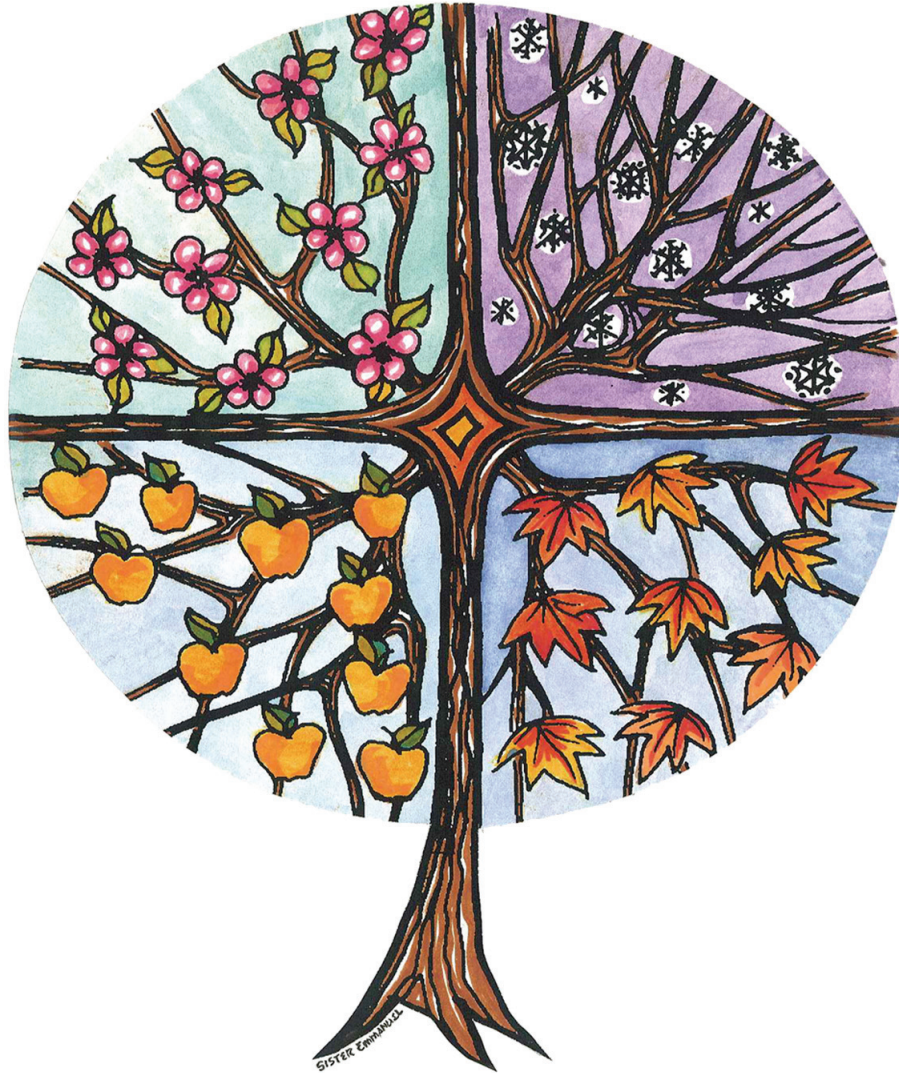


VIGIL



At the Time of an Execution

Adapted from Diocese of Covington Office of Justice and Peace

Notes on Using the Prayer Service

The services in this collection were designed for a variety of settings, and we encourage you to adapt them to your particular needs. The role of the leader can be shared by one or more persons. Some advance preparation such as handouts or candles may be required. Suggested hymns are widely available.

GATHERING HYMN *Be Not Afraid* (Bob Dufford, SJ)

GATHERING PRAYER

Leader: Welcome in the name of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Response: Amen.

Leader: We have gathered here in prayerful response to the many acts of violence in our society. We offer our prayers in remembrance of (victim/s), in compassion for (his, her, their) family, and on behalf of all those who are victims of violence. We pray for (condemned) and for (his, her) executioners. Holy Spirit of God our Creator, inspire us. May our presence here be a living sign of God's justice, compassion, and mercy. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

Response: Amen.

SCRIPTURE

First Reading: (*Gen 4:8–16*) A reading from the book of Genesis.

Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out in the field." When they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the LORD asked Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He answered, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" The LORD then said: "What have you done! Listen: Your brother's blood cries out to me from the soil! Therefore you shall be banned from the soil that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. If you till the soil, it shall no longer give you its produce. You shall become a restless wanderer on the earth." Cain said to the LORD: "My punishment is too great to bear. Since you have now banished me from the soil, and I must avoid your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, anyone may kill me at sight." Not so!" the LORD said to him. "If anyone kills Cain, Cain shall be avenged sevenfold." So the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest anyone should kill him at sight. Cain then left the LORD's presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

The word of the Lord.

Response: Thanks be to God.

Pause for silent reflection.

Second Reading: (*Matt 5:38–48*) A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on [your] right cheek, turn the other one to him as well. If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles. Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Response: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Pause for silent reflection.

Third Reading: (*Matt 6:14–15*) A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Response: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Pause for silent reflection.

INTERCESSIONS

Leader: In faith and hope, let us place our petitions before the Lord.

Please respond: *Our Creator is kind and merciful.*

Response: Our Creator is kind and merciful.

Leader:

That all victims of crime and hatred may know your healing power and be transformed by it, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

That all whose lives are taken by the state, especially (condemned), may trust in your promise of salvation, we pray. (*Response*)

That Governor (name) and (condemned)'s executioners may be comforted by you, who are Mercy and Justice, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

That we may have the courage and prudence to speak and act without violence, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

That our society may be transformed by people of peace, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

That our hearts may be open to your gifts of reconciliation and unconditional love, we pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

Holy God, Creator of all that is, seen and unseen, hear the intentions that are in our hearts. (*Invite participants to share their petitions.*) We pray to the Lord. (*Response*)

ACT OF OFFERING

Leader: Now let us offer one another a sign of peace.

(*A Prayer to Abolish the Death Penalty* by Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ; used with permission)

Leader:

God of Compassion, let your rain fall on the just and the unjust. Expand and deepen our hearts so that we may love as you love, even those among us who have caused the greatest pain by taking life. For there is in our land a great cry for vengeance as we fill up death rows and kill the killers in the name of justice, in the name of peace.

Jesus, our brother, you suffered execution at the hands of the state but you did not let hatred overcome you. Help us to reach out to victims of violence so that our enduring love may help them heal.

Holy Spirit of God, you strengthen us in the struggle for justice. Help us to work tirelessly for the abolition of state sanctioned death and to renew our society in its very heart so that violence will be no more.

Response: Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: Each of us needs the Lord's guidance and mercy. We humbly place before him all that is in our hearts, and we ask his blessing now and always, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Response: Amen.

Leader: Let us go in peace.

Response: Amen.

CLOSING HYMN *Amazing Grace* (John Newton)

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.
'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!
The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.
Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun.

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