

The Hours of Christmas Day

Praying the Hours is an ancient tradition and spiritual practice offered to hallow each day. Keeping the Hours began as prayers of the people. The ordinary workday was interspersed with times of prayer. Today it is mostly monks who follow fixed-hour prayers. We reclaim this practice in these Hours of Christmas Day. As you pray, know you are together in Spirit with others who join you in praying these Hours of Christmas Day.

You may choose to read these during three pauses in the day (upon waking, during a meal, and end of day), or all at once.

AWAKENING

Read: John 1:1-5

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” v.1

We wake today to a Divine Love present from the beginning. It is Love present in the Great Radiance of the universe. It is Love always expanding. It is Love born in human shape in the Little One of Bethlehem. It is Love born again. It is Love born today. Each day. Love poured down, Love surrounding, Love among us, Love within is. It is gift. So take a breath. Look East. As the sun rises on this day, pray softly: Awake, my soul, I will awake and praise the Gift given this day.

Act of Thanks: With the eyes of your heart open, watch for gifts that come into your day unwrapped.

FEASTING

Read: Luke 2:1-14

“And this shall be a sign to you; You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” v.12

Lying in a manger! I like to imagine the graciousness of the cow that shared her feed trough to cradle the baby! This is a day for festival and feasting. At the breakfast or dinner table as you gather with family or friends, or on your own, let's make a sign of gratitude. You might want to light a candle and sing a verse of “Joy to the World”, or “Away in a Manger.” We bless our food and give thanks for the joy of this day.

Sign of Thanks: The child lying in a manger was a sign to the shepherds. We learn sign language to say, “Bless this food.” You might want to learn this sign to use at your feast. There are three parts to “Bless this food.”

- With one hand, make the sign of the cross like you are blessing people;
- Bring your hands together then move them from meeting together to apart with open palms and fingers pointed downward at the food before you;
- With your right hand open, bring index and thumb together (which is the letter "F" for food) and scoop up toward mouth over centered flat left palm up.¹

Or you can simply say “thank you” by moving your hand from your mouth forward to display a flat palm.

TREASURING

Read: Luke 2:15-20

“But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” v.19

Many of you labour today to make a happy Christmas for your family, and for your self. It is a day rich in challenging dynamics, and hopefully, touched with moments to savour. When you come to the end of the day, it is good to take a centering breath and gently hold the day like brave and gentle Mary, in a time of reflection and letting go. You might want to light a candle or enjoy the glow of Christmas lights.

Act of Thanks: Here are some questions for pondering in your heart. What are the blessings I treasure this day? What are the feelings I acknowledge and let go of? Take your time. Now offer your pondering in the name of Love.

With children, everyone can offer a highlight and a lowlight of the day. Highlights are something you are grateful for, and a lowlight is something you are not so grateful for. Listen to one another without comment. When everyone shares, say Amen.