

Illinois March for Life

Thank you for joining millions of others across our country in lifting up our voices on behalf of those who are weakest among us. As we prepare to receive in the strength of God's Word to speak truth to those who hold authority in God's Left Hand Kingdom, encouraging them to righteous action and the protection of all those to whom God has given the gift of life, we take a moment to meditate upon this gift and the many ways our Lord reveals its value to us.

The following readings and prayers are merely suggestions to help guide your meditation and prayer prior to the start of Matins. Feel free to select from among the topics at your discretion.

It is highly recommended regardless of the topics you choose to cover that you begin and end your time of prayer with the Litany. Thank you for committing a portion of your day to meditate on the gift of life that God has given and praying that He would turn hearts and minds, that all would receive it with thanksgiving, even when it seems difficult or inconvenient.

I. Pray the Litany.

The Litany (LSB p. 288) has, for centuries, been a basic form of general prayer for the Church. Start your time of prayer with this traditional prayer for all people everywhere.

II. Meditate on the gift of Creation.

Read Genesis 1:1-2:25

Read/sing the Song of the Three Young Men (LSB #931)

Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for God's gift of creation and our right use of it, such as the following from the Easter Vigil.

Almighty God, through Your Word and Spirit You most wonderfully created all things, and through the Word made flesh You brought new life to fallen humanity. Grant that in Your mercy we may be conformed to the image of Him who shares fully in our humanity, even Jesus Christ, our Lord. (454)

III. Meditate of the miracle of life in the womb.

Read or chant Psalm 139

Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for God's gift of life in the womb.

Heavenly Father, before we were formed in the womb, You knew us. While we were still yet in the womb, You knit us together, fearfully and wonderfully forming us. Thank You for continuing Your miracle of creation through the life You grant in the womb. Open the eyes of all that we may see, that we may know, that we may understand the miracle You are working in the wombs of expectant mothers. Strengthen us by Your Holy Spirit to love and cherish every one of these lives, even as You love and cherish us through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (MM)

IV. Meditate on the Incarnation of Christ.

Read Luke 1:26-38

Read/sing Of the Father's Love Begotten (LSB #384)

Pray a prayer thanking God for sending Jesus as a baby in the womb, such as the following from the First Sunday after Christmas.

O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (L09)

V. Pray for mothers carrying children in their wombs.

Think of those mothers you may know who are carrying children in their wombs. Pray for these women by name, and for all women who are pregnant. If you wish, use this adaptation of the Collect for Before Childbirth from the LSB Pastoral Care Companion.

Heavenly Father, look favorably upon all mothers and the children they carry in the womb, and grant that throughout this time of pregnancy these expectant parents may be drawn nearer to You and to each other in the certainty of Your love; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (729 – alt.)

VI. Pray for mothers who have had children die in the womb.

A significant number of mothers have had a child die while still in the womb. Many do not share that they bear this great burden of grief. Perhaps you and your family have been effected by this. Pray for these mothers, as well as the fathers, siblings, and extended families. You may desire to use this Collect for the Parents of a Stillborn Child from the LSB Altar Book.

Heavenly Father, Your Son bore all our griefs and carried all our sorrows. Strengthen the faith of parents of children who were miscarried or stillborn and all who bear this heavy burden of sorrow and loss. Help them to rely on Your boundless mercy and to trust that their child, who has been gathered into Your loving arms, remains in Your abiding care; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. (273 – alt.)

VII. Pray for mothers who are contemplating abortion.

Many women feel pressured to contemplate abortion – from stresses at work, with the child's father, or other financial strains. Perhaps you know of someone who has contemplated abortion. Pray for these mothers and those who surround them that we may be of help and service to them. Pray this collect for When a Mother is Considering an Abortion from the LSB Pastoral Care Companion, or pray a similar prayer.

God of all grace, out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy You have given us life and commanded us not to hurt or harm our neighbor in his body. Teach us to care for unborn children whom You have created in Your image. Grant Your grace to those contemplating abortion that, by Word and Spirit, they may live according to Your will and have the courage to nurture and cherish their children. Surround them with those who will rejoice in these children, and provide for their needs of body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (747 – alt.)

VIII. Pray for those who counsel pregnant women.

Many dedicated volunteers spend countless hours speaking with women who experience crisis or anxiety during their pregnancy. Pray that the Lord would give these volunteers wisdom and discernment to recognize the great gift of life that God has granted.

Gracious Father, even in the midst of a culture of death under the orders of Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus, You gave faithful midwives to assist in preserving the lives of Your people. Continue to grant faithful counselors even in our day to those who are pregnant, that all may value the gift of life You have given. Give to these counselors wisdom to speak the truth of Your creation and strength to abide in this truth even when it is unpopular; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (MM)

IX. Pray for medical personnel who care for pregnant women.

In our modern times, we mask the grave physical dangers in the midst of well-practiced medical arts. But these dangers still exist. Pray for those who practice the healing arts in caring for pregnant women and their children, that they would be strengthened in their vocation of healing.

Lord God, be with the doctors and nurses and all others who will be ministering to the bodily needs of pregnant mothers and the children in their wombs that, blessed by You, their tender care may serve to the preservation of life and the strengthening of health in mother and child; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (MM – based on LSB collect 760)

X. Meditate on the consequences of sin in the world.

Read Romans 5:12-14.

Read/sing Lord, to You I Make Confession (LSB #608)

Pray a prayer recognizing the consequences of sin in your own life and in the lives of others, such as this collect from the LSB Altar Book.

Look mercifully, O Lord, we implore You, on the affliction of Your people. Let not our sin destroy us, nor hopelessness overwhelm us, but let Your boundless mercy save us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. (293)

XI. Meditate on the temptations to sin.

Read James 1:14-15

Read/sing Rise My Soul to Watch and Pray (LSB #663)

Pray for God's assistance and strength when you and others face temptation to sin, such as this Collect in Time of Temptation from p. 312 in the Lutheran Service Book.

Almighty and everlasting God, through Your Son You have promised us forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. Govern our hearts by Your Holy Spirit that in our daily need, and especially in all time of temptation, we may seek Your help and, by a true and lively faith in Your Word, obtain all that You have promised; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. (209)

XII. Meditate on the Temptation of our Lord.

Read Luke 4:1-13.

Read/Sing O Christ, You Walked the Road (LSB #424)

Pray, thanking God for Christ enduring all temptation in our place and asking Him to grant us the strength to withstand our own temptations, such as we do in the Collect of the Day for Proper 17 C.

O Lord of grace and mercy, teach us by Your Holy Spirit to follow the example of Your Son in true humility, that we may withstand the temptations of the devil and with pure hearts and minds avoid ungodly pride; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (C75)

XIII. Meditate on the Passion of our Lord.

Read Philippians 2:5-8

Read/sing Jesus, I Will Ponder Now (LSB #440)

Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, such as this Collect of Thanksgiving for Our Lord's Passion.

Almighty and everlasting God, You willed that Your Son should bear for us the pains of the cross and so remove from us the power of the adversary. Help us so to remember and give thanks for our Lord's passion that we may receive forgiveness of sin and redemption from everlasting death; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. (450)

XIV. Pray for those who face temptations.

Temptation comes upon us all. No one is immune. Pray for all who face temptation, that our Lord would grant strength to endure and faith to persevere. This Collect for Those who are Separated from the Church from the LSB Altar Book provides an example of this type of prayer.

O God, protect the tempted, the distressed, and the erring, and gently guide them. By Your great goodness bring them into the way of peace and truth. Graciously regard all who are in trouble, danger, temptation, or bondage to sin, and those to whom death draws near. In Your mercy draw them to Yourself; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. (113)

XV. Pray for those weighed down by sin and its consequences – those who mourn, the sick, the depressed, the distraught, those contemplating suicide.

For many, the struggle with temptations or the consequences of sin runs very deep. Pray for those who face these imperfections of this fallen world. There are many collects on pp. 316-7 of the Lutheran Service Book that can serve as a model for prayer in these situations, including this Collect in Times of Affliction and Distress.

Almighty and most merciful God, in this earthly life we endure sufferings and death before we enter into eternal glory. Grant us grace at all times to subject ourselves to Your holy will and to continue steadfast in the true faith to the end of our lives that we may know the peace and joy of the blessed hope of the resurrection of the dead and of the glory of the world to come; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. (279)

XVI. Meditate on the healing given by our Lord.

Read Matthew 8:1-17

Read/sing Jesus, Grant That Balm and Healing (LSB #421)

Pray for the healing of God to come upon those who are in need, perhaps using these words of the Collect for Times of Disaster found on p. 317 of Lutheran Service Book.

Almighty God, merciful Father, Your thoughts are not our thoughts, Your ways are not our ways. In Your wisdom You have permitted disasters to befall us. We implore You, let not the hearts of Your people despair nor our faith fail us, but sustain and comfort us. Direct all efforts to attend the injured, console the bereaved, and protect the helpless. Bring hope and healing that we may find relief and restoration; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. (292 – alt.)

XVII. Meditate on the strength given by our Lord.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Read/sing the first stanza of If Thou But Trust in God to Guide Thee (LSB #750)

Pray that the strength of God would come upon those who feel weak and tossed about by the storms of life, such as is found in the Collect for Peace and Strength in Trouble.

O Lord, our saving light and our shelter in the day of trouble, turn us not away in anger because of our sins. Calm our hearts, strengthen our faith, and lead us in Your straight paths until we see Your surpassing goodness in heaven with all those who live in Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (540)

XVIII. Pray for those who have chosen in the past to abort their children.

Some among us have chosen to abort children, and now suffer great pangs of conscience over that decision. Our Lord has covered all sin with the blood of His Sacrifice, there is no sin too great for Him to forgive. Pray that these hurting sisters in our midst would know the joy of our Lord's forgiveness and find comfort in the resurrection, using this collect from the LSB Pastoral Care Companion or a similar prayer of your own under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Gracious Father in heaven, look with mercy on Your daughters, who suffer the shame of abortion. For the sake of Christ Jesus, our Savior, forgive them all their sins, and remove all feelings of guilt and despair. Protect them from the accusing voices of others and the accusations from within. By Your Spirit increase their faith that they may entrust themselves and their children into Your fatherly hands; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (748 – alt.)

XIX. Pray for those who have desired the gift of children or grandchildren but are effected by barrenness.

Many in our midst desire the gift of children, but for one reason or another are barren. This barrenness effects not only husbands and wives who seek to be fathers and mothers, but extended families whose hopes and dreams of being grandparents or aunts/uncles/cousins are displaced. Give thanks for the high regard that is given to the vocation of parent even by those to whom it has not been given, and pray for God's peace to be upon those effected by barrenness, as we see modeled in this collect from the LSB Pastoral Care Companion.

Heavenly Father, You never forsake those who call on You. Hear the prayers of those who are unable to have children. Grant them grace to accept Your holy will, and bestow on them an increase of faith to cast this and every care on You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (744 – alt.)

XX. Meditate on our Lord's victory over death.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-57

Read/sing Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won (LSB #490)

Give thanks to God for the victory that is ours over death because of Christ's redeeming work, perhaps by using this Collect for Easter Wednesday or some similar prayer.

Almighty God, by the glorious resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ, You destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light. Grant that we who have been raised with Him may abide in His presence and rejoice in the hope of eternal glory; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (L40)

XXI. Pray for those nearing the end of life in this world.

With the exception of that generation that will still be alive at our Lord's return, we will all face death. Pray for those who are near to death, as we do in this Collect for One Near Death found on p. 316 of Lutheran Service Book.

Eternal Father, You alone make the decisions concerning life and death. We ask You to show mercy to Your servants whose deaths seem imminent. If it be Your gracious will, restore them and lengthen their earthly lives; but if not, keep them in their baptismal grace and in Your abiding care. Give them repentant hearts, firm faith, and a lively hope. Let not the fear of death cause them to waver in confidence and trust. At Your chosen time, grant them a peaceful departure and a joyous entrance into everlasting life with the glorious company of all Your saints; through Jesus Christ, our Savior. (262 – alt.)

XXII. Pray for those who take care of those nearing death.

Even as we could not take care of ourselves when we entered this world, so for most of us will we need to depend on the care of others as we prepare to leave this world. Pray for those whose tender love and mercy guides them to comfort and care for those who are dying, as we do in these collects from the LSB Pastoral Care Companion for non-related care givers and those caregivers who are taking care of family members.

Most merciful God, give to those who care for the dying a special measure of compassion and patience as they care for their patients. Comfort them in times of distress and anxiety, and give them understanding hearts as they extend their hands in acts of mercy to those who can no longer care adequately for themselves. Enable these caregivers to find time to care for themselves so that they may continue to serve with a joyful heart. (772 – alt.)

God of all compassion, give to Your servants a special measure of compassion and patience as they care for relatives who are nearing death. Comfort them in times of frustration and distress and give them understanding hearts as they extend their hands in acts of mercy. Enable them to rejoice in the opportunity You have given them to serve their loved ones in this way. Cause them to find time to care for themselves so that they may continue to serve with a joyful heart; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. (770 – alt.)

XXIII. Pray for those who counsel those making end of life decisions.

Many decisions must be made as our loved ones near death. Pray for those who are currently facing those decisions, that our Lord would guide them in all wisdom, and pray for those who counsel those making end of life decisions, that in all things, the gift of life which God gives would be honored and respected in a godly way.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the truth of Your Word that nothing in death or life will separate us from Your love in Christ Jesus and that whether we live or die we belong to You. By Your gracious Spirit strengthen the families of those nearing death in this confidence, and guide them as they face difficult decisions concerning their loved one's medical care so that their actions may be in agreement with Your holy will. Do not forsake them, but uphold and keep them in Your love and peace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (769 – alt.)

XXIV. Pray the Litany again.

LSB p. 288

Acknowledgements

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Collects whose numbers are followed by “- alt” have been altered from the exact wording of the collect in the companion resources of *Lutheran Service Book* by substituting a general term (e.g. “all mothers”) where the collect provides for a more specific term (e.g. the insertion of a name).

Collects designated (MM) were written by Rev. Michael Mohr specifically for this resource.