The Tradition of Choral Evensong

Welcome to Washington National Cathedral. It is an ancient tradition for the people of God to offer praise and prayer as the day draws to a close. Choral Evensong is a service of sung evening prayer. The text of the service is drawn almost entirely from the Bible. The main purpose is to proclaim the wonderful works of God in human history, and in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Sung psalms and canticles are interwoven with readings from the Old and New Testaments and the recitation of the Apostles’ Creed and Lord’s Prayer. Other prayers and hymns are drawn from the many centuries of the Christian Church. The congregation is invited to listen reflectively and prayerfully as the choir offers prayer and praise on their behalf. Many find this frees them to offer to God their own thoughts and prayers.

The people’s responses are in bold.

Organ Voluntary

Psalm-Prelude Set 2, No. 2

Herbert Howells (1892–1983)

The people stand as able as the procession enters.
HYMN • 133

O Light of Light, Love Given Birth

Sung by all.

Elmhurst

1 O Light of Light, Love given birth; Jesus, Redeemer of the earth: more bright than day your face did gleam; found company; the heavens above your glory lives show forth your light. To you, the King of glory,

2 Two prophets, who had faith to see, with your earth; more bright than day your face did gleam; found company; the heavens above your glory

3 May all who seek to praise a-right through pur-er

Officiant O Lord, open thou our lips;
Choir And our mouth shall show forth thy praise.
Officiant O God, make speed to save us;
Choir O Lord, make haste to help us.
Officiant Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
Choir As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.
Officiant Praise ye the Lord.
Choir The Lord’s Name be praised.

The candles are lighted as the choir sings.

THE OPENING SENTENCES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE

PRECES

Richard Shephard (1949–2021)
The Phos hilaron is an ancient lamp-lighting hymn. Meaning “gladdening light” in Greek, it is among the earliest-known hymn texts recorded outside of the Bible that is still in use today.

O Gladsome light, O grace
Of our Creator’s face,
The eternal splendor wearing;
Celestial, holy, blest,
Our Savior, Jesus Christ,
Joyful in your appearing.

As fades the day’s last light,
We see the lamps of night,
Our common hymn outpouring;
O God of might unknown,
You, the incarnate Son,
And Spirit, blest adoring.

To you of right belongs
All praise of holy songs,
O Son of God, life-giver;
You, therefore, O Most High,
The world does glorify
And shall exalt forever.

(3rd cent. Greek; paraphrase Robert S. Bridges, 1844–1930)

The people are seated.

PSALM • 114

Hallelujah!
When Israel came out of Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of strange speech,
Judah became God’s sanctuary
and Israel his dominion.
The sea beheld it and fled;
Jordan turned and went back.
The mountains skipped like rams,
and the little hills like young sheep.
What ailed you, O sea, that you fled?
O Jordan, that you turned back?
You mountains, that you skipped like rams?
you little hills like young sheep?
Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,
Who turned the hard rock into a pool of water
and flint-stone into a flowing spring.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
Not to us, O Lord, not to us,
but to your Name give glory;
because of your love and because of your faithfulness.
Why should the heathen say,
“Where then is their God?”
Our God is in heaven;
whatever he wills to do he does.
Their idols are silver and gold,
the work of human hands.
They have mouths, but they cannot speak;
eyes have they, but they cannot see;
They have ears but they cannot hear;
noses, but they cannot smell;
They have hands, but they cannot feel;
feet, but they cannot walk;
they make no sound with their throat.
Those who make them are like them,
and so are all who put their trust in them.
O Israel, trust in the Lord;
he is their help and their shield.
O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord;
he is their help and their shield.
You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord;
he is their help and their shield.
The Lord has been mindful of us, and he will bless us;
he will bless the house of Israel;
he will bless the house of Aaron;
He will bless those who fear the Lord,
both small and great together.
May the Lord increase you more and more,
you and your children after you.
May you be blessed by the Lord,
the maker of heaven and earth.
The heaven of heavens is the Lord’s,
but he entrusted the earth to its peoples.
The dead do not praise the Lord,
nor all those who go down into silence;
But we will bless the Lord,
from this time forth for evermore.
Hallelujah!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
Elijah arose, a prophet like fire, and his word burned like a torch. He brought a famine upon them, and by his zeal he made them few in number. By the word of the Lord he shut up the heavens, and also three times brought down fire. How glorious you were, Elijah, in your wondrous deeds! Whose glory is equal to yours? You raised a corpse from death and from Hades, by the word of the Most High. You sent kings down to destruction, and famous men, from their sickbeds. You heard rebuke at Sinai and judgments of vengeance at Horeb. You anointed kings to inflict retribution, and prophets to succeed you. You were taken up by a whirlwind of fire, in a chariot with horses of fire. At the appointed time, it is written, you are destined to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and to restore the tribes of Jacob. Happy are those who saw you and were adorned with your love! For we also shall surely live.

Reader  The Word of the Lord.
People   Thanks be to God.

The people remain seated as the choir sings.

MAGNIFICAT

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
    and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
For he hath regarded
    the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold from henceforth
    all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath magnified me,
    and holy is his Name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him
    throughout all generations.
He hath showed strength with his arm;
    he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat,
    and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things,
    and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel,
    as he promised to our forefathers,
        Abraham and his seed for ever.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
    as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

(Luke 1:46-55)
Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” They answered, “John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “The Messiah of God.” He sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone, saying, “The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” Then he said to them all, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”

Reader
The Word of the Lord.
People
Thanks be to God.

The people remain seated as the choir sings.

NUNC DIMITTIS
St. Paul’s Service; H. Howells

The Nunc dimittis is the song of the aged Simeon, who had been promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. Upon taking the infant Jesus into his arms, Simeon utters these words of thanksgiving.

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,
according to thy word,
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
which thou hast prepared before the face of all people,
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles,
and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

(Luke 2:29-32)

The people stand as able.

THE APOSTLES’ CREED
Said by all, facing the high altar.

The Apostles’ Creed grew from statements of belief made by early Christians at their baptism. The Church continues to confess this same faith in the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
   He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
   He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
   He descended to the dead.
   On the third day he rose again.
   He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
   He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
   the holy catholic Church,
   the communion of saints,
   the forgiveness of sins,
   the resurrection of the body,
   and the life everlasting. Amen.
THE LESSER LITANY

Officiant  The Lord be with you.
Choir    And with thy spirit.
Officiant  Let us pray.
Choir    Lord, have mercy upon us.
         Christ, have mercy upon us.
         Lord, have mercy upon us.

THE LORD’S PRAYER  Said by all.

Our Father, who art in heaven,
    hallowed be thy Name,
    thy kingdom come,
    thy will be done,
    on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
    as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
    but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
    and the power, and the glory,
    for ever and ever. Amen.

THE SUFFRAGES

Officiant  O Lord, show thy mercy upon us;
Choir    And grant us thy salvation.
Officiant  O Lord, save the State;
Choir    And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.
Officiant  Endue thy ministers with righteousness;
Choir    And make thy chosen people joyful.
Officiant  O Lord, save thy people;
Choir    And bless thine inheritance.
Officiant  Give peace in our time, O Lord;
Choir    Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God.
Officiant  O God, make clean our hearts within us;
Choir    And take not thy Holy Spirit from us.

THE COLLECTS

The officiant sings a series of prayers, appointed for the day, each followed by a choral Amen.

O God, who before the passion of thy only-begotten Son didst reveal his glory upon the holy mount: Grant unto us that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Lord God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ triumphed over the powers of death and prepared for us our place in the new Jerusalem: Grant that we, who have this day given thanks for his resurrection, may praise thee in that City of which he is the light; and where he liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.
O God and Father of all, whom the whole heavens adore: Let the whole earth also worship thee, all nations obey thee, all tongues confess and bless thee, and men and women everywhere love thee and serve thee in peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The collects conclude with:

Officiant Let us bless the Lord.

Choir Thanks be to God.

The people are seated.

OFFERING

For the safety of our worshippers and staff, we will not pass the traditional plate during today's service. Instead, all are invited to make a gift to support the Cathedral’s ministry of sharing God’s love with the world by texting the dollar amount you wish to give to (202) 856-9005 or visiting cathedral.org/support. These contact-free alternatives are highly encouraged to make giving as simple and safe as possible.

ANTHEM

Christ upon the Mountain Peak Sung by the choir. Frank W. Boles (b. 1955)

Christ upon the mountain peak
Stands alone in glory blazing;
Let us, if we dare to speak,
With the saints and angels praise him.

Alleluia!

Trembling at his feet we saw
Moses and Elijah speaking.
All the prophets and the Law
Shout through them their joyful greeting.

Alleluia!

Swift the cloud of glory came.
God proclaiming in its thunder
Jesus as his Son by name!
Nations cry aloud in wonder!

Alleluia!

This is God’s beloved Son!
Law and prophets fade before him;
First and last and only One,
Let creation now adore him!

Alleluia!

(Brian A. Wren, b. 1936)

The people stand as able. Additional prayers and petitions may be said at this point, concluding with The General Thanksgiving.

THE GENERAL THANKSGIVING Said by all.

Almighty God, Father of all mercies,
we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks
for all your goodness and loving-kindness
to us and to all whom you have made.
We bless you for our creation, preservation,
and all the blessings of this life;
but above all for your immeasurable love
in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ;
for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.
And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies,
that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise,
not only with our lips, but in our lives,
by giving up our selves to your service,
and by walking before you
in holiness and righteousness all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.
THE BLESSING

The officiant blesses the people and the people respond, Amen.

HYMN  •  123

Alleluia, Song of Gladness

Sung by all.

Tibi Christe, splendor Patris

ORGAN VOLUNTARY

“Finale” from Symphony No. 3, Op. 28

Louis Vierne (1870-1937)
participants  Officiant: The Reverend Patrick L. Keyser, Priest Associate; Musicians: The Girls Cathedral Choir, Canon Michael McCarthy, Canon for Music and Director of Institutional Planning, George H. Fergus, Associate Director of Music and Chorister Program Director.

flowers  The flowers throughout the Cathedral are given to the glory of God; in loving memory of Grace Gibson, National Cathedral School class of 1918, in memory of Elizabeth Arcier, and on the anniversary of the death of Abigail Norman Prince.


All Cathedral worship services are livestreamed via video for our online congregation. By participating in this service you acknowledge that you may be visible on live broadcast or archived video. If you are uncomfortable about the possibility of appearing on video, please see an usher to be reseated in a more private area.
ASH WEDNESDAY AT
WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

MARCH 2

Holy Eucharist with Imposition of Ashes
  • Noon (in-person & online)
  • 7:00 PM (in-person & online)

Rite of Reconciliation
  In-person
  1:15–2:15 PM & 5:30–6:30 PM

  Via Zoom
  10:15–11:45 AM & 1:15–2:15 PM

Register at cathedral.org/lent for Zoom; registration not required for in-person reconciliation.

For more details, visit: www.cathedral.org/lent
Thank you for worshiping with Washington National Cathedral, your National Cathedral.

The work of the Cathedral in service to the city, the nation, and the world is made possible entirely through private support. The gifts of people from across the country and the world are behind every worship service, concert, public program, and the daily work of maintaining this historic landmark. It is only through your generosity that the Cathedral can fully live into its priorities of welcoming, deepening, convening, and serving.

We invite you to support the mission and ministry of the Cathedral. You may text the dollar amount you wish to give to (202) 856-9005 or visit cathedral.org/support to donate. You may also mail a check to Washington National Cathedral, P.O. Box 98283, Washington, DC. 20090-8283. Thank you in advance for your generosity. Please know that your participation with us today has been a blessing.