

# CELTIC



## EVENING PRAYER



## OPENING PRAYER

God of the Autumn,  
help us to live with the grace of the falling leaves,  
with the enthusiasm of the flaming colours,  
with the serenity of the old trees, whose roots reach deep into the earth.

God of the Autumn,  
help us to appreciate the rich blessings of harvest,  
which carry the seeds of life for next year's planting.  
Help us to know that living and dying are one,  
that nothing good is ever lost.

God of the Equinox,  
at this time of equal day and night,  
help us to seek balance in our lives:  
to understand that both are necessary for growth.  
Help us to see in the ways of nature, a way for ourselves;  
to wonder at the Mystery that is Life  
and open ourselves to the blessings of both darkness and light. **Amen.**



*'Very truly I tell you, unless a single grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains but a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit' (John 12:24)*

### Prayer for Equilibrium

Like the joy of the sea coming home to shore,  
**may the relief of laughter rinse through our souls.**

As the wind loves to call things to dance,  
**may our gravity be lightened by grace.**

Like the dignity of moonlight restoring the earth,  
**may our thoughts incline to reverence and respect.**

As water takes whatever shape it is in,  
**may we be free and open to God's call.**

As silence smiles on the other side of what's said,  
**may we speak with kindness and truth.**

**May our prayer of listening deepen enough  
to hear in the depths, God's sigh of love for Creation.  
Amen.**

# READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE

## 1 John 1 : 5

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

## Romans 8 : 38-39

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## REFLECTION

The dark receives a bad press! Darkness can be associated with loss of faith, a sense of the absence of God in one's life and the world and a fear of death. Darkness is used as a synonym for sin and ignorance. The powers of darkness hold us in terrified sway. But everything is not, in fact, 'black and white'. Lines are not so easily drawn. Good things can happen in dark times and bad things can happen in the sunlight. The world is a place of brokenness *and* wonder and it's hard to warm to a salvation that divides reality starkly in two and asks that the 'bottom half' be forsaken. God created both night and day. Genesis 1: 5 says 'God called the light 'day' and the darkness he called 'night' and there was evening and there was morning, the first day'. In verse 31 we read, 'God saw *all* that he had made and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.' Psalm 139 v 12 says that darkness is not dark to God: the night is as bright as the day.

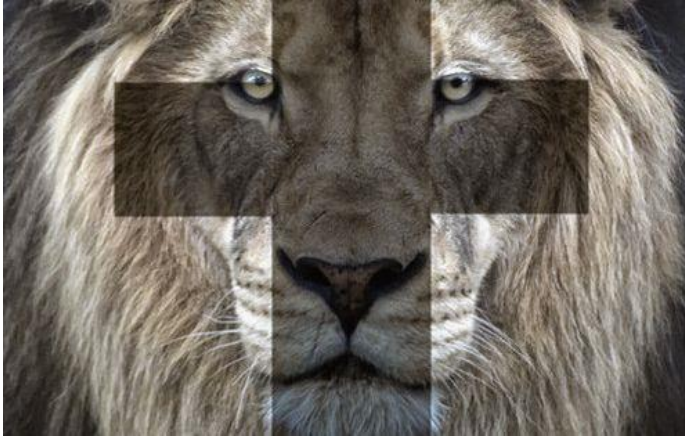


In our times of trouble, we often turn to God more readily than when things are going well and we feel everything is under our control. Even when we feel alone, with prayers seemingly unanswered, there is a divine presence that transcends all our ideas about it and it's not above using darkness



to knock down false gods: the false god of self-reliance, in particular. It is in the dark times of life, that God is far nearer than we can comprehend.

This idea is captured beautifully by C.S. Lewis in his book, 'The Horse and His Boy' (one of the Chronicles of Narnia). The boy, Shasta, is lost in the forest, alone, hungry and feeling sorry for himself, tears rolling down his face. What put a stop to all this was sudden fright. Shasta discovered that someone or something was walking beside him. It was pitch dark and he could see nothing. The Thing (or Person) was going so quietly that he could hardly hear any footsteps.... In



fact, it was so quiet that Shasta began to hope that he had only imagined it .... So he went on at a walking pace and the unseen companion walked and breathed beside him. At last he could bear it no longer. 'Who are you?' he said, barely above a whisper. 'One who has waited long for you to speak', said the Thing. Its voice was not loud, but very large and deep ...' The boy in

this story is lost and his mysterious companion is, of course, Aslan, the Lion, the 'High King above all kings.' Aslan was with the boy in his darkest time, simply waiting for the boy to speak so that he could comfort him.

When we experience times of thick darkness, if we quieten our soul and pay attention, we, too, will begin to notice that we are not alone. There is one who walks with us, quietly, sure-footedly and with great patience. He walks with us through the darkness, waiting for that moment when we will speak, when we will reach out, when we will ask for his help.

God comes on to the scene, not in flashes of lightning and thunder, but quietly, and even humbly. He looks on human suffering with the caring heart of a Father and the gentle grace of a lamb. He can be easily found by those who recognise that he is in the depth of darkness. We just have to remember to look. After all, he did enter the world of humankind as a baby in the little town of Bethlehem. On that dark night, he was found by those humble enough to seek him.

## *We Pray*

We are nourished with your forgiveness and hope.

We are sustained with your strength and patience.

We are filled with your grace and compassion.

**God, we thank you for feeding us with a harvest of plenty.**

We are restored through your generosity and healing.  
We are replenished with your abundance and joy.  
We are reminded of your selfless abandon.  
**God, we thank you for feeding us with the bread of heaven.**

Your gift of Christ sustains our lives.  
His presence confirms the promise of your love.  
His life fills our hearts with your everlasting light.  
**God, we thank you for filling us with the water of life.**

May we drink deeply, that our thirst may be quenched.  
May your river continue to flow  
over us, in us and through us,  
in all we do and in the prayers we now offer for the world you love.  
**Amen.**

## *PRAYERS FOR OUR WORLD*



Let us offer to God our prayers, trusting that God hears and uses them in the mystery of healing the brokenness and pain of the world ....

For our family of humankind throughout the world .....

For the earth and all its creatures .....

For Christ's Body on earth, his Church .....

For all who are ill and in special need at this time .....

For all who have journeyed on into the arms of God .....

We hold before our gracious Lord all we carry on our hearts today ....

Lord, we pray for a sense of peace both in darkness and full sunlight.  
May we turn to you in times of joy and trouble.  
May we seek you at all times, in all seasons and in all places.

**Amen.**

# THE LORD'S PRAYER

*(New Zealand Prayer Book)*

**Eternal Spirit,**

**Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver,  
Source of all that is and that shall be,  
Father and Mother of us all,  
Loving God, in whom is heaven:**

**The hallowing of your name echo through the universe;  
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world;  
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings;  
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom  
sustain our hope and come on earth.**

**With the bread we need for today, feed us.  
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.  
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.  
From trial too great to endure, spare us.  
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.  
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,  
now and forever. Amen.**

## BLESSING

As the Autumn fire – the orange and yellow sacrament of the sun - lights up the  
darkness with its dancing,  
**let us stand before it and rekindle the sun within us.**  
As darkness stretches out over the day,  
**may the flame of love burn brightly in our hearts and homes.**  
**And until we meet again, may God keep us in the knowledge of  
his Presence, his Light and his Love. Amen.**

