

BLUE CHRISTMAS



Welcome

Good Evening, and welcome to our Blue Christmas Program. Tonight our service has been put together especially for those of us who are not feeling particularly merry and bright right now.

Despite all the decorations, the cards, the music playing, you don't really feel very much like celebrating. The pandemic, our own feelings of isolation and anxiety, loss of someone close, loss of a job, loss of the life we used to know all seem to be surrounding us.

We hope that you'll find this a safe place to be transparent with yourself and with God, a safe place to admit that maybe you're not ok at the moment, that maybe what you're really feeling is sad, discouraged, or even angry. A place for you to be real with your struggles and your questions.

Those of us feeling a little blue at this time of year can feel edged out and forgotten as everyone else seems caught up in the mad frenzy of their own preparations and celebrations. We hope tonight as you think about the Christmas message, you'll find comfort and hope in knowing that you are not alone.

We'll light some candles and spend time in prayer and silent reflection. If it would help to have someone to talk to or pray with privately, please let us know.

Please join, as we commit this time together with God.



Opening Prayer

God of mercy and love, we gather here today as hurting people, bringing our pain, our sorrow, and our confusion to this safe space tonight. Would you meet us in our darkness, and give us the freedom to struggle together as we seek your presence. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow, and peace for the past.

R-Amen.

Candle Lighting.

John 1:1-5: "In the beginning was the Word. The Word was close beside God, and the Word was God. In the beginning, he was close beside God. All things came into existence through him; not one thing that exists came into existence without him. Life was in him and this life was the light of the human race. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."

Light the first outer candle

We light this first candle to remember those we have loved and lost.

We pause now to remember their names, their faces, their voices, and the memories of them that we hold in our hearts.

We thank God for them and ask for his comfort, and when we are feeling overcome with sadness, we ask for a peace that is greater than we can ever understand.

R- Lord, hear our prayer.

Light the second candle

We light our second candle to represent the pain and sadness that can come from other events that enter our lives, uninvited and unwanted – leaving us reeling in pain and shock, unable to shake the feeling that it wasn't supposed to be like that

So we light this candle to represent other losses that we find ourselves faced with.

The loss of health, of independence, of freedom, the loss of confidence or security, plans that did not work out, or hopes that ended in despair.

We pause now for you to tell the God who longs to bind up those who are broken-hearted, about some of the losses that you are feeling at this time.

R- Lord, hear our prayer.

Light the third candle

This candle represents our courage: the courage to face our sadness, to share our feelings with others, our doubts, and fears, our anger, frustration, or depression, and to dare to hope in the depths of our pain.

We pause now for you to tell the God who longs to take you by the hand and says to you, do not fear, I will help you, about some areas where you need help in finding courage.

R- Lord, hear our prayer.

Light the fourth candle

We light this fourth candle to remember those who have supported us in our pain. We pause to remember the prayers, the words of comfort and support, the acts of kindness from family and friends, and those who stood with us in our time of need.

We thank you, God, for sending others to remind us that we are never alone. And we thank you for sending your son, Jesus.

R- Amen.

Focusing on the central candle

Standing here in the center of the candles that represent some of life's joy and pain, this central candle represents

Jesus who has come to be Emmanuel, God with us, in the midst of it all.

Jesus, who was born as a helpless baby, and who hears our cries, and understands how weak and helpless we can feel.

Jesus the good shepherd, who knows our hearts and offers us healing and hope in the midst of our suffering. Who came to help us understand just how much God loves us. And who lived and died to restore our relationship with our heavenly father.

Music- O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O Come, O Come Emmanuel is an old carol that expresses the longing that the Israelites felt as they waited for God to send the deliverer he had promised, as you sing and listen, rest in God's presence.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!*

*O come, O Wisdom from on high, who orders all things mightily;
To us, the path of knowledge show, And teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!*

*O come, O come, great Lord of might, who to your tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times once gave the law, in cloud, and majesty, and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.*

*O come, O Rod of Jesse's stem, from ev'ry foe deliver them
That trust your mighty power to save, and give them vict'ry o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.*

*O come, O Key of David, come, and open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.*

*O come, O Dayspring, from on high, and cheer us by your drawing nigh,
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadow put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.*

*O come, Desire of nations, bind, in one the hearts of humankind;
O bid our sad divisions cease, and be for us our King of Peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.*

Prayer

Oh God, be with us in our darkness. Make your face shine upon us and give us peace. We pray for your Holy Spirit to be at work within us, all of us who are gathered here tonight, may your Holy Spirit comfort us, may it sustain us, may it remind us of your constant love for us. We trust this time of listening to you and ask you to open our hearts and our minds to whatever it is that we need to hear from you tonight.

R- Amen.

Message

The lighting of participants' candles

Please take a moment to light your candle. You are welcome to share aloud or silently the name of the person you are grieving or the event you are experiencing.

Closing

In a moment we'll say the Twenty-Third Psalm together and finish with prayer and the recitation of the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, and Glory Be. Music will continue playing after the prayers, and you are invited to stay and pray. You are welcome to leave when you are ready, and we ask that you do so silently out of respect for those still praying. If you would like someone to individually pray with you please come forward at the end of the service, or raise your hand where you are seated.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Prayer

Comforting God, as we leave this place would you continue to wrap us in your presence. Be with us in our struggles, and when we get lost in the darkness, shine your light and help us find our way back to you.

R- Amen.

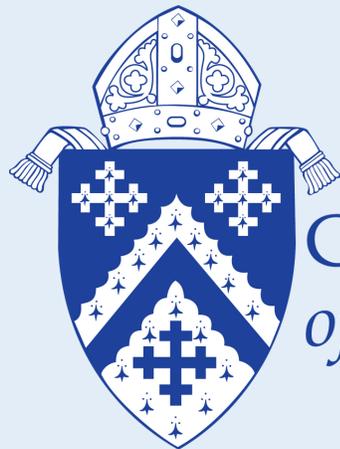
Our Father

Hail Mary

Glory Be



This service has been adapted with permission by Lori Reily-Joseph.



Catholic Diocese
of Cleveland

A resource from the Office for Marriage & Family Ministry
www.dioceseofcleveland.org/mfm