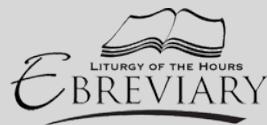


*Liturgy of the Hours*  
LITURGY OF THE HOURS

OFFICE OF READINGS

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March 18, 2026  
{ Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent }



*Stand and make sign of cross*

God, come to my assistance.

— Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now,  
and will be for ever. Amen.

#### HYMN

Behold, the accepted time has come:  
a holy gift from God shines forth  
to cure the sick and weary world  
with healing balm of abstinence.

The day of our salvation dawns  
resplendent with the light of Christ,  
as wounded hearts are freed from sin,  
restored by fasting and restraint.

O God, perfect our firm resolve  
to fast with body, mind, and heart,  
that filled with longing we may seek  
and safely reach the eternal Pasch.

Let all your works adore you, Lord,  
O merciful and Triune God.  
Renewed by pardon, let us sing  
a new song to your holy name. Amen.

*Metrical hymn, melody: ERHALT UNS, HERR, 8 8 8 8; later form of melody from  
Joseph Klug's Gestliche Lieder, Wittenberg, 1535*

*Plainsong, mode I, melody 28; Liber Hymnarius, Solesmes, 1983\*, Text: Nunc tempus  
acceptabile, ca. 10th c.*

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*Sit or stand*

## PSALMODY

### *Antiphon 1*

Bless the Lord, my soul; never forget all he has done for you.

*Psalm 103*

*Praise for God's tender compassion*

*In the tender compassion of our God, the dawn from on high shall break upon us (see Luke 1:78).*

*I*

My sóul, give thánks to the Lórd, \*  
all my béisng, bléss his holy náme.  
My sóul, give thánks to the Lórd \*  
and néver forgét all his bléssings.

It is hé who forgíves all your guílt, \*  
who héals every óne of your ílls,  
who redéems your lífe from the gráve, \*  
who crówns you with lóve and compássion,  
who fills your lífe with good thíngs, \*  
renéwing your yóuth like an éagle's.

The Lórd does déeds of jústice, \*  
gives júdgment for áll who are oppréssed.  
He made knówn his wáys to Móses \*  
and his déeds to Ísrael's sóns.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be for ever. Amen.

### *Antiphon*

Bless the Lord, my soul; never forget all he has done for you.

### *Antiphon 2*

As a father is gentle with his children, so is the Lord with those

who revere him.

*II*

The Lórd is compássion and lóve,\*  
slow to ánger and rích in mércy.

His wráth will cóme to an énd; \*  
he will nót be ángry for éver.

He does not tréat us accórding to our síns \*  
nor repáy us accórding to our fáults.

For as the héavens are hígh above the éarth \*  
so stróng is his lóve for those who fíear him.  
As fár as the éast is from the wést \*  
so fár does he remóve our síns.

As a fáther has compássion on his sóns, \*  
the Lord has pity on thóse who fíear him;  
for he knóws of whát we are máde, \*  
he remémbres that wé are dúst.

As for mán, his dáys are like gráss; \*  
he flówers like the flówer of the field;  
the wind blóws and hé is góne \*  
and his pláce never sées him agáin.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be for ever. Amen.

*Antiphon*

As a father is gentle with his children, so is the Lord with those  
who revere him.

*Antiphon 3*

Bless the Lord, all you his works!

*III*

But the lóve of the Lórd is everlásting \*  
upon thóse who hóld him in fíear;  
his jústice reaches óut to children's chíldren †

when they keep his covenant in truth,<sup>\*</sup>  
when they keep his will in their mind.

The Lord has set his sway in heaven<sup>\*</sup>  
and his kingdom is ruling over all.  
Give thanks to the Lord, all his angels,<sup>†</sup>  
mighty in power, fulfilling his word,<sup>\*</sup>  
who heard the voice of his word.

Give thanks to the Lord, all his hosts,<sup>\*</sup>  
his servants who do his will.  
Give thanks to the Lord, all his works,<sup>†</sup>  
in every place where he rules.<sup>\*</sup>  
My soul, give thanks to the Lord!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,<sup>\*</sup>  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now,<sup>\*</sup>  
and will be for ever. Amen.

*Antiphon*

Bless the Lord, all you his works!

VERSE

Turn back to the Lord and do penance.

— Be renewed in heart and spirit.

*Sit*

READINGS

*First reading*

From the book of Numbers

*11:4-6, 10-30*

*The spirit poured out over Joshua and the elders*

The foreign elements among them were so greedy for meat that even the Israelites lamented again, “Would that we had meat for food! We remember the fish we used to eat without cost in Egypt, and the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now we are famished; we see nothing before us but this

manna.”

When Moses heard the people, family after family, crying at the entrance of their tents, so that the Lord became very angry, he was grieved. “Why do you treat your servant so badly?” Moses asked the Lord. “Why are you so displeased with me that you burden me with all this people? Was it I who conceived all this people? or was it I who gave them birth, that you tell me to carry them at my bosom, like a foster father carrying an infant, to the land you have promised under oath to their fathers? Where can I get meat to give to all this people? For they are crying to me, ‘Give us meat for our food.’ I cannot carry all this people by myself, for they are too heavy for me. If this is the way you will deal with me, then please do me the favor of killing me at once, so that I need no longer face this distress.”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Assemble for me seventy of the elders of Israel, men you know for true elders and authorities among the people, and bring them to the meeting tent. When they are in place beside you, I will come down and speak with you there. I will also take some of the spirit that is on you and will bestow it on them, that they may share the burden of the people with you. You will then not have to bear it by yourself.

“To the people, however, you shall say: Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, when you shall have meat to eat. For in the hearing of the Lord you have cried, ‘Would that we had meat for food! Oh, how well off we were in Egypt!’ Therefore the Lord will give you meat for food, and you will eat it, not for one day, or two days, or five, or ten, or twenty days, but for a whole month—until it comes out of your very nostrils and becomes loathsome to you. For you have spurned the Lord who is in your midst, and in his presence you have wailed, ‘Why did we ever leave Egypt?’”

But Moses said, “The people around me include six hundred thousand soldiers; yet you say, ‘I will give them meat to eat for a whole month.’ Can enough sheep and cattle be slaughtered for them? If all the fish of the sea were caught for them, would they have enough?” The Lord answered Moses, “Is this beyond the Lord’s reach? You shall see now whether or not what I have promised you

takes place."

So Moses went out and told the people what the Lord had said. Gathering seventy elders of the people, he had them stand around the tent. The Lord then came down in the cloud and spoke to him. Taking some of the spirit that was on Moses, he bestowed it on the seventy elders; and as the spirit came to rest on them, they prophesied.

Now two men, one named Eldad and the other Medad, were not in the gathering but had been left in the camp. They too had been on the list, but had not gone out to the tent; yet the spirit came to rest on them also, and they prophesied in the camp. So, when a young man quickly told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp," Joshua, son of Nun, who from his youth had been Moses' aide, said, "Moses, my lord, stop them." But Moses answered him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the people of the Lord were prophets! Would that the Lord might bestow his spirit on them all!" Then Moses retired to the camp, along with the elders of Israel.

*Responsory*

*Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 1:8*

I will pour out my spirit on all mankind; your sons and daughters will prophesy.

— In those days I will pour out my spirit.

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.

— In those days I will pour out my spirit.

*Second reading*

From a letter by Saint Maximus the Confessor, abbot

*(Epist. 11: PG 91, 454-455)*

*The mercy of God to the penitent*

God's will is to save us, and nothing pleases him more than our coming back to him with true repentance. The heralds of truth and the ministers of divine grace have told us this from the beginning,

repeating it in every age. Indeed, God's desire for our salvation is the primary and preeminent sign of his infinite goodness. It was precisely in order to show that there is nothing closer to God's heart that the divine Word of God the Father, with untold condescension, lived among us in the flesh, and died, suffered, and said all that was necessary to reconcile us to God the Father, when we were at enmity with him, and to restore us to the life of blessedness from which we had been exiled. He healed our physical infirmities by miracles; he freed us from our sins, many and grievous as they were, by suffering and dying, taking them upon himself as if he were answerable for them, sinless though he was. He also taught us in many different ways that we should wish to imitate him by our own kindness and genuine love for one another.

So it was that Christ proclaimed that he had come to call sinners to repentance, not the righteous, and that it was not the healthy who required a doctor, but the sick. He declared that he had come to look for the sheep that was lost, and that it was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel that he had been sent. Speaking more obscurely in the parable of the silver coin, he tells us that the purpose of his coming was to reclaim the royal image, which had been coated with the filth of sin. *You can be sure there is joy in heaven*, he said, *over one sinner who repents.*

To give the same lesson he revived the man who, having fallen into the hands of the brigands, had been left stripped and half-dead from his wounds; he poured wine and oil on the wounds, bandaged them, placed the man on his own mule and brought him to an inn, where he left sufficient money to have him cared for, and promised to repay any further expense on his return.

Again, he told of how that Father, who is goodness itself, was moved with pity for his profligate son who returned and made amends by repentance; how he embraced him, dressed him once more in the fine garments that befit his own dignity, and did not reproach him for any of his sins.

So too, when he found wandering in the mountains and hills the one sheep that had strayed from God's flock of a hundred, he brought it back to the fold, but he did not exhaust it by driving it

ahead of him. Instead, he placed it on his own shoulders and so, compassionately, he restored it safely to the flock.

So also he cried out: *Come to me, all you that toil and are heavy of heart. Accept my yoke*, he said, by which he meant his commands, or rather, the whole way of life that he taught us in the Gospel. He then speaks of a burden, but that is only because repentance seems difficult. In fact, however, *my yoke is easy*, he assures us, *and my burden is light*.

Then again he instructs us in divine justice and goodness, telling us to be like our heavenly Father, holy, perfect and merciful. *Forgive*, he says, *and you will be forgiven. Behave toward other people as you would wish them to behave toward you*.

#### *Responsory*

*See Ezekiel 33:11; Psalm 94:19*

Lord, what anguish I would suffer if I knew nothing of your mercy! But you have said: I do not desire the sinner's death but that he come back to me and live.

— You called back to your love the Canaanite woman, and the publican to repentance.

When my heart is full of anxiety, you give me comfort and joy.

— You called back to your love the Canaanite woman, and the publican to repentance.

#### *Stand*

### *CONCLUDING PRAYER*

Let us pray.

Lord,  
you reward virtue  
and forgive the repentant sinner.  
Grant us your forgiveness  
as we come before you confessing our guilt.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

God, for ever and ever.

— Amen.

*Acclamation*

Let us praise the Lord.

— And give him thanks.

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