

## Holy and Blest

This prayer service is best used at the conclusion of Chapters 5 and 6 of *Jesus Christ: God's Revelation to the World*.

**Leader:** Come, let us remember those who waited and prepared for the promised Messiah. Come, let us celebrate the coming of Good News.

**Voice 1:** O God, when your people reached the land of the promise, they too soon abandoned the promises they'd made. God, in your goodness, you raised up just leaders to summon your chosen ones back to the fold.

**Reader 1:** A reading from the Book of Judges (2:11-12, 14).

The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They served the Baals, and abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the one who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They followed other gods, the gods of the peoples around them, and bowed down to them, and provoked the LORD. The anger of the LORD flared up against Israel, and he delivered them into the power of plunderers who despoiled them. He sold them into the power of the enemies around them, and they were no longer able to withstand their enemies. But the LORD raised up judges to save them from the power of their plunderers.

**All:** Holy and blest, keeper of covenants, your compassion and mercy bring pardon and accord.

**Voice 2:** O God, when your people clamored after a monarch, you raised up from among them kings to govern and lead. And though power did turn them away from your kingship, from the line of a sovereign, you promised the advent of the great King of Kings.

**Reader 2:** A reading from the Book of Psalms (89:21-22, 37-38)

I have chosen (King) David, my servant;  
with my holy oil I have anointed him.  
My hand will be with him;  
my arm will make him strong.  
No enemy shall outwit him,  
nor shall the wicked defeat him.  
His dynasty will continue forever,  
his throne, like the sun before me.  
Like the moon it will stand eternal,  
forever firm like the sky!"

**All:** Holy and blest, king of the universe, your rule extends over all time and all space.

**Voice 3:** O God, when your people, divided and unfaithful, abandoned your worship and turned from your face, you sent them prophets to act as your mouthpiece and to summon them back to lives of justice and truth.

**Reader 3:** A reading from the Book of Joel (2:12-13)

Even now—oracle of the Lord—return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting in punishment.

**All:** Holy and blest, God of mercy and justice, you send prophets to call us to see the world through your eyes.

**Voice 4:** O God, when your people, weary with waiting, were longing for the Messiah, but were unable to give birth, your quickening Spirit found Mary, the flower of Nazareth, hailed her full of grace, and stirred her to bloom.

**Reader 4:** A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke (1:26-33).

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

**All:** Holy and blest, enchanting God of the promise,  
You tipped the earth on its axis and became God-One-of-Us!

**Voice 5:** O God, when your people, standing anxious on tip-toe, were straining to hear the words of your mouth, you delivered the Gospels—encounters with Jesus, Good News proclamations, and challenges to love.

**Reader 5:** A reading from the First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians (1:5-8)

For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and [with] much conviction. You know what sort of people we were [among] you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving the word in great affliction, with joy from the Holy Spirit, so that you became a model for all the believers. . . . For from you the Word of the Lord has sounded forth . . . in every place your faith in God has gone forth.

**All:** Holy and blest, great God always with us—flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone—  
may your Good News echo forever in us. Amen.