

## Collect for 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent

*Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.*



*This Collect has been used as an Advent Collect since at least the year 750 A.D. It has allusions to Psalm 80:2 "Stir up your might, and come to save us!" and Hebrews 12:1 "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us." This prayer holds together Christ's first advent in humility and his advent in glory; his saving, and his coming to help and deliver.*

## Inquiry Period Questions:



❖ *How do I discern God's will for my life?  
What am I supposed to be doing at this stage  
of my life?*

The following came from a daily email devotional from Richard Rohr this past week, and it addresses this issue of discernment:

## Acting or Waiting?

*“At times we have to step into God’s silence and patiently wait. We have to put out the fleece as Gideon did ([Judges 6:37-40](#)), and wait for the descent of the divine dew, or some kind of confirmation from God that we are on the right course. That is a good way to keep our own ego drive out of the way.*

*“Yet there are other times when we need to go ahead and act on our own best intuitions and presume that God is guiding us and will guide us. But even then we must finally wait for the divine backup. Sometimes that is even the greater act of faith and courage, and takes even more patience. What if the divine dew does not fall? What do we do then? When either waiting or moving forward is done out of a spirit of union and surrender, we can trust that God will make good out of it—even if we are mistaken! It is not about being correct, it is about being connected.”*

*~ Adapted from unpublished recording*

# **RECAP**

**of Formation Chapt. 3:**

**Opening to the Word of God**

# Entering God's Presence

*Through the liturgy, we can enter into  
God's Presence.*

# Going to Church

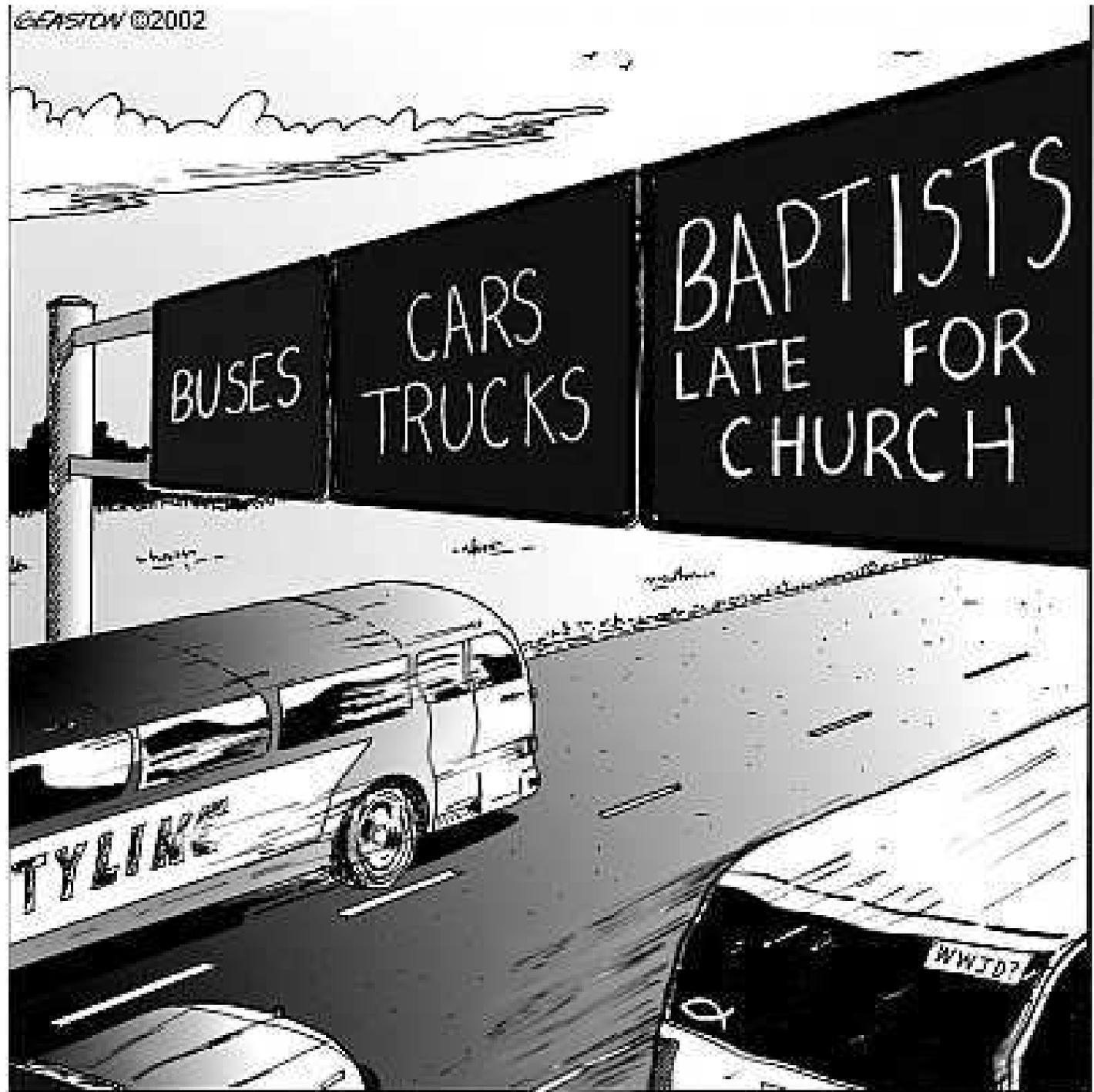


*In times past, “going to church” was a much slower, more deliberate process.*

*The very act of walking to church, surrounded by nature, could be a time of reflection, moving one’s mind and heart into the closer presence of God.*



*Today, we know precisely how long it will take for us to pile in the car and get in the front door before the service begins.*



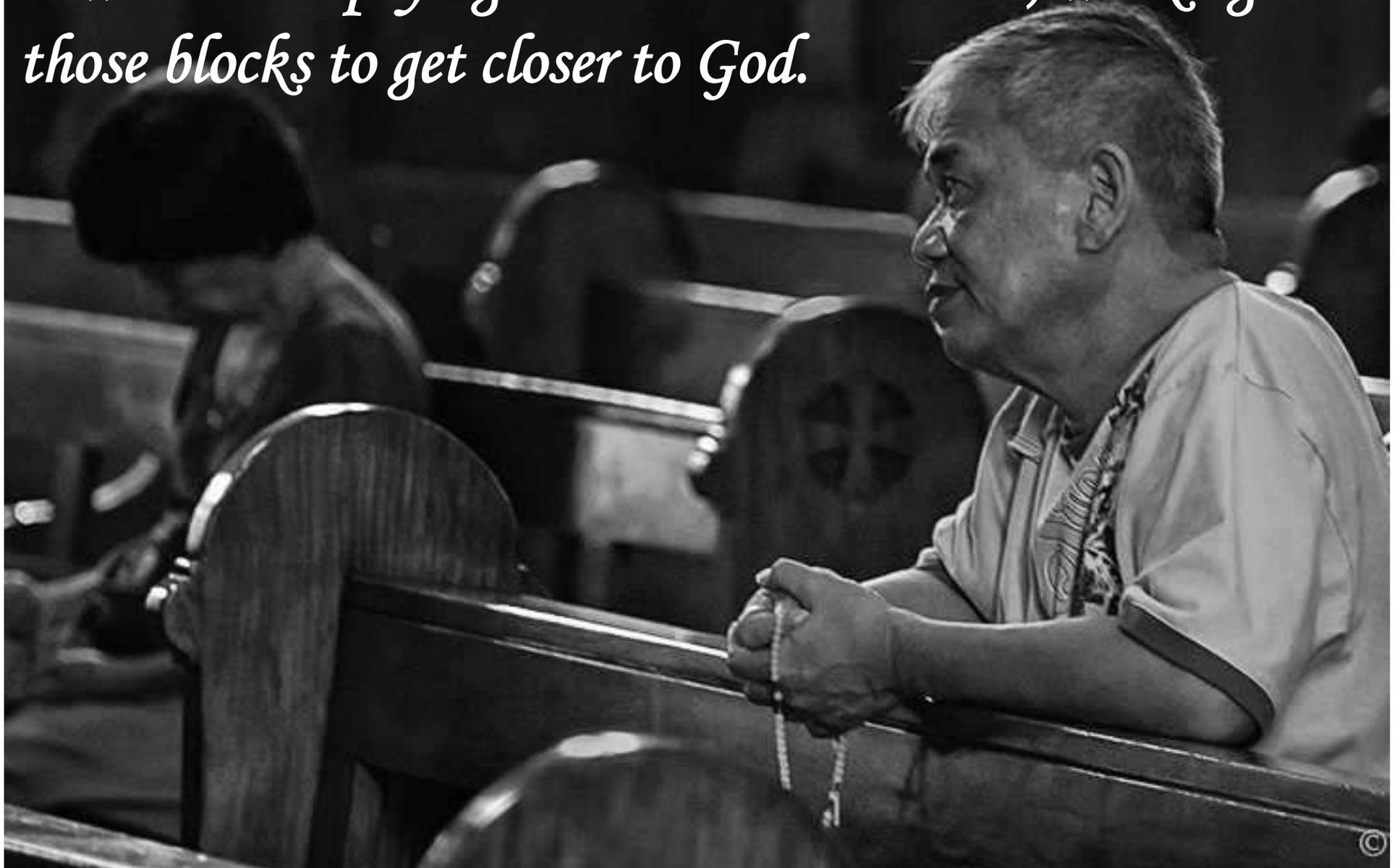
*Episcopal author Agnes Sanford used to say that we imagine that we can pray at any time. But often the reality is that we are standing a few blocks away from God and shouting at God.*

*We need to take the time to walk the distance to God, that we might better communicate.*



*That is precisely what we are doing in that part of our worship called the “Entrance Rite”: drawing closer to God, entering God’s closer presence, removing the barriers between us and God, opening our hearts and minds, making hearts soft to hear and receive.*

*We maintain prayerful silence before worship, slowing down and emptying our minds and hearts, walking those blocks to get closer to God.*



*The procession is a powerful symbolic movement from the entryway toward the altar, into God's closer presence. I always tell our acolytes that all of our hearts and minds process with them into God's closer presence.*

*Let your heart follow the cross and the Gospel!*



*Sometimes we sing a hymn during the procession (in the early Church, it was chanting psalms); at other times we are silent.*

*Either way, our hearts and minds move with the procession (think of it almost literally!) into the closer presence of God.*

*Each of the elements of the Entrance Rite is intended to help us prepare to hear and respond to the Word of God.*

# Opening Acclamation

***Celebrant*** Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

***People*** And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

*In place of the above, from Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost*

***Celebrant*** Alleluia. Christ is risen.

***People*** The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

*In Lent and on other penitential occasions*

***Celebrant*** Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins;

***People*** His mercy endures for ever.

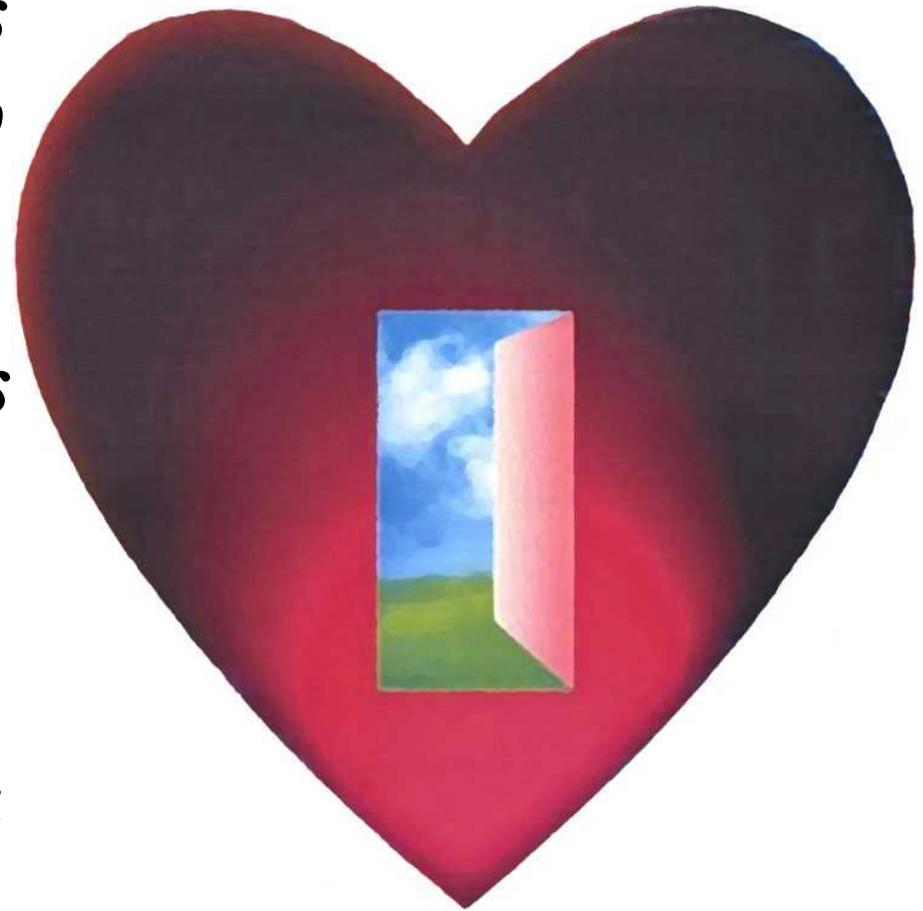
*Each of these Acclamations turns us away  
from ourselves, and toward God.*

*Our life in the world has taught us to be defensive. We've learned to protect ourselves. We put up walls around ourselves to keep others from getting too close. To some extent, this is necessary, but habitually putting up barriers can shield us from allowing God in, too.*



*And so at the beginning of worship, we intentionally try to let down our barriers to God, and ask God's help in doing so.*

*We pray for God to help us empty and open our hearts, using a prayer called "The Collect for Purity", which we know was used at least as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> Century.*



## The Collect for Purity

*Almighty God, to you all hearts are open,  
all desires known, and from you no secrets  
are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that  
we may perfectly love you, and worthily  
magnify your holy Name; through Christ  
our Lord. Amen.*

*The Collect for Purity places our relationship  
to God in the context of openness and desire,  
not knowledge or virtue.*

*As usual, the imagery and language for this prayer are borrowed from the written Word.*

**The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. --Genesis 6:5**

*At the beginning of worship, we pray for the Holy Spirit to cleanse these “thoughts of our hearts” in order that we might truly love and worship God.*

## Hymn of Praise

*The Spirit having cleansed the thoughts of our hearts, we can now respond in singing a song of praise and thanksgiving. The Gloria in Excelsis, an ancient hymn patterned on the song of the angels, is often the “hymn of praise” that is used, though our Prayer Book allows for others. In Advent and Lent, the Gloria is not used, and the Kyrie (“Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy”) is often sung.*

## “Right Brain” activities

*Singing is one of the many liturgical instruments by which our right brain is engaged, thus breaking the “death grip” which our left-brain often has on our consciousness. Symbol, song, bodily motion (sitting, standing, kneeling), color, scent – all these can awaken the creative part of our being. You may not have a perfect voice, but refusing to sing, even if it is off-key – removes one of the most powerful instruments you have to break through the often suffocating domination of the left brain.*

*“Beautiful music is the art of the prophets that can calm the agitations of the soul; it is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us.” –Martin Luther*

*“Poetry and music are a better way to teach spiritual things than mental concepts.” --Richard Rohr*



*Of course, it is easy for the elements of the Entrance Rite to become empty ritual. We can read prayers and sing songs without either praying or praising. The elements of the Entrance Rite, and the other elements of liturgy, **CAN** provide form and structure for our worship, but worship itself remains a matter of the heart. It requires turning from ourselves toward God, opening our hearts to the cleansing of the Holy Spirit, entering into God's presence and joining ourselves to the Communion of Saints.*

*There is a difference between “liturgy” and “worship”: Liturgy is a means to an end, and that end is worship – ascribing worth to God, turning to God in openness and desire, allowing the Holy Spirit to cleanse and fill our hearts.*

*But be assured that God is there in worship the moment we turn toward Him and open our hearts. For God has called us to assemble together, and desires in the purity of HIS heart before we have desired Him. When we participate in the elements of the liturgy with repentance, openness, and faith, we can trust God to act in and among us according to His love.*

# God of All People



1. God of all plac - es: pres - ent, un - seen; Voice in our  
2. God of all dream - ing, near and yet far. Vi - sion un -  
3. God of all peo - ple, dust and the clay. Breath of a



si - lence, song in our midst. We are your peo - ple, know - ing, un -  
heard of, wake us to rest. We are your pres - ence, sent forth a -  
new wind, fire in our hearts. Light born of heav - en, peace on the



sure. Come, Lord Je - sus, come!  
fraid. Come, Lord Je - sus, come!  
earth. Come, Lord Je - sus, come!

Text: David Haas, b.1957

Tune: KINGDOM, 9 9 9 6; David Haas, b.1957

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