

NUNC DIMITTIS

“In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.”

- Psalm 4:8

THE LESSON: NUNC DIMITTIS

The first two chapters of St Luke’s Gospel include four hymns of praise that connect the New Testament with the Old Testament. These are: the song of Mary, the song of Zechariah, the song of the angel choir, and the song of Simeon. Each of these songs is an expression of praise to God that he has fulfilled the promises of the Old Testament by sending Jesus.

The Song of Simeon, also called “Nunc Dimittis” (from the Latin for “Now you dismiss”) is said at Compline or Night Prayers because it speaks of Simeon’s readiness to gratefully embrace a peaceful end, something that is as good of a prayer at the end of a day as it is at the end of a life.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Set aside ten minutes each night before you sleep this week to say the Compline service in the Book of Common Prayer (pages 722-728). If that seems like too much, instead just say this simple prayer that opens the Compline service: “The Lord Almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end. Amen.”

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who hast opened unto us the gate of everlasting life, and art the peace and light of those who rest in thee: In company with thy holy Apostles, Prophets, and Martyrs, and with all the faithful departed, we praise and glorify thee for the fullness of joy which thou gives to all who put their trust in thee; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

(ADDITIONAL PRAYER FROM THE SERVICE FOR THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD, BCP PAGE 599)

NUNC DIMITTIS

LUKE 2: BITTERSWEET BLESSINGS

²²And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord... ²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

³³And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."