

VESPERS

According to the Usage of The Congregation of Abraxas

The usual introductory material, found in the Compline, for example, was not drafted. The asterisk indicates that those who are able are welcome to stand. Markings for the ringing of the bell were not completed. Some parts (leader, left, right, etc) are not correctly indicated. I am responsible for this mess and promise a clearer redaction with alternate texts in the future.
—Vern Barnet, 2008

APPROACH

PRELUDE

* The candle, chalice or lamp shall be lit.

*INTROIT

*OPENING WORDS

leader The evening comes and now is.
Welcome the dusk with gladness,
and greet the twilight with praise.

*INVOCATION all (select left or right text)

Spirit of History, Spirit of Hope, of Humanity
forever surpassing, forever becoming,
now gather us together in your presence.
As the daylight ebbs and shadows obscure,
hold us to your relentless clarity.
Let us see the whole of you, the full glory of your fire
Be for us a grand panorama, even amidst the vertigo
Judge us, purge us, and temper us
as we complete the day you have set before us.
Spare us the waste of easy despair.
Lead us on.
Spirit of History and Hope,

Forever absent, forever surpassing,
forever becoming,
gather us together,
and touch our anxieties with peace.
As you have led the day we now finish,
remain in our hearts as we complete the
night you have set before us.
As your Spirit burns, so shall we know light.

*HYMN OF PRAISE chosen for the evening

EMPTYING

PRAYER FOR EMPTINESS

leader Empty me, empty me, Spirit of Time,
all And wash me in wonder.
leader Test and search all my ways,
all And turn my works to grace.

SILENCE AND/OR CADENZA

We reflect on the experience of the day, the night to come, our place in the larger sweep of history, and the pattern of all things.

CONFESSION all (select left or right text)

all Way of Life, eternally flowing,
forever upholding:
right Prophets and murderers groan in our hearts,
lovers and loners spring from our loins,
singers and soldiers slip from our wombs,
the bland and ordinary are born from our history.

left Our lives, like bent axles, break.
We choose confusion over decision,
decision over anguish, and anguish over action.
We seek harmony, and are out of balance.
We seek wholeness,
and yet pursue partial pleasures.
We choose the safe but narrow,
the secure but low.
We are frail.

Let us consider our day
and its experiences, seeking its relation
to the harmony and pattern of all things.

WINDING DOWN

Breathing softly and steadily,
*We welcome inward silence in the midst
of worldly turbulence.*
We salute the memories of the day, and
now pass them by
*We bow to our anxieties, and now set them
aside.*
We kiss our plans, and store them away.
**Watching the breath and the rhythm of
the world, we say Amen.**

ALL AMEN! [may be repeated]

ASSURANCE

What does the Eternal require of us but to be compassionate, to act with justice, and to walk humbly with the Riddle?
Even in the midst of confusion we can act justly.
Even in decisiveness we can show compassion.
Even in the hell of anguish we can humbly give thanks.
Behold: We are blessed in all our striving.
We are one with all loving things.
We are the waves which awaken history, and give rest.
And we are free to choose.
ALL: ALLELUIA!

ACCLAMATION

Forward goes the Process, onward carries us, from day to night, from night to day.
The sun and stars are there to see!
Glory on high, glory below!
History burns with greatness before us!
Resistance to tyranny be praised!
Shouts of rage be blessed!
We extoll the power of peace!
We magnify just indignation!
Into the Void of history's shadows we toss these names like torches; like reddened splendor of setting suns, they light the way before us.
[Individuals may call out names of the praiseworthy, living and dead, who have by their lives, words and spirits sought to participate in the redemption of meaninglessness and history's tragedies.]
**All these we glorify, praise, laud and extoll,
And all those whose names we do not know,
Small folk who in small ways persist in faith;
In them we take delight;
By the stars of their lives we steer our course. Amen.**
AMEN.

*SONG OF PRAISE. A magnificat, benedictus, or other song of praise may be used.

EXPLORATION

Select left or right action.

PUTTING ON OUR EVENING EYES

We sit quietly. At the sound of the bell we rise silently and take seats on the other side of the room. From this new perspective we meditate briefly.

AN ABRAXAN "ROSARY"

While sitting, we silently recall Fate, Grace and Will as we touch (from top to bottom) the three knots of the Abraxan cincture, recalling the three toes of the Foot of Abraxas. Other trinities that may be recalled are Creation, Preservation and Destruction; Process, the Teaching and Community; Samsara, Nirvana and Ordinary Awareness; and so forth.

LESSON A reading for the day, if desired.

HOMILY As appropriate, if desired.

HYMN, CHANT or ASCRIPTION

CONNECTION

EMBRACING OF THOSE PRESENT with words, handshake, hug, or kiss; or by forming a group circle.

INTERCESSION

leader Spirit of Community, near even when we feel far,
binding us though we feel alone: unite us now.

people From our confines, enlarge the circle of compassion to
embrace all who need love and support.
From our pain, help us to shorten the pain of others.
From our failures and betrayals, help us to nurture others who have been wronged.
From our hurts, help us to lift those who are trampled.
From our loneliness, help us to show that others belong

individuals [Remembrances may be offered.]

people As we now face the night,
show us that the trials of the day may yet issue in peace,
that the struggles of this world may yet point to glory
Vex us not with impossible dreams, but fill with grace those lesser tugs,
that the fruits of this day may be enjoyed.

leader May the concerns of our hearts be gathered now to Caprice, Surprise and Grace in new life.

SELECT "AFFIRMATION" or "THANKSGIVING"

AFFIRMATION all

We gather as members of the Great Congregation
whose temple is the world,
whose membership embraces all humanity.
Our faith is to affirm the sacred dimension of life,
to proclaim that every person is a child of the uni-
verse beyond all barriers of race, nation, class,
creed, gender, sort, love or vote.
Our work is to celebrate the gift of life,
to clap our hands with the trees,
to sing with the mountains,
to dance with the flowing waters.
Our hope is to lift the burden of every oppression,
heal the pain of every grief,
open the prison of every captivity.
Our life is to live in compassion with all persons, all
nations, all living things,
that the power of history's meaning in and among us
may liberate the world to justice, equity, and peace.
This do we covenant with one another in tangible
community,
toward the realization of the divine in this life, on
this our lovely earth. Amen.

THANKSGIVING all

Spirit of History, in whose fabric of support we
live our days,
whose sustaining web surrounds us like the stars
above and the sea below:
we thank you for the struggles of the day,
that we may be tested and become whole.
We bless you for the small triumphs of the day,
that remind us we contend not in vain.
We praise you for the pleasures of the day
which sustain our spirits with spontaneity.
We glorify you despite the grief of the day,
for in your grace all sorrow becomes void
as new occasions break in upon our nows. Amen.

*CONSECRATION

O evening, that quiets and yet judges us, lead us into the night of trust.

Now, therefore, since the struggle deepens,
since evil abides and good does not yet prosper,
let us gather what strength we have, what confidence and valor,
that we may be part of the righteous thrust of history,
that the world awaited be the world attained.

*HYMN, CHANT, OR ASCRIPTION A Nunc Dimittis is appropriate.

*BENEDICTION

May creative power go forth from this commu-
nity into our lives: and when we meet again, may
that power which has become us enter our com-
munity once more to transform it anew. Amen.

*CLOSING PRAYER

We have met you without flinching, O History; like
the setting sun we can see without blinking and
tears. We have extolled them that redeem you,
And affirmed our place in the process of time.
So now our evensong can end, and we shall leave
content.

*RESPONSE select left or right text

We go out in joy
And are led forth in peace.
Though darkness descends around us
The light of the stars leads us on.
WE GO FORTH TOGETHER IN HISTORY AND HOPE!

Peace be with us
And with all humankind.
Peace to hearts and minds unknown.
Peace that flows like a river
from the eternal source of all.
AMEN.