

Focus center: One large candle, with smaller candles around (one for each person present).

Beginning: Evening Hymn

The leader lights the large candle; those present light their candles from the larger one, and places it around the larger candle. Once everyone has lighted their candles, the leader reads the first reading

The Incarnation

Reading: A reading from the Holy Gospel, according to John (John 1:1-14)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a human's decision but of God.

And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

Response: Christ Be Our Light

Prayer

Leader: Loving and gracious God, you shared your Word with us as a light in the darkness. May we be open to the awe and mystery of life that surrounds us in so many ways. Help us to recognize the light of Christ in our own inner poverty and to reach out courageously to share our light with others. We pray this in the wonder of your love, Jesus, the Incarnate Word. Amen

Welcome

Welcome! Tonight, we gather to celebrate our Congregational Feast, the Feast of the Annunciation.

This "Feast of the Incarnation" is obviously particularly special to us as Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word - God made flesh. It is also special to us as vowed religious because the feast also celebrates Mary, and her yes, her "fiat" to God's invitation. Mary is the model disciple for us: Mary heard the word of God, and acted upon it.

We are especially mindful as our Jubilee Year comes to a close, of the many women of this Congregation, past and present, who heard the word of God, and acted upon it. We also acknowledge, in this year of Thanksgiving, the many lay collaborators, women and men who have heard the word of God, and acted upon it through their work in the many ministries of our Congregation. They have been our partners, our friends, our companions on our journey.

We do not gather tonight as we anticipated. May our prayer tonight be one that unites us none-the-less and one that celebrates not only Mary - and her "fiat" - May it remind us that we are all called to one God and one mission. May we continue to respond with courage however and whenever we are called.

Our Response to the Mystery of the Incarnation

Reading: A reading from Leviticus (19:32-34)

Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the old, and love your God! When an alien resides with you in your land, do not mistreat such a one. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in an alien land. I, the Lord, am your God.

Response: All Are Welcome

Prayer:

Leader: O God, you called our first Sisters to leave their homes to extend your healing love to the people of Texas. Grant that, inspired by their witness, we may proclaim by our word and action the presence of Jesus in our world today. Keep us searching for and responding to those who society moves to the sidelines. Keep alive in women and men, lay and religious, the desire to follow Jesus' way of generous and inclusive love. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

God's Faithfulness

Reading: A reading from the Book of the prophet, Ezekiel (36:24-28)

For I will take you away from among the nations,
gather you from all the foreign lands,
and bring you back to your own land.
I will sprinkle clean water upon you
to cleanse you from all your impurities,
and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you,
taking from your bodies your stony hearts
and giving you natural hearts.

I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes,
careful to observe my decrees.

You shall live in the land I gave your ancestors;
you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Response: With Joy You Shall Draw Water

Prayer:

Leader: God our creator, you have called us by name; we belong to you. Help us to believe in your truth, hope in your mercy, and love all people as you call us to love. Let our lives give joy to you and encouragement to one another. May our efforts to live in love give you praise this night, and every day of our lives. Amen.

God's Love for Us

Reading: A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians

Brothers and sisters:

I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen

Response: How Can I Keep From Singing

Prayer:

Leader: Christ Jesus, you promise to dwell in those who love you and are true to your word. We ask you to give us loving hearts. Make us faithful to you, that with you in us, we may labor for the coming of the reign of God, here and now. We ask this in your most holy name. Amen.

Our Love for God

Reading: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew (6:19-24)

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

Response: Heart of a Shepherd

Prayer:

Leader: Bountiful God, we are filled with wonder and gratitude as we strive to realize our calling to tell the message of the gospel with our lives. Let the promises of Christ give us the freedom to leave behind all that hinders the coming of your realm on earth. Give us the courage and peace of heart that comes from confidence in your care. Dispel the darkness of our lives with healing truth; make us ready for the new wine of the future. We ask this of you, God of time and eternity. Amen.

Our Life in Community

Reading : A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number.

Response: As a Fire is Meant for Burning

Prayer:

Leader: God of all knowing. You chose us to form community, one dedicated to the Incarnate Word ... to follow his way of service and unconditional love. Together we have found our home in you. Help us to serve you and support one another. May the poor find a place at our table, and the hopeless find refuge and rest. Give us the strength to continue to work for the coming of your Kingdom. We ask this through Jesus the Incarnate Word. Amen.

Renewal of our Commitment

The leader introduces "Renewal of Vows"

Renewal of Vows

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Loving and gracious God, in your presence and in union with Mary, Mother of the Incarnate Word, we renew our dedication to you as Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. May our lives of consecrated celibacy, evangelical poverty and religious obedience, lived in community, bring us to a deeper union with you. May our love for you be manifested in our service to each other and to your people. Accept this offering of ourselves, and give us the grace and strength to be faithful to you forever. Amen.

Response: God My Savior

Prayer:

Leader: O God, in the fullness of time, you called Mary to be the mother of Jesus. Grant us all the grace of opening our lives to all that you would call us to be. Give us the mind and heart of Mary that we too may bear Christ to the world. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, one with you, Source of all life, and with the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Intercessions

Closing Prayer & Blessing

Leader: God of our history, women and men of every era tell the story of your call and your care for us. Enkindle in each one of us the faith and courage of those who have gone before us. Fill us with the love of your son, Jesus, and let our lives continue his revelation of your goodness; you who are God forever and ever. Amen.

May the Lord, bless us protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Let us go in peace!

Closing Hymn: Make the Love of God Known