

Great Thanksgiving
(Discerning a Call)

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Ever-Present, You never leave us.

You are never out of reach.

You are as close as our first breath and will be with us at our last.

Yet our vision is unclear.

Our understanding is often confused.

We feel unprepared to follow Your call into the uncreated tomorrow.

Ever-Merciful, You never abandon us.

We are sheltered by Your compassion, under the shadow of Your wings.

Because of Your great imagination all things will work out for good.

Because of Your great creativity, You alone turn our chaotic lives into something spectacular.

You surround our lives with opportunities and give us the honor of choosing.

You surround our lives with opportunities and give us the honor of loving as You have loved us.

You have placed our lives in Eden

and invite us to spend time with you walking in the cool of the day.

You want us to succeed.

You want us to live lives immersed in Your joy.

You want us to join with all of Your creation to dance and sing before You.

You want us to join with all those who worship around Your heavenly throne and to sing with them the song of eternal praise:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

You came to us in Jesus, Immanuel, God with us,

but few could discern Your presence.

Some were expecting the child of a King to come with pomp and splendor,

but they had not room for a poor child, a refugee, one who had to hide from the law.

Some were expecting a traditional teacher, who would uphold the ways of the past,

but they had little time for Jesus, surrounded by sinners, who showed concern for foreigners, and a teacher of women.

Even Christ's closest followers, were expecting a leader of a messianic revolt, they could not understand: walking an extra mile,

turning the other cheek and a call to prayer for those they despised.
Few discerned who Jesus was.
Few discerned the meaning of what Jesus did.
Few discerned the cup You placed in Jesus' hands, nor its meaning in salvation history.

Even now we try to discern as we wash our hands,
why Jesus would remove his outer garments,
take up a towel and basin to humble himself before his disciples.
What was the significance of his washing the feet of his betrayer?
Why would Jesus insist on washing the feet of someone who would deny even knowing him?
Why would Jesus honor those who would desert him?
How can we follow Christ by treating others as He has treated us?

Even now we try to discern as we take the bread,
why Jesus would choose to align his life with the exploited of this world
when with thanks he broke the bread and said:
"Take and eat, this is my body given for you."
How can we follow Christ by treating others as He has treated us?

Even now we try to discern as we take the cup,
why Jesus would accept the cup that You have given him
when with thanks he shared the cup and said:
"Drink, all of you, for this is the cup of my blood,
poured out with faith in God's eternal covenant of forgiveness
and his promise to reconcile with you and the whole world."
How can we follow Christ by treating others as He has treated us?

When we look at this, the life You lived before us in Jesus Christ,
can we not discern Your call?
A call to served those who do not even realize their need?
A call to sacrifice our lives for those who do not have the power to save themselves?
A call to accept the judgement of the world to bring an end the senseless cycles of violence?
We discern the mystery of our call in the wonder of Christ's life and we declare boldly:

**Christ has died,
Christ is risen,
Christ will come again.**

Unknowable, Known deep in our Soul
reveal in the ordinary, this bread and wine,
so we might discern in them, the incarnate mystery of the body and blood of Christ.

Unknowable, Known deep in our Soul
reveal in our ordinary lives, our hopes and our compassion,
so the world may discern in us, the incarnate mystery of Your church,
the body and bride of Christ.

Unknowable, known deep in our Soul
be with all who are seeking to discern Your call upon their lives.
Open their hearts to hear the cry of the needy.
Open their minds to see new paths never traveled.
Open their lives to Your dreams and visions that will take their breath away.
Use their lives in Christ, with Christ, through Christ
with the mystery of the Holy Spirit
to bring glory, honor and praise to You,
Creator of every good and perfect gift, now and in all the days to come.

Amen.

Now as those called to follow Christ, let us join with him in prayer:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

Prayer after Communion:

In these sacred acts we have discerned a holy mystery, You, O God, have loved us and given us the gift of eternal life. We also know that this gift was not for us alone, so we ask You, to help us answer Your call upon our lives, and give us opportunities to share this grace we have received with others in the days to come. Amen.