GRATITUDE AND NEW BEGINNINGS
For all that has been, thanks...
For all that will be YES!

Year End Day of Prayer

Opening Hymn
It Came Upon A Midnight Clear

Welcoming a New Year

Leader: a new year stands on my doorstep
ready to enter my life’s journey.

something in me welcomes this visitor:
the swiftness of the coming
the boldness of the entrance
the challenge of a year’s good-bye.

something in me fears this visitor:
the unnamed events of future days
the wisdom needed to walk love well
the demands of giving away and growing

Joyce Rupp, Fresh Bread

Lighting of Candles

Reader 1: This is the candle of love and light.
We gather in the love and light of Christ,
rejoicing in God’s presence here with us,
blessing this space and making it holy,
anointing each other with peace and love.

All: We entrust each other to God.

Reader 2: This is the candle of the present.
This is where we are together.
Our time and our energy are gathered into this space.
Here we recognize one another.
We know one another and we are known.
Here we stand in awe of the marvelous things that God had done for us.

All: We entrust the present to God.
Reader 3: This is the candle of the past.

   This is the time of memory for us:  
   a time filled with gratitude and joy,  
   a time marked by struggle, hard work, misunderstanding and frustration,  
   a time replete with grace and hope.  
   All that was is held by God in tenderness and love.

All: We entrust the past to God.

Looking Back with Gratitude

Leader: Each time another January greets us, we have an opportunity to pause, to see where we have been, to notice how far we have come, and to ponder how this time has been for us. We can gain wisdom by looking at the places our hearts have been during this past year. As we look back, it is helpful to identify those that blessed and affirmed us, that challenged and tested us. Sit with God and recall to mind those persons and experiences of this past year. Ponder with gratitude how God has blessed you and supported you in the midst of all that has unfolded in your life.

Pause for reflection.

Response: Magnificat of Gratitude

Side 1: Count them, my spirit, and be grateful,  
        Count the wonders one by one,  
        each drop of rain, each kiss,  
        each kindly word, each rose and garlic bud.

Side 2: Observe them all, my soul, and give thanks.  
        How many times have you been redeemed?  
        How many breezes blew clouds away?  
        How many seeds burst into life?

Side 1: Holy is God, alive and active…

Side 2: For all your universal wonders, we praise you.  
        For all your showering benefits, we thank you.  
        For all your daily miracles, we murmur gratitude.  
        Generation after generation you continue blessing.

Side 1: You are the rock we grasp and hold.  
        You are the shield we lift for protection.  
        Age upon age you remain steadfast.
Side 2: At all times and seasons,
in all places and persons,
we see and hear and feel
the goodness of your presence...
To you we lift our hearts and voices
in this prayer of gratitude.” Amen.
Ann Johnson, Miriam of Nazareth

Looking Ahead to New Beginnings

Reader 4: This is the candle of the future.
We light this candle because we believe in the past and in the present.
Because we have touched these times,
we know that there is energy that goes on ahead of us.
Because there is tangibleness,
because we have marked these times,
We have hope in the future.

All: We entrust the future to God.


WOMEN OF MERCY, WOMEN OF HOPE

Through Women of Mercy, Women of Hope we, as members, will enter into a year of prayer, reflection and contemplative dialogue as we share, probe and reflect upon our lives as vowed religious and upon our belief that God continues to call women to join us.

As we begin this new year, let us ponder our call to Mercy through this quote from Pope Francis:
“...something unusual happened to me. I cannot say what,
But it was something that changed my life.
I would say it was as though I had been changed
while my guard was down. It was the surprise, the amazement of
An encounter for which I realized I had been waiting.
This is the religious experience: the amazement of meeting someone
who is expecting you. From that moment on,
God became for me the One who goes ahead of you.
You are seeking Him, and he seeks you first.
You want to meet Him but he comes to meet you first.”
Pause for Reflection:

How is the call to Mercy that I experience(d) an invitation that is continually extended to me? To what is God calling us as Mercy today?

INSTITUTE VISIONING PROCESS

Leader: Your call, O God, is our life. This summer we were called to widen our embrace of a future full of hope. And now, on this feast of Mary, the future beckons us. With Mary’s open faith, we begin to ponder the vision of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, gathered into one community in 2023. We will be turning this vision over and over in our hearts, drawing on the wisdom of our dear Catherine McAuley...and of one another... for the courage to imagine, to question, to wonder.

Dialogue with Catherine.

Sister: One community in 2023. What will it look like, feel like, ask of me? Where will I be living? Who will be living with me, and how will we sharing vibrant community life? What loss will I be experiencing? What newness will be enriching me, stretching me, offering me growth? Catherine, how will I be sustained?

Catherine: There has always been a marked Providential guidance in our journey! We have ever confided largely in Diving Providence, and shall continue to do so. We have one solid comfort amidst all this tripping about, our hearts can always be in the same place, centered in God, for whom alone we go forward or stay back.

Sister: One community in 2023. In what ministry might I find myself? How will Mercy be reaching out to the suffering of our time...committing our lives and resources to act in solidarity with those who are poor? What will that look like? Catherine, how will we find the means for our mission?

Catherine: God will never let you want for means to do His work. Put your whole confidence in God. God can bend and change, form and reform any of his creatures to fit them for the purpose he designs.

Sister or Associate One community in 2023. What decisions will we have made that feel like “good news?” What creativity and hope, compassion and courage, will impel us? What imagination do I bring to the vision? How will our legacy of union and charity empower us?

Catherine: The union which exists among you will draw down the favor and blessing of heaven. The tender Mercy of God has given you one another. The Spirit of unity is the true spirit of the Order...the true spirit of Mercy...which God so graciously caused to flow on you.
**Sister or Associate:** Oh Catherine, so many questions! My heart is full of longing and excitement, anxiety and hesitation. Be with us in the exploration into God’s bottomless mercy, into a future full of hope.

**Catherine.** My dear ones, You have given all to God without reserve. Nothing can happen to you which God does not appoint. Join me in singing the prayer that holds my surrender to God’s merciful love:

**Suggested Hymn:** **Susciepe**

**Pause for reflection:** As I ponder “one community in 2023,” what stirs in me?

**Closing**

**Leader:**

 i a new year stands on my doorstep  
 ready to enter my life’s journey.

 something in me welcomes this visitor:  
 the swiftness of the coming  
 the boldness of the entrance  
 the challenge of a year’s good-bye.

 something in me fears this visitor:  
 the unnamed events of future days  
 the wisdom needed to walk love well  
 the demands of giving away and growing

**ALL:**

 i a new year stands on my doorstep.  
 with fragile caution I move  
 to open the door for its entrance.  
 my heart leaps with surprise,  
 joy jumps in my eyes,  
 for there beside this brand-new year  
 stands my God with outstretched hand!  
 God smiles and gently asks of me:  
 can we walk this year together?

 and I, so overwhelmed with goodness,  
 can barely whisper my reply:  

 welcome in!

SEE MUSIC SUGGESTIONS ON NEXT PAGE
Suggested Music:

It Came upon the Midnight Clear

Text: Edmund H. Sears, 1810-1876, alt.
Tune: CAROL, CMD, Richard S. Willis, 1819-1900
Suggested Closing Songs:

1. **Nothing Is Impossible**  Jaime Cortez  
   found on iTunes

2. **We Give You Thanks**  David Haas

3. **Thanksgiving Song**  Mary Chapin Carpenter

4. **Your Call My God is Life**  Dina Altamiranda, RSM  
   *(Women of Mercy, Women of Hope)*

   **Chorus**
   Your call, my God, is life  
   that I want to share with the poor  
   of the Earth,  
   with those most in need, with the marginalized,  
   share with all equally.

You call me by name  
And I want to follow your voice,  
I’m not afraid of the surrender you demand  
when calling me. My trusting response will be:  
to give myself to others, to serve others. (Chorus)

I hear your call and I want to follow your voice  
I want to respond to you through the poor and  
the helpless, with all my brothers and sisters,  
I want to spend this life that you have given me  
so that I can live it to its fullest. (Chorus)