Calendar of Blessings
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January: Silence and Rest
February: New Life
March: Wind
April: Seeds and Rain
May: All Who Work the Land
June: The Land
July: Visitors and Guests
August: First Fruits
September: Change and Letting Go
October: Animals
November: Food
December: Night

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Introduction

For centuries, the Church has set aside feast days and liturgical days that are celebrated throughout the world. At Catholic Rural Life, the charge has been to unite both the liturgical calendar and the cycles of nature.

The seasonal blessings presented here come with a request that a time be set aside each month for a prayerful moment that highlights an aspect of rural life.

These blessings may be used in a parish setting or other group setting. The prayers and reflections offer an opportunity to bring to mind rural life and prayer. Parish uses may include parish meetings, Bible study groups, and religious education sessions.

You may also want to use the blessings for family prayer, especially at a special meal. These blessings may also be used for private prayer and reflection.

Each blessing begins with an Opening prayer. This is followed by a Song of Praise, either recited together or by alternating verses; response by all. Then there is a Main Reading, plus other selective readings from Scriptures.

A few moments are given to Reflection, either quiet thought or sharing with the group. Finally, there is a Closing blessing or prayer.
Blessing of Silence and Rest

The start of a new year. But before you begin carrying out your resolution for the year, remember that rest and silence are also valuable.

Winter’s bareness and cold offer a welcome pause to the frenzied pace of our lives. As the activities of the year come to an end, we now have time to slow down. The boisterous hum of family life and work is now replaced by quietness, if only for a moment.

The month of January is a good time to avail yourself to silence and rest. Do these appear as strangers to us? With practice, silence and rest can become trusted friends that fill us with deeper awareness, recharge us, and provide greater creativity for the tasks that await us in the coming spring.

In the spirit of this month’s blessing, consider fasting or preparing a simple meal on the day of the blessing. Gather with family or friends in the early evening. Light a candle. After a moment of silence, begin this service:

Opening Prayer

Loved ones, let us open our hearts. God of the ages, You call your people to seek You in the quietest of places. Free us from what detracts and blinds us; let us behold your marvelous Presence. Renew us by the teachings of your Word so that we may live more abundantly. When life around us appears dark, make us a harvester of Light. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Song of Praise: Verses from Psalm 62 (2 3, 8 9, 11 12)

Response: Only in God will my soul be at rest.

My soul rests in God alone
from whom comes my salvation.
God alone is my rock and salvation,
my fortress; I shall never fall.

Response: Only in God will my soul be at rest.

My deliverance and honor are with God,
my strong rock; my refuge is with God.
Trust God at all times, my people!
Pour out your hearts to God our refuge!

Response: Only in God will my soul be at rest.

Do not trust in extortion;
in plunder put no empty hope.
On wealth that increases,
do not set your heart.

One thing God has said:
strength and mercy belong to God;
For You repay to each of us
according to our deeds.

Response: Only in God will my soul be at rest.

As they continued their journey, Jesus entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary, who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak.

Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me.”

The Lord said to her in reply, “Martha,
Martha, you are anxious and worried about
many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.”

**Selected Readings from Scripture**

**Exodus 20:8-11**
Remember the Sabbath day: keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

**Psalm 62:1-2, 5**
My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.
Yes, my soul, find rest in God: my hope comes from him.

**Psalm 116:7**
Return to your rest, my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.

**Isaiah 40:28-31**
“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and His understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

**Matthew 11:28**
“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

**1 John 3:19**
This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in His presence.

**Philippians 4:6-7**
Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**Silent Reflection, or invite sharing of thoughts**

**Closing Blessing**
*(Invite everyone to gather around a lit candle. Dim or turn off other lights.)*

Let us prayer: O Lord, we long for your peace. We come to you like Martha, racing about with busy hands and minds, but with our hearts that are left closed and empty.

We also come to you in silence, like Mary who ceased all activity to sit at your feet and listen, ready and willing to receive what you alone can give.

Bless this silence. Teach us to recognize the treasures it gives and to desire it more often.

Bless this rest. Help us to trust it with the same faith which we give to work. Strengthened by our participation in holy silence and rest, may we come to see in winter not a death that is a final ending, but rather an opening that leads to the next life.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Blessing of New Life

Birth is an elusive mystery: an everyday occurrence in nature and rural life that is nonetheless marvelous to behold. Its wonder and splendor are fresh with each new entrance into creation. At the appointed time, a universal labor of intense energy opens the womb of Nature's gateway and ushers into the world an innocence and hope that is always a gift.

In a moment of revelation, we are privileged to witness and perhaps assist the birth of the latest member of our renewing world. Hand in hand with the Creator, we grasp the rhythm of new life, new breath and new hope.

In the spirit of this month's blessing, consider preparing a simple meal on the day of the blessing. Gather with family or friends in the early evening. Light a new candle. After a moment of silence, begin this service:

**Opening Prayer**

Let us pray: Lord of life and birth, you enter our lives through gentle messengers, infants of earth with greetings from heaven. May your unending array of hope and promise never fail to move us with awesome wonder and tender love. Teach us to serve your creatures with gratefulness and marvel. Give us a sensitivity to the fragile web of creation and the wonder of the miracle of life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song of Praise: Verses from Psalm 139 (13 14, 15) and Psalm 71 (5 6)

Response: You knit me in my mother's womb.

You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb. I praise you, because I am wonderfully made; wonderful are your works!

Response: You knit me in my mother's womb.

My very self you know. My bones are not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, fashioned in the depths of the earth.

Response: You knit me in my mother's womb.

You are my hope, Lord; my trust, GOD, from my youth. On you I have depended since birth; from my mother's womb you are my strength; my hope in you never wavers.

Response: You knit me in my mother's womb.

Reading: Isaiah 45:8, 12 13, 18

“Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the Lord have created it.”

For thus says the Lord, “I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host. I have stirred him up in righteousness, and I will make all his ways level; he shall build my city and set my exiles free, not for price or reward,” says the Lord of hosts.

For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who formed the earth and all its inhabitants:

“I am the Lord, and there is no other.”
Selected Readings from Scripture

**Geneses 1:24**
And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

**Isaiah 43:18-19**
Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

**Isaiah 65:17-25**
For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.

**Colossians 3:9-10**
Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

**John 3:3**
Jesus answered and said unto him, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

**2 Corinthians 5:17**
Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

*Silent Reflection, or invite sharing of thoughts*
(People may mention births that have occurred recently or are to happen soon, remembering the people and households involved.)

**Closing Blessing**

Creator God, bless the fresh born creatures of our land. Oversee their needs with attentive care. Bear them into this life as the continuing newness of creation and your faithful cycle of promise and hope.

As you imbue them with the breath of life, breathe the freshness of your Spirit into our labored lungs.

And bless all mothers for their sacrifice of love in your creative partnership, to bring forth your love enfleshed in new life.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Blessing of Wind

Wind: our heavenly companion, sister, conspirito and inspiration. She breezes into woodlands, soars past mountaintops, sweeps over plains and deserts, and skims the oceans. She can come from any direction, sometimes gentle, sometimes harsh, and wanders to the ends of the earth fulfilling her sacred mission.

In appointed service, she swoops up fertile pollen and airy seed, she grandly ushers in misty clouds, and then deposits them all in fruitful wonder. She lavishes relief on the wise, but others she lashes for their foolishness.

In this blessing, find a breezy area and use a wind chime to draw attention to the wind. Face the wind and revel in its caress, using it to help you pray.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray: Lord of wind and spirit, your playful breath refreshes us, carrying away our many cares and lifting the burden of hectic schedules. Let us rejoice in its animation and experience the liveliness of your Spirit. Blow into our hearts with your life giving Word. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song of Praise: Psalm 104:1, 3 4, 29 30; Proverbs 30:4; Psalm 135:5, 7

Response: God has weighed out the wind, whose breath fills the world.

Bless the LORD, my soul! LORD, my God, you are great indeed! You spread out the heavens like a tent; setting the beams of your chambers upon the waters.

You make the clouds your chariot; traveling on the wings of the wind. You make the winds your messengers; flaming fire, your ministers.

Response: God has weighed out the wind, whose breath fills the world.

When you hide your face, they panic. Take away their breath, they perish and return to the dust. Send forth your spirit, they are created and you renew the face of the earth.

Response: God has weighed out the wind, whose breath fills the world.

Who has gone up to heaven and come down again—who has cupped the wind in the hollow of the hand? Who has bound up the waters in a cloak—who has established all the ends of the earth?

Response: God has weighed out the wind, whose breath fills the world.

For I know that the LORD is great, that our Lord is greater than all gods. Whatever the LORD desires he does in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the depths.

It is he who raises storm clouds from the end of the earth, makes lightning for the rain, and brings forth wind from his storehouse.

Response: God has weighed out the wind, whose breath fills the world.
Reading: John 3:5-8

Jesus answered, “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Selected Readings from Scripture

Genesis 8:1
But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided.

Psalms 103:15-16
As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, and its place acknowledges it no longer.

Proverbs 11:29
He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind, and the foolish will be servant to the wise hearted.

Isaiah 17:13
The nations rumble on like the rumbling of many waters, but He will rebuke them and they will flee far away, and be chased like chaff in the mountains before the wind, like hirling dust before a gale.

Amos 4:13
For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind and declares to man what are His thoughts, He who makes dawn into darkness and treads on the high places of the earth, The Lord God of Hosts is His name.

John 6:16-18
Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum. It had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing.

Acts 27:13-15
When a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and began sailing along Crete, close inshore. But before very long there rushed down from the land a violent northeastern wind. When the ship was caught in it and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and let ourselves be driven along.

Quiet Reflection, or sharing of thoughts.

Closing Blessing

Loving God, as the winnowing wind blows through the grain and carries the chaff away, blow through our thoughts and sift out all that is unworthy.

As moist wind blowing over parched earth conveys hope, breathe renewal into our wearied hearts. As the mighty wind pushed back the flood waters for Noah and created space for new life, sweep your spirit into our beings and recreate wholesomeness.

Lord of all, bless the wind in its fertile vocation as it swirls through crops and hearts bearing gifts of both heaven and earth. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen
Blessing of Seeds and Rain

Our health, our very lives, depends on the sprouting of seeds. Through the nurturing of seeds, then harvesting and eating of their produce, we receive God’s choicest blessings. Saving some of the new seeds allows us to continue this miraculous cycle.

Seeds cannot grow without water. The cycle of rain blesses us, and water stored in the ground is our true treasure. Let us seek God’s guidance in finding ways to better utilize seeds and water so that farming can become more sustainable for all who find their vocation on the land.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray: God, who created everything and everyone, we ask you to be with us now in this place. Send your Holy Spirit upon us that we might pray well and bless your name. Help us to care for “the seeds which are the Word of God,” the living words your Son shares with us. Let the hard work of sowing and tending be crowned with an abundance of life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song of Praise: Psalm 126:1-6 (A Song of Ascents)

Response: They shall come back rejoicing, carrying their harvest of grain.

When the LORD restored the captives of Zion, we thought we were dreaming. Then our mouths were filled with laughter; our tongues sang for joy.

Response: They shall come back rejoicing, carrying their harvest of grain.

Then it was said among the nations, “The Lord had done great things for them.” The Lord has done great things for us; Oh, how happy we were!

Response: They shall come back rejoicing, carrying their harvest of grain.

Reading: Mark 4:26-29 (Parable of Seed’s Growth)

Jesus said, “This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how. Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the grain is ripe, the sower wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come.”
Selected Readings from Scripture

Genesis 1:29
And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.”

Psalm 72:6
May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth!

Isaiah 55:10
“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater.”

Hosea 10:12
Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the Lord that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.

John 12:24
Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Galatians 6:8
For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

James 5:18
Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

Quiet Reflection, or sharing of thoughts.

Closing Blessing
(Have some seeds and water placed in the middle of those gathered; ask people before hand to bring seeds of their own. Invite them all to extend their hands in blessing over the seeds and the water.)

Loving God, the Spirit of Life hovered over the waters and began the great work of creation. Bless the waters of this earth. Let them fall again from the sky at the proper times so that our gardens and fields may yield abundantly, and all growing things may thrive.

Bless also these seeds, pregnant with life. They show us the Easter mystery of new life coming from death and burial. May they burst forth soon with verdant growth from earth, rain and sun.

You have called us to the honored task of being workers in your garden. Through the rain and these seeds, bring us to a new awareness of your presence in and around us, as we joyfully live in the knowledge of eternal resurrection.

Plant seeds of love in our lives that will grow through the years, watered by the tears of pain and sacrifice that come our way. Your Son showed us the way. We now ask your guidance to follow it well. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Catholic Rural life
www.catholicrurallife.org
Blessing of All who Work the Land

We share in God’s work through our human labor. Work is not drudgery that our Creator has imposed on us nor is it a penance for our sinfulness. Work is a gift: human participation in the creative activity of God.

In Church tradition, we have a beautiful partnership of work by the married farm couple, Isidore & Maria. These saints labored with their hands, cared for the land and its creatures, and brought a blessing to the poor of their day and the Church for all time.

All who have a part in helping bring food to the table are a precious treasure in the human community and especially in the Church. Their country lifestyle and the spirituality that flows from it is a witness to Biblical faith.

Work is our communion with God and is also our communion with people, our way of taking responsibility for the well being of our neighbors, communities and the environment.

Opening Prayer

Creator God, you formed the human in your image to be partner with you. You have blessed us by calling us to work with the land and its creatures, providing nourishment and health for all. Let your word now take root in our hearts and lives, to produce a rich harvest of justice for all creation. Let all who work with the land be blessed with dignity, their homes blessed with health, and their labor blessed with safety. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Song of Praise: Psalm 104:14, 15a, 23, 24, 27 30
Response: How manifold are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you have wrought them all.

You make grass grow for the cattle and plants for people to cultivate, bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts. Response: How manifold are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you have wrought them all.

People go forth to their work, to their labor until evening.

How many are your works, Lord!
In wisdom you wrought them all.
Response: How manifold are your works, O Lord!
In wisdom you have wrought them all.

All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. Response: How manifold are your works, O Lord!
In wisdom you have wrought them all.

When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground. Response: How manifold are your works, O Lord!
In wisdom you have wrought them all.

Reading: Mark 4:1 20 The Parable of the Sower

Jesus taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: “Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. But when
the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times.” Then Jesus said, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

Selected Readings from Scripture

**Deuteronomy 11:13-15**
And if you will indeed obey my commandments to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. And He will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you shall eat and be full.

**Psalm 85:12**
Yes, the Lord will give what is good, and the land will yield its increase.

**Proverbs 12:11**
He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who pursues worthless things lacks sense.

**Ecclesiastes 11:4-6**
He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap. As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything. In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

**Zechariah 8:12**
For there shall be a sowing of peace. The vine shall give its fruit, and the ground shall give its produce, and the heavens shall give their dew. And I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.

**2 Timothy 2:6**
It is the hard working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.

**James 5:7**
Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.

_Silent Reflection, or invite sharing of thoughts_

_Closing Blessing_

(A bowl of olive oil or canola oil is placed in the center of the group.)

God blesses our work, the work of human hands, to make the land fruitful and to provide food for us. Let us ask God to mark our hands and our labors with a blessing this day.

(Invite all to extend their hands over the bowl of oil to be used for the blessing.)

Blessed are you, Lord God, for through your goodness this oil is the fruit of the earth and the work of human hands. By your mighty love, it carries your blessing to us and to all that we do. Let it be a blessing to all who labor with their hands and to all who work with the land. Blessed be God forever.

(Invite everyone to bless each other's hands, tracing the oil on the palms in the shape of a cross.)
Blessing of the Land

Land and life go hand in hand. Our daily bread, and much else that sustains us, comes from the land. The land is beautiful for its mountains and plains; its beauty resounds in the canyons and draws. Its goodness thrives in the forests and fields; every plant emerges from it.

Do we take for granted how precious and fragile the land is? How grateful we should be! Only in rich soil do roots grow deep; if we deplete the soil, we risk everything. Our lives and the great variety of life on the earth depend upon the land and its vitality.

Let us thank God the Creator: He shares this land with us as a promise of His goodness, now and for eternity.

Opening Prayer

Loving Creator, show us how to be good stewards of the land; give your blessing on every part of it—the soil, waterways and landscape. Together these contain the elements of life entrusted by You to our care. Remind us of your constant love. Bless us with favorable weather, abundant crops and a vigorous community of life around us in all directions: East, West, North and South. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Recite the Lord’s Prayer.

READING: Deuteronomy 28:1-6, 8-9
Let us be mindful that the land is God’s gift—a Promised Land expressing God’s love for us.

Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God:
Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country.
Blessed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock.
Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

The Prayer of Directions

Leader: Let us face the East and raise our hands in blessing: there the sun rises, the winds begin to blow, and life begins anew each day.

Reader 1: O God, we give thanks for the blessings of birth, for the gift of rain to sprout the seeds, for the dawn that brings each day, for the wisdom that guides us.
We promise to respect all living species in the east, and to care for your precious gift of the land. Bless all creatures, fields and people who live in the east.

Response: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: Let us face the South with arms outstretched and raise our hands in blessing: see there, warm breezes come and spring time awakes.
Reader 2: O God, we give thanks for the blessings of life: the abundance of green growth and of summer life. We give thanks for the medicines that heal our bodies, and for mothers who bring forth the gift of new life. We promise to respect all living species in the south, and to care for your precious gift of soil. Bless all creatures, fields and people who live in the south.

Response: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: Let us face the West and raise our hands in blessing: there strong winds begin to sweep towards us, but the sun finds rest.

Reader 3: O God, we give thanks for our diverse cultures and common heritage, for these sustain us as much as food and water. We give thanks for death itself, when life and light leave us as does the sun at the end of each day. Death is the companion of all creatures and the door through which you lead us to new life. Help us care for all living species and your precious gift of the land. Bless all creatures, fields and people who live in the west.

Response: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: Let us face the north with arms outstretched and palms opened to receive the blessings of the Spirit.

Reader: Let us face the north and raise our hands in blessing: To the north, from which comes winter and trial, that leads us to courage. We give thanks for the mothers and fathers who face harsh winds and trials to provide for their families. We promise to respect all living things, and to care for your precious gift of light and life. Bless all creatures, fields and people who live in the north.

Response: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: Let us face the West and raise our hands in blessing: there strong winds begin to sweep towards us, but the sun finds rest.

Reader 5: Oh Great Spirit of all that is Above, of everything that soars, of all that flies, of all high visions, all that is above the earth, we honor you and glorify you for the power that you are. Lift our minds and our hearts above the earth so that we may see it as one place, one land, one home for all. Oh Spirit of All that is Above, put us on the your wings so that we may know this world as You know it.

Response: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: Let us place our arms at our sides and look down at the earth.

Reader 6: Oh Great Spirit of All that is Below, of everything we stand upon, of all that pulls us to deeper places, to the depths of ourselves, we turn to you in the memory of all that returns to dust. We ask you to give us the strength and the courage to face death. When people leave us in this life to share life with You, let there not be a grief that is untrue. When we experience losses and changes in our lives, let us see them as your revelation. Oh, Spirit of All that is Below, purify us.

Response: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: Let us pray once more, our father, ho 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.

Amen.
Blessing of Visitors and Guests

Summer is a time of vacations and visitors, when people travel to see relatives and friends. Hospitality is a cornerstone of rural life; his hospitality can become a cornerstone of rural spirituality as well.

This blessing prompts us to greet God in the people who come to see us, to proclaim their visits a blessing to us, and to recognize that our homes and farms are indeed holy places where God can be encountered.

This blessing works well when visitors are preparing to depart. Everyone gathers in the yard or a large room. The visitors are asked to stand together, and the family host members encircle them for the blessing rite.

Opening Prayer

O God, you have made us your guests in this world, the earth you created for all. We remember how you sent your angels to Abraham and Sarah to be received as guests. By their hospitality, Abraham and Sarah received a message of hope and life.

Bless us and our hospitality. May our guests be a blessing to us and reveal your presence to us. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song of Praise: Psalm 87:1 7

Response: Blessed be these angels, the messengers of God's love.

The Lord loves the city founded on holy mountains,
Glorious things are said of you, O city of God!

Response: Blessed be these angels, the messengers of God's love.

From Babylon and Egypt I count among those who know me.
And of Zion it will be said: “They all were born here.”
The Most High confirms this.

Response: Blessed be these angels, the messengers of God's love.

The LORD notes in the register of the peoples:

“This one was born here.”
So singers and dancers: “All my springs are in you.
Within you is my true home.”

Response: Blessed be these angels, the messengers of God's love.

Reading: Genesis 18:1 10
Abraham’s Visitors

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oak of Mamre, as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. Looking up, he saw three men standing near him.
When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground, he said: “Sir, if it please you, do not go on past your servant. Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest under the tree.
“Now that you have come to your servant, let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way.”
“Very well,” they replied, “do as you have said.”
Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quick, three measures of bran flour! Knead it and make bread.” He ran to the herd, picked out a tender, choice calf, and gave it to a servant, who quickly prepared it.
Then he got some curds and milk, as well as the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them, waiting on them under the tree while they ate.

"Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There in the tent," he replied. One of them said, "I will return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son."

Selected Readings from Scripture

**Hebrews 13:2**
Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

**Hebrews 13:16**
Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

**Leviticus 19:34**
You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

**Isaiah 58:7**
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house? When you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

**Matthew 10:40,42**
Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. ... And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

**Luke 14:12-14**
He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

**Romans 15:5-7**
May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

**Quiet Reflection, or sharing of thoughts.**

**Closing Blessing**
(Family members extend their hands in blessing over the guests.)

O wondrous God, you are never far away. Again and again, you reveal your presence among us. Look with favor on our guests, who during their stay with us have opened our eyes to the mystery of your love and grace. Like our ancestors in the bible, we have received these guests through the fellowship of table: food, drink stories and sharing.

Through them we have participated in the companionship which mirrors the relationship between you and your people. As Abraham and Sarah were visited by your angels, we too have felt your presence through our guests.

Bless these holy pilgrims with safety in their travels, wonderful adventures in your good world, warm welcome from all they meet and a happy return home when that time comes. May all they touch witness the wonder of your presence.

Bless us, O Lord of Hosts, for you became a guest to reveal the truth of your faithful love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Blessing of First Fruits

From early times, “first fruits” were something special. They were the first taste of a new season’s produce with a promise of more variety and quantity to come. They were the end of a fast from fresh food and from a dwindling amount of last year’s harvest. “first fruits” were sacred. The best portion was offered as a thanksgiving to the Creator, then shared with those most in need and with each other as a blessing from God.

As preparation for this blessing, each person should bring the “first harvest/first fruits” of his or her labors, the first fruits of this growing season. Then all gather around for the blessing rite.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray: Creator and ruler of the universe, we are here united under Your guidance. Help us to listen to You attentively before we offer You the first fruits of our labor in Your garden. Help us to know Your ways. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song of Praise: Psalm 67 (Petition for a Bountiful Harvest)

Response: Let the people praise you, O God; let us all praise you.

May God be gracious to us and bless us; may his face shine upon us. So shall your way be known upon the earth, your victory among all the nations.

Response: Let the people praise you, O God; let us all praise you.

May the people praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you! May the nations be glad and rejoice; for you judge the peoples with fairness, you guide the nations upon the earth.

Response: Let the people praise you, O God; let us all praise you.

The earth has yielded its harvest; God, our God, blesses us. May God bless us still; that the ends of the earth may revere our God.

Response: Let the people praise you, O God; let us all praise you.

Reading: Deuteronomy 26:1-11 (Thanksgiving for the Harvest)

When you have come into the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you as a heritage, and have taken possession and settled in it, you shall take some first fruits of the various products of the soil which you harvest from the land the Lord, your God, is giving you; put them in a basket and go to the place which the Lord, your God, will choose as the dwelling place for his name.

There you shall go to the priest in office at that time and say to him, “Today I acknowledge to the Lord, my God, that I have indeed come into the land which the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.” The priest shall then take the basket from your hands and set it in front of the altar of the Lord, your God.

Then you shall declare in the presence of the Lord, your God: “My father was a refugee Aramean who went down to
Egypt with a small household and lived there as a resident alien. But there he became a nation great, strong and numerous. When the Egyptians maltreated and oppressed us, imposing harsh servitude upon us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors, and the Lord heard our cry and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression.

Then the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and outstretched arm, with terrifying power, with signs and wonders, and brought us to this place, and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Now, therefore, I have brought the first fruits of the products of the soil which you, Lord, have given me."

You shall set them before the Lord, our God, and you shall bow down before the Lord, your God. Then you and your household, together with the Levite and the resident aliens who live among you, shall celebrate with all these good things which the Lord, your God, has given you.

Quiet Reflection, or sharing of thoughts.

Closing Blessing
(All extend their hands in prayer, with palms opened to the Lord.)

O Bountiful Giver of gifts, you provide what we need for abundant living. You give us the strength of our bodies so we can work in your vineyard, providing for ourselves and those you have placed in our care.

We offer you thanks for these gifts, the first and best of what we have, so we will never forget their origin. May they nourish us and others. Make all who see and partake of them marvel at their beauty and usefulness.

Make us always mindful of your rhythmic symphony of life. Our work has not been without difficulties, but we rejoice that trouble of every kind has been overcome with your help.

Come, Lord of first fruits, Lord of rejoicing. Join in our celebration as we taste the joy of your immeasurable love. We pray to you, who have given us these fruits of the land. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Blessing of Change and Letting Go

Change is natural if not always smooth as we move from one phase of life to another. The month of September brings us a change of seasons: The warmth of summer gives way to mornings with a touch of chill in the air; the evenings come earlier as the days shorten in the rhythm of the season.

Change means letting go and accepting what will come: we must allow the comfortable to be replaced by new urgencies. Without the season of fall, summer’s growth would never become the harvest; it is now time for seeds to begin the process for the next life cycle.

This blessing may be used at a family gathering, outdoor event, or a cookout. The reflection will help to draw attention to the signs of change which our natural surroundings provide.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray: O Lord, you mark the journey of life with change. Once again we witness your creation moving from one season to the other. Change is your instrument of growth that brings us to a deeper relationship with you. May your Word be the lantern that guides the roads of change in our lives. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song of Praise: Ecclesiastes 3:18

Response: Rejoice and do well during life.

There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens.
A time to give birth, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant.
Response: Rejoice today and do well during life.

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to tear down, and a time to build.
A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.
Response: Rejoice today and do well during life.

A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather them; a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces.

Response: Rejoice today and do well during life.

A time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away.
Response: Rejoice today and do well during life.

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to be silent, and a time to speak.
A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.
Response: Rejoice today and do well during life.

Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:9-15

What profit have workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to mortals to be busied about. God has made everything appropriate to its time, but has put the timeless into their hearts so they cannot find out, from beginning to end, the work which God has done.

I recognized that there is nothing better than to rejoice and to do well during life. Moreover, that all can eat and drink and enjoy the good of all their toil—this is a gift of God.

I recognized that whatever God does will endure forever; there is no adding to it, or taking from it. Thus has God done that he may be revered. What now is has already been; what is to be, already is: God retrieves what has gone by.
Selected Readings from Scripture

**Jeremiah 29:11**
For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

**Isaiah 43:18-19**
Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

**Luke 9:62**
Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

**Matthew 6:19-21**
"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

**Philippians 4:6**
Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

**Romans 8:28**
And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Silent Reflection, or invite sharing of thoughts

Closing Blessing
(Invite all to raise their hands and arms in prayer.)

O Divine Artist, we give you praise for the wonders of this summer that now draws to a close. We are thankful for such wonders as the sunshine, the rain, the song of birds, the garden produce, the family gatherings, for the cuttings of hay and the sweet smell of flowers.

Now a new season is coming, one that causes us to move indoors for school and that changes to green to red, brown and harvest gold. But change is difficult for your people. It makes us feel awkward and anxious.

Help us to learn from all of nature how life must change.

Bless this change that is occurring in the land around us. Bless the passages and the transitions that happen in our lives. And when these changes in life cause us pain and anguish, guide us to healing and deeper understanding.

May we let go with courage and allow you to lead us another step closer to your Promised Land. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Blessing of Animals

Animals are our companions on Earth, be they house pets, domesticated livestock or wild creatures. We receive much from them: comfort, protection and wonder, as well as labor, food and clothing.

So we ask God to help us remember our dependence on these creatures, great and small, and to make us wise enough to care properly for all animals: they too reveal God’s loving presence.

For this blessing, people should bring along animals or plan to gather where the animals are: barn, field, pasture or yard.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray: Compassionate Creator, we believe you have given the animals of the world as our companions and helpers. Help us to remember your love for all creatures, to grow in our care for all animals, and to find here signs of your presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song of Praise: Psalm 148:5 7 9 13
Response: Praise the Lord from the earth, all you creatures of God.

Let them praise the Lord’s name, for he commanded and they were created; Assigned them their station forever, set an order that will never change.

Response: Praise the Lord from the earth, all you creatures of God.

Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all the deeps of the sea; Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars; Animals wild and tame, creatures that crawl and birds that fly.

Response: Praise the Lord from the earth, all you creatures of God.

Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all who govern on earth; Young men and women too, old and young alike. Let them all praise the Lord’s name, for his name alone is exalted; His majesty is above earth and heaven.

Response: Praise the Lord from the earth, all you creatures of God.

Reading: Genesis 1:20 26, 28, 31

Then God said: Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures, and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky. God created the great sea monsters and all kinds of crawling living creatures with which the water teems, and all kinds of winged birds. God saw that it was good, and God blessed them, saying: Be fertile, multiply, and fill the water of the seas; and let the birds multiply on the earth. Evening came, and morning followed—the fifth day.

Then God said: Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: tame animals, crawling things, and every kind of wild animal. And so it happened: God made every kind of wild animal, every kind of tame animal, and every kind of thing that crawls on the ground. God saw that it was good.
Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth.

God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth.

God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day.

Selected Readings from Scriptures

**Job 12:7-10**
But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.

**Ecclesiastes 3:18-21**
I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?

**Matthew 6:26**
Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

**Revelation 5:13**
And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

*Silent Reflection, or invite sharing of thoughts*

**Closing Blessing**
(All are invited to gather around the animals.)

Blessed are you, Lord our God, for you have made all things well. You have given us innocent companions on our life journey, animals wild and tame. They are wonderful in all their variety of shapes, sizes and abilities. We marvel at their beauty, which draws us closer to You who made them.

Keep them thriving and able to carry out what Your law intends for them. Let us never see them as only for trade or profit, but always as creatures of Your wisdom. Bless these animals with us now and all the creatures throughout Your good earth. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Blessing of Food

Harvest festivals are an ancient practice. The great American feast of Thanksgiving follows that tradition. This holiday reminds us that another year’s work of growing food is over.

We are thankful for all we can store to get us through the winter and continue to enjoy our land’s abundance and variety. We also take time to remember God who has given us so much.

As all are seated at table for this meal of giving thanks, we begin with prayer.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray: Creator who sustains all your creatures with food, drink and friendship, we enjoy this moment of special pleasure. We acknowledge your gifts and your goodness. We thank you this day, for you have blessed us beyond measure. From us as people filled with praise, filled with faith in you, filled with the generosity you have shown to us. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Song of Praise: Psalm 65:10 14
Response: To you we owe our hymn of praise, O God of Zion.

You visit the earth and water it, make it abundantly fertile.
God’s stream is filled with water; you supply their grain.

Response: To you we owe our hymn of praise, O God of Zion.

Thus do you prepare it:
you drench its plowed furrows,
and level its ridges.
With showers you keep it soft,
blessing its young sprouts.

Response: To you we owe our hymn of praise, O God of Zion.

You adorn the year with your bounty;
your paths drip with fruitful rain.
The meadows of the wilderness also drip;
the hills are robed with joy.

Response: To you we owe our hymn of praise, O God of Zion.

The pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys blanketed with grain;
they cheer and sing for joy.

Response: To you we owe our hymn of praise, O God of Zion.

Reading: Leviticus 26:2-6
The Reward of Obedience

Keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary. I am the Lord. If you live in accordance with my statutes and are careful to observe my commandments, I will give you your rains in due season, so that the land will yield its crops, and the trees their fruit; your threshing will last till vintage time, and your vintage till the time for sowing, and you will eat your fill of food, and live securely in your land.
I will establish peace in the land, and you will lie down to rest with no one to cause you anxiety. I will rid the country of ravenous beasts, and no sword shall sweep across your land.
Selected Readings from Scripture

Exodus 34:22
You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year’s end.

Leviticus 19:9-10
When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 16:14-15
You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow within your towns. For seven days you shall keep the feast to the Lord your God at the place that the Lord will choose, because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.

Amos 9:13
"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it."

John 4:36
Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.

Revelation 14:15
And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.”

Silent Reflection, or invite sharing of thoughts.

Closing Blessing
(Each person lifts a dish of food or glass of drink.)

Blessed are you, Lord our God. You have lavishly provided for us the fruits of the earth. As you have always promised your faithful people, you will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.

We pray to you as one voice: "Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen."

Praise to our God who gives life and joy!

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Blessing of Night

As the daylight hours give way during the month of December, the night calls our attention. Darkness invites us into its mystery, to gaze into its star-filled sky with wonder.

As we watch and wait for the Light during the season of Advent, the darkness of a particular night can be a powerful setting for prayer.

Wait for an evening when the sky is clear and the wind is still; gather family and friends and walk outdoors. Find a place where the view of the night sky is unobstructed. Invite everyone to join in this Blessing of Night.

Opening Prayer

Lord of Peaceful Night, in your creative wisdom you created light to rule the day and darkness to rule the night. It is the darkness of night that draws our need for the virtues of hope and trust: remind us to delight in the comfort of rest and solitude. Let the night encircle us and instruct us to seek more deeply your wisdom and peace. May Your Hand rest upon us. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Song of Praise: Verses from Psalm 139

LORD, you have probed me, you know me:
You know when I sit and stand;
you understand my thoughts from afar.
You sift through my travels and my rest;
with all my ways you are familiar.

Response: Blessed are those who have not seen yet believe.

Where can I go from your spirit?
From your presence, where can I flee?
If I ascend to the heavens, you are there;
if I lie down in the nether world, here you are.

Response: Blessed are those who have not seen yet believe.

If I say, "Surely darkness shall hide me,
and night shall be my light" —
Darkness is not dark for you,
and night shines as the day.
Darkness and light are but one.

Response: Blessed are those who have not seen yet believe.

How precious to me are your designs, O God; how vast the sum of them!
Were I to count them, they would outnumber the sands;
when I complete them, still you are with me.

Response: Blessed are those who have not seen yet believe.

Reading: Genesis 15:1-5

Some time afterward, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: Do not fear, Abram! I am your shield; I will make your reward very great.

But Abram said, “Lord GOD, what can you give me, if I die childless and have only a servant of my household, Eliezer of Damascus?”

Abram continued, “Look, you have given me no offspring, so a servant of my household will be my heir.”
Then the word of the LORD came to him: No, that one will not be your heir; your own offspring will be your heir.

He took him outside and said: Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so, he added, will your descendants be.

Abram put his faith in the LORD, who attributed it to him as an act of righteousness.

Selected readings from Scripture

**Psalms 148:3-6**
Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light!  
Praise Him, highest heavens, And the waters that are above the heavens!  
Let them praise the name of the LORD,  
For He commanded and they were created.

**Isaiah 40:26**
Lift up your eyes on high  
And see who has created these stars,  
The One who leads forth their host by number,  
He calls them all by name.  
Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power,  
Not one of them is missing.

**Job 38:31-33**
"Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, and guide the Bear with her satellites? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, or fix their rule over the earth?"

Matthew 2:9-10
After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

2 Peter 1:19
So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

Silent Reflection, or invite sharing of thoughts

Closing Blessing

God of wonder and hope, we thank you for your everlasting presence. Though we feel lonely and estranged at times, never are we abandoned by You.

May the night always be a reminder to us to see your face. You who govern the night, inspire in us a faith like our ancestors of old, a faith that casts our needless fear and crippling despair.

We ask you to bless this night. May it increase our longing for the fullness of your kingdom, more bountiful than all the stars that cover the sky.

Awed by the immensity of night, may we live as vigilant pilgrims, always ready to walk when you call us home. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
The Calendar of Blessings, originally produced in 1993, was initially written by three rural advocates who lived and worked in the Texas Panhandle. Their mission was to highlight rural culture and spirituality while also promoting small town vitality and sustainable agriculture in the Southern High Plains. We are grateful to them for their inspired efforts: Virginia Artho, Hereford, TX; Darryl Birkenfeld, Amarillo, TX; and Jerry Stein, Amarillo, TX.

The artwork introducing each month in this calendar was drawn by Darrel Nelson, a previous contributor to Catholic Rural Life publications. His artwork helped earn us several publication awards from the Catholic Press Association during the 1990s.

This updated Calendar of Blessings (2014) includes additional Scriptural passages.

Catholic Rural Life, established in 1923, is a national membership organization that educates and advocates on behalf of farm families, rural communities and a healthy environment. We welcome all people who share these goals to join with us as members. For Membership information, visit our website www.catholicrurallife.org, email info@catholicrurallife.org or call the St. Paul, Minn., office: 651 962 5956.