

THE CONGREGATION AT PRAYER

Stephen Confesses Jesus Christ unto Death

2 Chronicles 24:17–22; Acts 6:8–7:2a, 51–60; Matthew 22:34–39

The Christ is born in the land of Judah, but His own people will not receive Him. As it was in the days of Joash, so it is also in the days of Herod and Pilate. The Lord “sent prophets among them to bring them back to the Lord. . . but they would not pay attention” (2 Chronicles 24:19). As Zechariah was being stoned he cried out, “May the Lord see and avenge!” (2 Chronicles 24:-22). But the infant



Jesus has come to save and to forgive. Today, the Church remembers St. Stephen, the first martyr after Christ’s ascension. His confession recalled the stiff-necked, uncircumcised hearts and ears of Judah that would not receive the Righteous One (Acts 7:51–52). But as his body was being stoned and his spirit received by the Lord Jesus, Stephen cried, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (Acts 7:59–60), bearing witness to the One who also said,

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). On the second day of Christmas, our thoughts are already directed to Christ’s atoning death to save rebels like us, and to the vision Stephen saw: Heaven is open to us, Christ is reigning at God’s right hand, and no sin, death, or foe can stop Him.

✠ THE FEAST OF ST. STEPHEN, MARTYR ✠

INVOCATION *(make the sign of the holy cross and say)*

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

THE APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the ✠ life everlasting.

PSALMODY *(sing or read out loud each day)*

Psalm 119

LEARN BY HEART LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM: The Ten Commandments

The Fifth Commandment

You shall not murder.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.

DAILY READINGS

Sunday:	Psalm 28	Genesis 26	2 Chronicles 2	Luke 19:28-46
Monday:	Psalm 29	Genesis 27:1-40	2 Chronicles 3	Luke 19:47-20:44
Tuesday:	Psalm 30	Genesis 27:41-28:9	2 Chronicles 4	Luke 20:45-21:38
Wednesday:	Psalm 31	Genesis 28:10-22	2 Chronicles 5	Luke 22:1-46
Thursday:	Psalm 32	Genesis 29:1-30	2 Chronicles 6	Luke 22:47-23:25
Friday:	Psalm 33	Genesis 29:31-30:43	2 Chronicles 7	Luke 23:26-56
Saturday:	Psalm 34	Genesis 31	2 Chronicles 8	Luke 24

HYMN OF THE WEEK

By All Your Saints in Warfare (7)

LSB 517

PRAYERS

The following suggestions are offered as an aid in developing the habit of praying for ourselves and others each week:

Sunday: For the joy of the resurrection among us; for the fruit of faith nourished by Word and Sacrament.

Monday: For faith to live in the promise of Holy Baptism; for one's calling and daily work; for the unemployed; for the salvation and well-being of our neighbors; for schools, colleges, and seminaries; for good government and for peace.

Tuesday: For deliverance against temptation and evil; for the addicted and despairing, the tortured and oppressed; for those struggling with sin.

Wednesday: For marriage and family, that husbands and wives, parents and children live in ordered harmony according to God's Word; for parents who must raise children alone; for our communities and neighborhoods.

Thursday: For the Church and her pastors; for deacons, teachers, and other church workers; for missionaries and for all who serve the Church; for fruitful and salutary use of the blessed Sacrament of Christ's body and blood.

Friday: For faithful preaching of the holy cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; for the spread of His knowledge throughout the whole world; for the persecuted and oppressed; for the sick and dying.

Saturday: For faithfulness to the end; for the renewal of those who are withering in the faith or have fallen away; for receptive hearts and minds to God's Word on the Lord's Day; for pastors as they prepare to administer and for people as they prepare to receive Christ's holy gifts.

Heavenly Father, in the midst of our sufferings for the sake of Christ, grant us grace to follow the example of the first martyr, Stephen, that we also may look to the One who suffered and was crucified on our behalf, and pray for those who do us wrong; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

O Lord, look down from Heaven. Behold, visit, and relieve Your servants who stand in need of our prayers: **[insert the names of family members, friends, church members, government officials, those in need, etc.]** Look upon them with the eyes of Your mercy. Grant them comfort and sure confidence in You. Defend them from all danger, and keep them in perpetual peace and safety, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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 and ever.

Morning

I thank You, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your Dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me.

Evening

I thank You, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your Dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins, where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me.

BLESSING

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit ✠ be with us all.

Amen.

LOOKING FORWARD TO NEXT SUNDAY: *The Second Sunday after Christmas*

Genesis 46:1–7

Psalm 77

1 Peter 4:12–19

Matthew 2:13–23

Hymn of the Day

Thine Honor Save, O Christ, Our Lord

TLH 265