

The City Church, New York

The Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession – Sunday January 1, 2006

On this day in 1922, 31-year-old German philosopher Edith Stein was baptized. She became a Carmelite nun in 1931 and, in 1942, died in the gas chambers at Auschwitz.

Let us pray.

Lord: Even in the Book of Lamentations we're assured that Your mercies are "new every morning." On this new morning of a new Year of Yours, we're given another beginning by Your mercy. It's appropriate to remember beginnings – our baptisms into You, our being recreated in Christ, with the old, gone, the new, come. May we renew our vows of Christian baptism and commitment – whether promises made by our parents or promises we made when we declared our faith in You. Give us a joyous desire to recommit to You and Your will alone. We so easily and so often forget our promises to You. We thank You that You never forget Your promise to us – from before Your creation of time.

Lord, we're grateful for the witness of our sister Edith on this anniversary of her baptism. To follow You, she endured rejection from family and friends. Some of us, too, may have to endure something like that. Yet she endured so much more. May we learn from her faithful example in the face of Evil's would-be "final solution," so that on our watch, in this land of religious freedom, we might witness with a grateful boldness.

Lord, help us pay closer attention to our worship in the new year. May we get here on time – in time for Your quieting all our distractions so we might truly focus our minds and center our hearts' purpose in adoration, readied for enlightenment and strengthening that we might learn to love You with all we are and have and love each neighbor as ourselves. May we embrace every opportunity You give us to worship and be built up together in Spirit and Truth – closely attending to the reading of Your Holy Word, singing with joy, praying to You in earnest, giving back to You some tokens of Your bounty to us, carefully listening to the preached word and, when each hour is over, going forth as truer Christians refreshed and renewed for service in a world that so needs to know You.

We pray in Jesus' name as we add the prayer he graciously taught us to pray, saying:

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.