

# Sibyls' Service

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24<sup>th</sup> Feb 2026

# O Virtus Sapientia

## Antiphon for Divine Wisdom Hildegard of Bingen

O virtus Sapientie,  
que circuiens circuisti,  
comprehendendo omnia  
in una via que habet vitam,  
tres alas habens,  
quarum una in altum volat  
et altera de terra sudat  
  
et tertia undique volat.  
Laus tibi sit, sicut te decet,  
O Sapientia.

O strength of Wisdom!  
who, circling, circled,  
enclosing all  
in one lifegiving path,  
Three wings you have:  
one soars to the heights,  
one distils its essence  
upon the earth,  
and the third is everywhere.  
Praise be to you, as is fitting,  
O Wisdom.

# Opening Prayer

The earth is God's and all that is in it.

Who shall stand in the high places of God?

Those with clean hands and pure hearts

Those do not lift their soul to what is false

Or speak with deceit.

It is they who will receive blessing and vindication from God,

Come God and be with us today. Our hearts and minds are open.

(based on Psalm 24)

# Confession

Loving God, Creator of the Universe, you know our inner hearts.

Too often we have failed to follow your ways, to love our neighbour and to truly love you.

Forgive us for our past failures.

Grant us fresh hearts and new minds so that we can celebrate the full richness and diversity of human experience in the Love of Christ.

## Luke 10:38–42

Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

## John 11:20–29

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’ Martha said to him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’ She said to him, ‘Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.’ When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, ‘The Teacher is here and is calling for you.’ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.

# Communion

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. (1 Cor 11:23–26)

# Communion

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?

Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. (1 Cor 10:16–17)

## Mary and Martha

Martha was distracted “about much service (*diakonian*)” and complained: “my sister has left me alone to serve (*diakonein*)”

Jesus said to her “Martha, Martha...” which to our ears might sound exasperated or condescending.

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But there are only seven times in the Bible where God calls a name twice and each time it is a profound moment of calling in their life: Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samual, Saul, Simon, and now Martha.

Jesus is calling Martha to follow him and become his disciple.

He is saying, in effect. “You have been serving me and my disciples, now let me serve you for a while”

## Martha's Feast and Jesus' Feast

Jesus is the Wisdom of God incarnate. In Proverbs 9, Wisdom calls to everyone to come to her feast of wisdom: “she calls from the highest places in the town... ‘Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Leave inexperience behind, and live, and walk in the way of insight.’”

Jesus is offering his feast to *Mary* and *Martha*.

In Luke 22:25-27 Jesus tells his disciples “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you... I am among you as one who serves.” In John 13:15 Jesus says “I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.”

He is calling *Martha* to come and join in with feast of wisdom, as her sister *Mary* is already doing.

# Disciples

Mary “sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying.” But this was not a position of inferiority and silent submission. Rabbis sat down to teach: Jesus would be sitting down on the ground outside the house with the disciples seated around him. So they would all be at the same level. The ones “sitting at Jesus feet” would be the keenest disciples, the ones who wanted who wanted “front row” seats, right next to Jesus.

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Disciples would start by listening quietly, then the teacher would ask questions and then they in turn would ask questions and enter a detailed discussion.

# Disciples

We can see this progression take place in Luke 2:42–52 when Jesus was presented at the Temple at the age of twelve, and stayed behind to debate with the teachers:

“After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.”

(Luke 2:46–47)

Jesus was sitting, listening, asking questions and finally, answering their questions.

## Any Questions?

Jesus never rebuked anyone for questioning his teaching (unlike many modern teachers!) — even when they were only asking questions to try and catch him out.

A disciple would start by listening, then asking questions, then answering questions, then when they are fully taught, they would become a teacher, able to teach others also in the same way.

This is the path Mary has chosen, and Jesus declares “it shall not be taken away from her”. She will be allowed, indeed encouraged, to follow this path right to the end and become a teacher in her own right.

This is the path that he also calls Martha to take.

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Martha answers “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.” This is a profound statement of faith, similar to Peter’s in Lk 9:20 when Jesus asked “Who do you say I am?” and Peter answered, “The Messiah of God.”

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Martha has clearly learned much from Jesus.

# Song

Let us Build a House Where Love Can Dwell

*Marty Haugan*

# Blessing

May God help you become exactly who you are. May the Divine bless and keep you safe; may God's light shine upon you with grace; may you perceive the Holiness in the faces of others and in the world, lifting you up, cherishing you, making you whole. May we be strong, strong, and strengthen one another.