

**DRAFT**

Submitted by Vern the Void to

# The Congregation of Abraxas

## A RITUAL FOR PEOPLE WHO HATE RITUAL

### *A Didactic Pilgrimage Parish Liturgy*

Note: The Abraxas Matins, Vespers, and Compline are examples of "monastic" hours. The Eucharist may be used either as a monastic or "parish" liturgy. This liturgy is not designed for regular use but rather to initiate discussion about parish worship practices. Normally some of the text is chanted and hymns are included. Water may be poured before "Joining."

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## Entering

### PRELUDE

**INTROIT** (see attachment if provided)

### OUR PURPOSE

*Leader:*

The question on gathering together Sunday morning is —  
Why are we getting together, anyhow?

1. Is it because we are so afraid of the world that we need to reassure ourselves that we have friends, and even that we are worthy to have friends?

*All:*

**and so we huddle reassuringly together,  
a lonely crowd?**

2. Is it because we make business contacts here, or show our clothes or life-styles, or to exercise power in this here part of the world because we feel powerless in our own personal lives?

*All:*

**and so we disguise our insecurity  
in the propriety of church membership?**

3. Is it because we revolt against some former creed or ritual and cut ourselves off from our former perplexing selves and past?

*All:*

**and so we complain as often as we can  
of any reminders of those years?**

4. Is it because we seek intellectual stimulation, but wish someone else to do the work for us, to make us happy and informed, to make sense out of the chaos of the world?

*All:*

**and so the compartment of Intellect, unattached to  
Will, gets a fair massage for a few irrelevant minutes?**

5. Is it because we want to prove to ourselves and others perhaps that we are genuinely interested in religious growth?

*All:*

**and so if we do not grow, it must be beyond our power,  
and the fault lies elsewhere?**

*Leader:*


No, our reason for gathering is none of the above;  
though even if it were,  
it would be accepted and approved;  
for we are only human beings,  
and there is no need to make us feel any worse.  
We don't have to be perfect; we account to no One,  
though we are responsible fields of a larger Process  
we do not understand  
but which out of despair we must come to trust.

*North:*

There are many ways to say what our true purpose is.  
It is said in unspoken ways,  
by sharing presence with each other,  
regardless of surface disputes and restless words.  
It is said in handshake and smile  
beyond the friendly flatter.


*South:*

We are children of the universe,  
and we have come to play together.  
We set aside our work, our ordinary rules of behavior,  
our conventions and expectations of achievement.  
Sometimes, we just have to sing and dance,  
unknowing why,  
but filled with gratitude, even in pain.


*Leader:*   
We gather this hour on pilgrimage.

*North:*  
The earth spins through the sky,  
going we know not where.  
So this hour we enter mystery, unsure of what's ahead.

*South:*  
This is our adventure, uncertain of the ending,  
except we know we want out of here by 12 noon sharp!

*Leader:*   
This is kairos: we enter eternity;  
but we will return to ordinary time in time for lunch.

*North:*  
As a silly, stupid gesture,  
but because we make up this play as we go along  
(as, sometimes unknowing,  
we play out our lives as we go along),  
we now remove our shoes,  
to make our pilgrimage on holy ground.


[All pause as individuals remove their shoes and place them under their chairs or nearby, until the end of the service when they will be put on again.] 



*South:*  
As a silly, stupid gesture,  
but because we make up this play as we go along  
(as, sometimes unknowing,  
we play out our lives as we go along),  
we now light incense,  
to attract the attention of the gods;  
or if there be no gods,  
at least to remind ourselves  
that we are children of the universe playing together.

[The congregation pauses as the Leader lights the incense.]



*All:*  
**As a silly, stupid gesture,  
but because there is nothing else to do  
at a time like this,  
we pass from one another a flame,  
match to match, until the flaming chalice is lit,  
recalling pilgrimages of the past  
which provide us a pilgrimage chance we take today.**

 [The congregation pauses. The Leader strikes a match and lights a member's who then lights another's, until the last member's match is lit, to light the flaming chalice. After your match has passed on the flame to another,

blow it out and break the match in half. Put it in your shoe as a reminder of this silly seriousness.]  

*All:*  
**Yes, yes, we hear the bell.  
Another gimmick, another toy.  
But our secular lives are made of gimmicks and toys  
we take too seriously.  
We fight over them, and nations war.  
We let the sacred bell mean to us:  
it is all a game, so let us not harm each other.**

6. Our purpose this morning is to worship,  
in depths to consider those things of worth.  
We consider them by adventure;  
we unite on religious pilgrimage.

7. But the irony of our purpose is this:  
in a religious journey,  
if we already know what we are looking for,  
and rush to find it,

8. we miss the pleasure of roadside conversation  
and the discovery of the unexpected,  
which can change our lives —  
which is why openness is dangerous —

9. far safer to get what you're after and get back  
than to join with crazy Unitarian Universalists,  
uncertain of the path;

*All:*  
**Thus the silly shoes, the blatant bell,  
the irritating incense, the fearsome flame,  
may reveal deep things:  
In order to be truly open to what is on the path,  
in order not to be unduly influenced  
by expectation and advance guess:  
The highest purpose is to have no purpose at all.**

*Leader:*  
Such is a religious pilgrimage; such is our worship —  
The highest purpose is to have no purpose at all.

## Joining

### PREFACE

10. ACT TWO of our worship is peculiar.  
We have acknowledged that we gather for no purpose,  
so beholding the universe and history  
as our parent and child,  
that we may see what is, rather than what we expect to see.

11. The peculiarity is  
that to cleanse the doors of perception,  
we need one another's healing,  
and so a purpose emerges after all.

12. Our pilgrimage this hour is together,  
even though we must often walk alone.

13. We gather strength from one another;  
even as strangers, we discover who we are in deeper ways.

14. We sometimes fall and are bruised;  
we sometimes stumble into the chasm.

15. Therefore in this ACT,  
we renounce our agendas  
to be open to a companionable adventure.

## CONFESSSION

*Leader and All:*

Our cleverness can destroy the earth.

**Life, have mercy!**

Our cleverness can destroy all life.

**Life, have mercy!**

Life anoints us with many gifts.

**Life, have mercy!**

Let us each be merciful to all.

**May we each be merciful to life.**

## THE MYTH

a story displaying the structure of sacred reality



## OUR QUESTIONS

16. In our time who shall affirm their unity with all life?

**Those who have put aside  
their unwarranted sense of failure.**

17. Who shall affirm their unity  
with all peoples everywhere?

**Those who have made peace with their neighbors.**

18. Who shall enter the presence of the Wholesome?

**Those who have abandoned self-importance  
and opened the gates of communication.**

*Leader:*

Let us stand and join our words together  
to acknowledge and resolve the world's right and rift:

## OUR LIMITS

**We who stand in the presence of holiness  
admit to ourselves and to each other —  
that sometimes our joy is so great  
we lose self-awareness  
and become one with the flow around us;  
that our love is so expansive  
we accept with gratitude all that is,  
and practice compassion without limit;  
that as a result  
we and others have lived fully and with faith;**

**We also admit to ourselves and each other —  
that sometimes we have allowed ourselves  
to be distracted,  
losing sight of our center,  
that we have done things we ought not to have done,  
and left undone things we ought to have done;  
that as a result  
we and others have suffered brokenness.**

## OUR REACH

19. We ask now from ourselves and each other
20. that our eyes be reopened to the wholesome vision,
21. that our ears be made keen to the music of the spheres,
22. that our hands be strong and graceful doing justice,
23. that our hearts beat the rhythm  
of the awakening world,
24. as we give thanks for this holy Day of Creation.

## OUR PEACE

*All:*

**We who acknowledge our whole selves  
affirm our common humanity  
by giving and receiving peace.**

[The people may move from their places to exchange  
greetings by clasp of hand, short conversation or embrace.  
At the bell, all return to their places.]



## GREETINGS and ANNOUNCEMENTS



## **OFFERTORY SENTENCE**

25. With these gifts to each other we say to each other:
26. we share the responsibilities of freedom,  
the uncertainties of democracy,
27. the acceptance of a sundry fellowship in pilgrimage,
28. a confidence in the vindication of the honest search,
29. and a faith in the redemption of genuine love —
30. thus we make ourselves a free congregation.

## **Venturing**

### **SERMON** or **ACTIVITY**

### **DISCUSSION** as time permits

### **DECLARATION OF LIFE'S GOODNESS**

*North:*

Together we make a joyful noise  
in the gallery of the abyss!

*South:*

We enter the wilds of life with singing!

*North:*

We know that friendships are divine,  
that we constitute each other.

*South:*

We trust the pilgrimage that gives us being for a while

*North:*

And relax in its ultimate motion.

*South:*

With thanksgiving laughter we sing  
the joke of our existence —

*North:*

For life is good, our estate is sacred,  
and love endures forever.

*South:*

The ease we praise and shake unites us all.

## **Re-turning**


### **RE-SHOEING**

*Leader:*

Chronos appears: it is time for coffee.

*All:*

**We return the shoes to our feet  
and identities to our selves.  
Our feet carry us apart for a week  
in separate journeys.**

[The congregation pauses as members put on their shoes.  
At the bell:] 

**We extinguish the flame, soon silence the bell,  
and let the sacred odor vanish, as we depart.**



### **QUATRAIN**

(T S Eliot)

**We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.**

### **ASCRPTION**

(Finlandia — Curtis-Barnet)

**The world is One; its name is also Many;  
Now is Eternal; here, Infinity.  
I am born free! an ever-changing river  
Is what I am -- and neighbor, so are you.  
We have the power, thru laughter, love and tears  
To face all fears, and live forever free.**

**BENEDICTION** such as  
<From wonder to wonder existence opens.>

### **POSTLUDE** and

### **COFFEE HOUR**