

Sunday, April 8, 2018

Second Sunday of Easter

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, with joy we celebrate the day of our Lord's resurrection. By the grace of Christ among us, enable us to show the power of the resurrection in all that we say and do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Acts 4:32-35

While the apostles testified to others about the resurrection of Jesus, the early Christian community shared what they owned or sold their possessions to help their fellow believers who were in need.

³²Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. ³³With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. ³⁵They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1--2:2

The opening of this letter serves as a reality check. The reality of God is light, but our confessed reality has been sin. God cleanses us from our sinful reality through Christ's death so that we live in fellowship with Christ and walk in God's light.

¹We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—²this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—³we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

⁵This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; ⁷but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

^{2:1}My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ²and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Gospel: John 20:19-31

The story of Easter continues as the risen Lord appears to his disciples. His words to Thomas offer a blessing to all who entrust themselves in faith to the risen Lord.

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” ²⁸Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Rejoicing in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we pray for the witness of the church, the wholeness of creation, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Holy God, you speak peace in the presence of fear. Give us courage to testify to your grace with our lives. Embolden prophets, preachers, and teachers to speak your truth. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, you create peace in the midst of chaos. Where storms rage and winds howl, bring calm. Protect people and animals from the dangers of weather. Restore damaged lands and homes. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Holy God, you are peace in a violent world. Heal neighborhoods ravaged by crime. Reconcile political factions at war. Build relationships where suspicion keeps us apart, and bring us to the day of unity. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Holy God, you bring peace to a hurting world. Fill the stomachs of the hungry. Bind up the shattered. Give rest to the weary and hope to the disillusioned. Restore the sick (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Holy God, you breathe your Spirit of peace into us. Enlivened by the Spirit, equip us to bring new life to all we meet in our work and in our play. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Holy God, you are our peace in this world and the next. Comfort all who mourn (*especially*). Hold them in your tender care. Bring us all around the table as we share the heavenly banquet. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We entrust all our prayers to you, gracious God. Receive them by the power of the Holy Spirit and the love of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

You are the body of Christ raised up for the world.

Go in peace. Share the good news.

Thanks be to God.

Especially on the Day of Pentecost

Go in peace. The Spirit sends us forth to serve.

Thanks be to God.

Sunday, April 15, 2018

Third Sunday of Easter

Prayer of the Day

Holy and righteous God, you are the author of life, and you adopt us to be your children. Fill us with your words of life, that we may live as witnesses to the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Acts 3:12-19

After healing a crippled man, Peter preaches to the people how God's promises to Israel have been fulfilled in Jesus. Through the proclamation of Christ's death and resurrection, God is offering them forgiveness and restoration in Jesus' name.

¹²[Peter] addressed the people, "You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?"¹³The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him.

¹⁴But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, ¹⁵and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

¹⁷"And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer.

¹⁹Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out."

Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-7

God has loved us in order to make us children of God. Though we do not yet know the full details of our future existence, we trust that God will reveal it just as God revealed Jesus to take away our sins.

¹See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. ³And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

⁴Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. ⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

Gospel: Luke 24:36b-48

In this account of an appearance after his resurrection, Jesus opens the minds of the disciples to understand him as Messiah. Jesus convinces them that he has been raised and sends them on a mission to proclaim the message of repentance and forgiveness.

^{36b}Jesus himself stood among [the disciples] and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ³⁷They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate in their presence.

⁴⁴Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.”

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Rejoicing in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we pray for the witness of the church, the wholeness of creation, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Holy God, we pray for the church and its many expressions. Strengthen the National Youth Gathering planning team. Prepare the hearts and minds of the youth and adults who will experience your love this summer. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Creating God, you gave us dominion over every living creature. Grant us wisdom to use our power to develop sustainable farming and housing practices. Slow down our rush to consume. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Merciful God, walk with all refugees who leave their homes to move to safety. Protect them on their journey. Greet them with hospitality. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Compassionate God, you heal us. For all who have not been granted the healing they desire and for all who cannot access the care they need, send social workers, doctors, parish nurses, and other caregivers. Today we pray especially for . . . Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

God our provider, you call us to give generously. Bless the finance and stewardship teams of this congregation. Make us joyful givers of the time, talents, and treasures you have first given us.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God of our ancestors, in you we have our beginning and our end. We remember all the faithful departed. Enfold in a shield of peace all those who mourn (*especially*). Hold them in your love. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We entrust all our prayers to you, gracious God. Receive them by the power of the Holy Spirit and the love of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

You are the body of Christ raised up for the world.

Go in peace. Share the good news.

Thanks be to God.

Especially on the Day of Pentecost

Go in peace. The Spirit sends us forth to serve.

Thanks be to God.

Sunday, April 22, 2018

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Prayer of the Day

O Lord Christ, good shepherd of the sheep, you seek the lost and guide us into your fold. Feed us, and we shall be satisfied; heal us, and we shall be whole. Make us one with you, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Acts 4:5-12

Peter and John had been arrested the previous day because they were proclaiming the news of the resurrection to the people. In today's reading, Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit so that he is able to proclaim salvation in Jesus' name to the religious authorities.

⁵The next day [the] rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, ⁶with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, ¹⁰let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. ¹¹This Jesus is

‘the stone that was rejected by you, the builders;
it has become the cornerstone.’

¹²There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.”

Second Reading: 1 John 3:16-24

Jesus’ death on our behalf is the clearest demonstration of divine love. This is the very love we share with others, not just through our words but especially through our deeds. In sharing such love we fulfill God’s commandments.

¹⁶We know love by this, that [Jesus Christ] laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. ¹⁷How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

¹⁸Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. ¹⁹And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him ²⁰whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; ²²and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

²³And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. ²⁴All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

Gospel: John 10:11-18

In language that recalls the twenty-third psalm, Jesus describes himself as the shepherd who cares for his sheep. He is willing to die for them, and he is able to overcome death for them.

[Jesus said:] ¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

¹²The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Rejoicing in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we pray for the witness of the church, the wholeness of creation, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Bless all who shepherd your sheep and guide them in their serving. We pray for church custodians, office managers, Sunday school teachers, confirmation leaders, baptismal sponsors, deacons, pastors, youth workers, and bishops. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Restore natural environments damaged by our hands. We pray for river valleys and grassy plains, coral reefs and arctic ice, mountains, deserts, and marshlands. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Protect and guide first responders. Bring mercy and justice with their presence. We pray for military personnel, firefighters, paramedics, and police officers, and for disaster relief and crisis intervention teams. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Heal and renew all who ache for a better tomorrow. We pray for the unemployed and underemployed, the forgotten, the nameless, and the outcasts; for our enemies; and for our loved ones (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Give to all who are restless, reckless, or uncertain the peace you promise that is deeper and richer than anything we can imagine. We pray for all who live with chronic pain, who live with anxiety, and who are ill or hospitalized (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Nourish us with the testimony of all the disciples who have gone before us. We give thanks for the faithful departed and their witness in every age. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We entrust all our prayers to you, gracious God. Receive them by the power of the Holy Spirit and the love of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

You are the body of Christ raised up for the world.

Go in peace. Share the good news.

Thanks be to God.

Especially on the Day of Pentecost

Go in peace. The Spirit sends us forth to serve.

Thanks be to God.

Sunday, April 29, 2018

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Prayer of the Day

O God, you give us your Son as the vine apart from whom we cannot live. Nourish our life in his resurrection, that we may bear the fruit of love and know the fullness of your joy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Acts 8:26-40

Led by the Spirit, Philip encounters an Ethiopian official who is returning to his African home after having been to Jerusalem to worship. Philip uses their encounter to proclaim the gospel to him. Upon coming to faith in Jesus, the Ethiopian is baptized by Philip.

²⁶An angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) ²⁷So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." ³⁰So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³²Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.

³³In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth."

³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" ³⁵Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" ³⁸He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Second Reading: 1 John 4:7-21

We love God and others because God first loved us. We cannot say we love God, whom we have not seen, while hating fellow Christians, whom we regularly see. Love toward God is to be matched by love toward others because the essence of God is love.

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. ¹⁵God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. ¹⁷Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. ¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. ²¹The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

Gospel: John 15:1-8

On the night of his arrest, Jesus taught his disciples about the relationship they would have with him. Those who abide in his word and love would bear fruit, for apart from him, they could do nothing.

[Jesus said:] ¹"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. ²He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Rejoicing in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we pray for the witness of the church, the wholeness of creation, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

For ministries that nurture faith formation. For missionaries and Bible study leaders. For those who are seeking, questioning, or curious. For seminarians, campus ministers, and the newly baptized, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For the beauty and health of the earth. For vineyards and orchards, groves and plains. For rain forests and arctic tundra. For volcanoes and mountains, hills and valleys. For oceans deep and rivers wide, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For spears to be beat into pruning hooks. For harsh words to be reformed into loving speech. For bombs and sniper attacks to cease. For justice and peace in every land, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For homeless youth and rejected children. For isolated grandparents and lonely nursing home residents. For the shamed, the slighted, and the disregarded members of our communities. For all the sick (*especially*), let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For all who live with post-traumatic stress disorder and postpartum depression. For all who struggle with eating disorders and anorexia. For all who suffer in silence and all who suffer alone, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

In thanksgiving for (*Catherine of Siena and*) all the mystics and theologians who live eternally with you. For those we mourn and those we would rather forget. For the kingdom on earth to be as it is in heaven, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

We entrust all our prayers to you, gracious God. Receive them by the power of the Holy Spirit and the love of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Dismissal

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