

Sunday, May 6, 2018

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Prayer of the Day

O God, you have prepared for those who love you joys beyond understanding. Pour into our hearts such love for you that, loving you above all things, we may obtain your promises, which exceed all we can desire; through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Acts 10:44-48

While Peter shares the good news of Jesus with a Gentile soldier and his family, the Holy Spirit comes upon them. Recognizing that the Spirit works inclusively in the lives of both Jews and Gentiles, Peter commands that these Gentiles also be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, ⁴⁶for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷“Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” ⁴⁸So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

Second Reading: 1 John 5:1-6

God’s children believe that Jesus is the Messiah and love God by keeping God’s commandments. Thus the world is conquered not through military might but through love and faith.

¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, ⁴for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. ⁵Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

⁶This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

Gospel: John 15:9-17

On the night of his arrest, Jesus delivers a final testimony to his disciples to help them in the days ahead. Here, he repeats the most important of all his commands, that they love one another.

[Jesus said:] ⁹“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments

and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹²“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

Prayers of Intercession

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, your voice calls us to worship. Where discord bellows within the church, unite us in harmony. Where we lack direction, guide us in singing your song with our unique voices. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Creative Lord, your melodies formed the earth and all that is in it. Receive the roar of the sea and the rhythmic clap of the rivers. Rejoice as the hills ring out in praise. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Holy One, you hear all our moans and groans. Where lament and the blues resound, send us to listen. Send us to comfort. Send us to build relationships rooted in your justice and peace. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Serenade the estranged and all who suffer alone. Accompany high-functioning addicts and the frightened who have no one to turn to. Give rest to overworked caregivers and people living with schizophrenia. Today we pray especially for Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Eternal Song, you call us to share our gifts for your glory. We thank you and praise you for our musicians and vocalists, choir directors and hymnwriters. Bless all who lead and all who sing in worship. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Your goodness echoes through all time with the songs of the saints. Thank you for all the disciples who have mentored us through their gift of music. Keep your song within us this day and always. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

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.

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

Thanks be to God.

Sunday, May 13, 2018

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Prayer of the Day

Gracious and glorious God, you have chosen us as your own, and by the powerful name of Christ you protect us from evil. By your Spirit transform us and your beloved world, that we may find our joy in 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 1:15-17, 21-26

In the days between Jesus' ascension and Pentecost, Peter oversees the process whereby one of the members of the community of believers is chosen to be the twelfth apostle, in order to fill the vacancy created by Judas' treachery and death.

¹⁵In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, ¹⁶“Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus—¹⁷for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.” ²¹So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.” ²³So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴Then they prayed and said, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” ²⁶And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Second Reading: 1 John 5:9-13

God has borne witness to the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ. Whoever believes in the Son of God believes in the witness of God and has the promise of eternal life.

⁹If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. ¹⁰Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Gospel: John 17:6-19

In this reading the church hears Jesus' words on the night before his death. This gospel reports the words of Jesus' prayer, a prayer for his disciples and for all who would believe in him through their words.

[Jesus prayed:] ⁶“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. ¹⁴I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

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.

End divisions within your church, O God. Open us to receive your testimony. Make us one as you are one. Make our joy complete. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Nourish the soil of your earth, holy God. Bless the trees planted by the water, and bless the seeds planted by birds and by our hands. Bring forth fruit in due season. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for warring nations, political refugees, and peacekeepers (*especially*). Wash away the fear and hatred that tear us apart. Let justice roll down like a mighty stream. Quench our thirst for peace in every land. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for those who are homeless, naked, hungry, imprisoned, abandoned, or sick (*especially*). Send us to shelter, clothe, feed, and visit those in need. Make us your healing and compassionate presence in the world. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for mothers we love and mothers we struggle to love. For adoptive mothers, stepmothers, and foster mothers. For those who long to be mothers. For everyone who has mothered us in the faith. Give rest, healing, wisdom, and strength, mothering God. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You give us eternal life in your Son. When doubts and fears arise, give us peace in the resurrection promise. Sanctify us in your truth and unite us with all the saints. 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.

May God who has brought us from death to life fill you with great joy.

Almighty God, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

Amen.

Dismissal

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

Thanks be to God.

Sunday, May 20, 2018

Day of Pentecost

Prayer of the Day

Mighty God, you breathe life into our bones, and your Spirit brings truth to the world. Send us this Spirit, transform us by your truth, and give us language to proclaim your gospel, 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 2:1-21

Originally Pentecost was a Jewish thanksgiving-type festival celebrated seven weeks after Passover. On this particular Pentecost, however, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the entire community of believers just as Jesus had promised and the scriptures had prophesied. Empowered by the Spirit, the entire community bears witness to God's activity in multiple languages.

¹When the day of Pentecost had come, [the apostles] were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷‘In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ ”

Second Reading: Romans 8:22-27

By pouring the Holy Spirit into our hearts, God gives us the promised first fruit of eternal life so that we await God’s future in hope. In the meantime, the Spirit also intercedes for us by carrying the prayers of our weak human hearts to God.

²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought,

but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Gospel: John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

When speaking to his disciples before his death, Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as “the Helper” and described the difference the Spirit would make in their lives and in the world.

[Jesus said,] ²⁶“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. ²⁷You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

^{16:4b}“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. ⁷Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹about sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; ¹¹about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

¹²“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

Prayers of Intercession

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

Filled with the Holy Spirit, we join with the church in every place, praying for the world that God so loves.

A brief silence.

Lord of life, you baptize your people with the fire of the Spirit. Grace your church everywhere with your visions and dreams, so that as we testify, all will hear the gospel and call upon your saving name. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Your creating Spirit renews the face of the earth. Bring to birth new life in the earth’s land forms and waters. Awaken us from the slumber of neglect to show tender care for our home. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Your Spirit swept over the waters and you created the human family. Now we are divided, scattered like dry bones. Connect the nations with the strength of the Holy Spirit, so that all will live in hope. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Your Spirit sighs with every need. Guide us in honoring the dignity of everyone and opening our lives to others. Pour your healing mercies into the lives of all who need your care (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Your Spirit has called and gathered this congregation into life in Christ. Help us in our weakness, teach us to pray, search our hearts, and intercede for us, your beloved saints, according to your will. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

By your Holy Spirit you have called and gathered people from every nation under heaven. Gather us with all the saints (*especially*) at the heavenly banquet that has no end. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

By the sure guidance of your Holy Spirit, O God, we lift up our prayers in trust and thanksgiving; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Dismissal

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

Thanks be to God.

Sunday, May 27, 2018

The Holy Trinity

Prayer of the Day

Almighty Creator and ever-living God: we worship your glory, eternal Three-in-One, and we praise your power, majestic One-in-Three. Keep us steadfast in this faith, defend us in all adversity, and bring us at last into your presence, where you live in endless joy and love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8

This reading narrates Isaiah's vision of the Lord surrounded by angels. They sing "Holy, holy, holy," a song the church sings at the beginning of the great thanksgiving. This liturgical text invites the church and all creation to sing in praise of God's glory. That glory is God's mercy toward sinners.

¹In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. ²Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. ³And

one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. ⁵And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

⁶Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. ⁷The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.” ⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”

Second Reading: Romans 8:12-17

In describing the new life of faith, Paul refers to all three persons of the Trinity: the Spirit leads us to recognize that we are children of God the Father and sisters and brothers with Christ the Son.

¹²Brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—¹³for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Gospel: John 3:1-17

Jesus’ miracles prompt Nicodemus to visit him in secrecy. Jesus tells him about being born of the Spirit and about the Son who has been sent by God to save.

¹Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ²He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” ³Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” ⁴Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” ⁹Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹“Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

Prayers of Intercession

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

Filled with the Holy Spirit, we join with the church in every place, praying for the world that God so loves.

A brief silence.

Abba, when we cry to you, your Spirit bears witness with our spirit. Give to your church the confidence of the children of God, so that we boldly share with everyone your world-saving love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

The whole earth is full of your glory: cities teem, fields flourish, mountains soar, and waters abound. Blot out our sin of spoiling your creation. Send us to go for you, mending what is torn and tattered in your world. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You so loved the world that you gave your only Son. In these days, when nation condemns nation, save us. Give us strength and fill us with your justice and peace. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Your people cry out to you, seeking the goodness and hope of your holiness. Let the wind of your Spirit blow into the lives of all who suffer from injustice, want, or anguish of any kind (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

In our living and in our dying, we belong to you. In loving remembrance, we honor those who live with scars or have died defending our nation. Beat our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning hooks, and teach us your ways. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

With affection we remember the saints now departed and rejoice in their faithful witness (*especially John Calvin, renewer of the church*). Through their example, provoke us to holy lives of loving service in your name. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

By the sure guidance of your Holy Spirit, O God, we lift up our prayers in trust and thanksgiving; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Dismissal

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

Thanks be to God.

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