



Morning Prayer
Fifth Sunday of Easter
10th May 2020

An Order for Morning Prayer on Sunday

10 May 2020

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† Preparation

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you
and also with you.

This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

We have come together in the name of Christ
to offer our praise and thanksgiving,
to hear and receive God's holy word,
to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins,
that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Prayers of Penitence

Christ our passover lamb has been sacrificed for us.
Let us therefore rejoice by putting away all malice and evil
and confessing our sins with a sincere and true heart.

cf 1 Corinthians 5.7,8

Lord God,
we have sinned against you;
we have done evil in your sight.
We are sorry and repent.
Have mercy on us according to your love.
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.
Renew a right spirit within us

**and restore to us the joy of your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

May the Father of all mercies
cleans us from our sins,
and restore us in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Blessed is the Lord,
for he has heard the voice of our prayer;

Therefore shall our hearts dance for joy
and in our song will we praise our God.

Blessed are you, Lord our God,
creator and redeemer of all;
to you be glory and praise for ever.
From the waters of chaos you drew forth the world.
and in your great love fashioned us in your image.
Now, through the deep waters of death,
you have brought your people to new birth
by raising your Son to life in triumph.
May Christ your light ever dawn in our hearts
as we offer you our sacrifice of thanks and praise.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:
Blessed be God for ever.

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;
let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever.

Amen.

¶ The Word of God

Psalmody

Psalm 31.1-5,15-16

- 1 In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame; ♦
deliver me in your righteousness.
- 2 Incline your ear to me; ♦
make haste to deliver me.
- 3 Be my strong rock, a fortress to save me,
for you are my rock and my stronghold; ♦
guide me, and lead me for your name's sake.
- 4 Take me out of the net
that they have laid secretly for me, ♦
for you are my strength.
- 5 Into your hands I commend my spirit, ♦
for you have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.
- 15 'My times are in your hand; ♦
deliver me from the hand of my enemies,
and from those who persecute me.
- 16 'Make your face to shine upon your servant, ♦
and save me for your mercy's sake.'

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now:
and shall be for ever. Amen.

First Reading

Acts 7.55-60

Standing before the high priest and the council, ⁵⁵Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand

of God!’ ⁵⁷But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. ⁵⁸Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ ⁶⁰Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he died.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The reading may be followed by a time of silence.

Old Testament Cantic

The Song of Moses and Miriam

Exodus 15.1b-3,6,10,13,17

- 1 I will sing to the Lord, who has triumphed gloriously,
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.
- 2 The Lord is my strength and my song
and has become my salvation.
- 3 This is my God whom I will praise
the God of my forebears whom I will exalt.
- 4 The Lord is a warrior,
the Lord is his name.
- 5 Your right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power:
your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.
- 6 At the blast of your nostrils, the sea covered them;
they sank as lead in the mighty waters.
- 7 In your unfailing love, O Lord,
you lead the people whom you have redeemed.
- 8 And by your invincible strength
you will guide them to your holy dwelling.

9 You will bring them in and plant them, O Lord,
in the sanctuary which your hands have established.

Exodus 15.1b-3,6,10,13,17

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

Second Reading

John 14.1-14

Jesus said to his disciples: ¹‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.’ ⁵Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’ ⁶Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.’

⁸Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.’ ⁹Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹²Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.’

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The reading may be followed by a time of silence.

Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead

And Christ shall give you light.

You have died and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead.

Set your minds on things that are above,
not on things that are on the earth.

And Christ shall give you light.

When Christ our life appears you will appear with him in glory.

**Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,
and Christ shall give you light.**

Gospel Canticle

Benedictus

- 1 Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel,
who has come to his people and set them free.
- 2 He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour,
born of the house of his servant David.
- 3 Through his holy prophets God promised of old
to save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all that hate us,
- 4 To show mercy to our ancestors,
and to remember his holy covenant.
- 5 This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham:
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
- 6 Free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight
all the days of our life.

- 7 And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
- 8 To give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
- 9 In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
- 10 To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Luke 1.68-79

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

Sermon (There is a reflection at the end of this booklet)

The Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,**

and the life everlasting.

Amen.



Prayers

Let us pray to God,
who alone makes us dwell in safety:
For all who are affected by coronavirus,
through illness or isolation or anxiety,
that they may find relief and recovery:
At this time of need

We wait, we watch, we hope, we pray

For those who are guiding our nation at this time, and shaping
national policies, that they may make wise decisions:
At this time of need

We wait, we watch, we hope, we pray

For doctors, nurses and medical researchers,
that through their skill and insights
many will be restored to health:
At this time of need

We wait, we watch, we hope, we pray

For all those of our congregation worshipping at this time,
that we may be supported by our common prayer
and soon return to worshipping together
At this time of need

We wait, we watch, we hope, we pray

For the vulnerable and the fearful,
for the gravely ill and the dying,
that they may know your comfort and peace:
At this time of need

We wait, we watch, we hope, we pray

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,
to the mercy and protection of God.

Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The Collect is said.

Almighty God,
who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ
have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life:
grant that, as by your grace going before us
you put into our minds good desires,
so by your continual help
we may bring them to good effect;
through Jesus Christ our risen Lord

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer is said

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

¶ The Conclusion

The Blessing

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

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5th Sunday of Easter

By Rosalind Brown

I DO NOT want to find out how I would cope with watching someone being stoned to death. What was it like for those disciples who braved the crowd and their own distress to watch? Why did God allow it? What sense did the good news of the resurrection make? It makes me wonder about Saul, there in the front row, approving of it all. It is a disturbing picture.

Luke casts Stephen's death in the mould of Jesus's death. He wants us to understand that Stephen, the first Christian martyr, followed his Lord to death not only in commitment, but also in conduct. So both faced accusations by the populace at the instigation of leaders; both had the assurance that they were going to be with God; and both prayed for forgiveness for those causing their deaths.

In contrast to this vivid and bloodthirsty story, which led to persecution and the scattering of the Church, we have the measured calm of the conversation between Jesus and his disciples. Hearing the reassuring words "Do not let your hearts be troubled," we are immediately in calmer waters, and in danger of seeing this as little more than a leisurely theological and philosophical debate about heaven and the vision of God, forgetting that John presents this as Jesus's last proper conversation with his disciples before his death.

If, under the pressure of ambient fear at what is about to happen, you had an hour in which to say all you wanted to your family and friends, what would you say? Jesus's demanding instruction was a command to be active in stopping their hearts from being afraid. Then he answered Thomas's and Philip's questions about how they could be sure of the way to God's house, and how they could see the Father.

The question of seeing God is a key one throughout John's Gospel, from the prologue's "No one has ever seen God: it is God the only Son who . . . has made him known," to the end when the disciples see but do not always recognise the risen Jesus. In healing the blind man, Jesus used physical sight as a metaphor for spiritual sight.

In this Easter season of resurrection, it jars to hear of an angry crowd, a nasty martyrdom, a young man who positively wants to see another stoned to death, and fearful disciples commanded not to let their hearts be afraid. Putting Stephen's martyrdom, or any similar terrible contemporary event, in dialogue with Jesus's promises is a challenge to which we must rise.

Easter gives a different frame of reference to stories that, on their own, justify fear and despair. Reframed by the Easter story, while the horror of what is wrong is not diminished - stoning can never be made right or sanitised - the power of Jesus's resurrection brings hope of new life in the midst of death.

Stephen's vision of God's glory is the outworking of Jesus's promise to his disciples: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself so that where I am, there you may be also."

He could add: "You know the way to the place where I am going," because he himself is the way: all Stephen had to do at the moment of death was to pray: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." By describing Stephen's assurance, Luke puts flesh on the bones of Jesus's promise to the disciples, and reassures us of the reliability of our hope.

But we cannot abandon Saul, the young man seeking the blood of Christians. The Bible does not prettify Saul's past just because he becomes a hero in the future. Yet God turned him round. This Easter, the challenge is to let the story of Stephen's horrific death belong with the comfort that Jesus promised his disciples before he died.

The only way I know to reconcile the two, letting each add profound depth to the other, is to see both through the lens of the death and resurrection of Jesus. How else can we hold together life and death in our own stories, or the stories we hear in the news?