

Morning Prayer

Sixth Sunday of Easter

17th May 2020



An Order for Morning Prayer on Sunday

17 May 2020

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Hymn

All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

Pride of man and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
what with care and toil he buildeth,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power,
hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendour, light, and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
new-born worlds rise and adore.

Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.



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 66.7-18

- 7 Bless our God, O you peoples;
make the voice of his praise to be heard,
- 8 **Who holds our souls in life
and suffers not our feet to slip.**
- 9 For you, O God, have proved us;
you have tried us as silver is tried.
- 10 **You brought us into the snare;
you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.**
- 11 You let enemies ride over our heads;
we went through fire and water;
but you brought us out into a place of liberty.
- 12 **I will come into your house with burnt offerings
and will pay you my vows,
which my lips uttered
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.**
- 13 I will offer you fat burnt sacrifices
with the smoke of rams;
I will sacrifice oxen and goats
- 14 **Come and listen, all you who fear God,
and I will tell you what he has done for my soul.**
- 15 I called out to him with my mouth
and his praise was on my tongue.
- 16 **If I had nursed evil in my heart,
the Lord would not have heard me,**
- 17 But in truth God has heard me;
he has heeded the voice of my prayer.
- 18 **Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer,
nor withheld his loving mercy from me.**

**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 17.22-31

²²Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, ‘Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. ²³For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, “To an unknown god.” What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. ²⁶From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him - though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸For “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said,

“For we too are his offspring.”

²⁹Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. ³⁰While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.’

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The reading may be followed by a time of silence.

Old Testament Canticle

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 14.15-21

Jesus said to his disciples: ¹⁵'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. ¹⁷This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. ¹⁸I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.'

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)

Hymn

Come down, O love divine, seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardor glowing;

O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,
and kindle it, Thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn, til earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;

And let thy glorious light shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become mine inner clothing;

True lowliness of heart, which takes the humbler part,
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

And so the yearning strong, with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;

For none can guess its grace, till they become the place
where-in the Holy Spirit finds a dwelling.

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:

We pray 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

As we look for the way out of this crisis we pray for our
government, that they may make wise decisions for us to move
forward safely.

At this time of need

We wait, we watch, we hope, we pray

We pray for medical staff that they may have the skill to care for
the suffering and for the medical researchers that they may find a
cure or vaccine for coronavirus.

At this time of need

We wait, we watch, we hope, we pray

We pray that you will be with all 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

Grant your comfort and your peace to those dying at this time
especially as they are not able to be supported by family and
friends as they would be in normal times.

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.

God our redeemer,
you have delivered us from the power of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us
to eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ your Son our 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.

Hymn

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heav'n to earth come down:
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown:

Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter ev'ry trembling heart.

Come, Almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.

Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish, then, thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be:
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee.

Changed from glory into glory,
'til in heav'n we take our place,
'til we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

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6th Sunday of Easter
By Roger and Sally Morris

The other day someone wrote to me asking where the voice of the church was during this time of crisis and anxiety. Years ago, the church would have been at the centre of things; leading the nation in prayer and offering wise counsel. But as one church report said, the Church is not at the heart of the affairs of men and women as once it was. That report was written in 1964. But it's true.

And – if you will forgive a sporting analogy - it is as if, for the church, every game is an away fixture. We are not at home in this culture as once we were. The gradients and characteristics of the pitch are all new to us. Support for us is at best contested but is often overwhelmed by opposing or challenging voices. The culture – how we do things – has not been shaped by us. It's their songs – not our songs – that we can hear. We are not at home.

And yet huge opportunities have opened up for us and, especially at this time of crisis, we are finding that we are connecting with people who live very different lives from us and who believe very different things.

So I am really pleased that one of the readings we have for today is from Acts 17 and it tells of how, two thousand years ago, Paul the Apostle was stuck in Athens waiting for a couple of friends to arrive. But Paul was not the kind of man to just take a holiday. Instead he walked around Athens looking at the objects of their worship.

Being a convert to Christianity from Judaism, he was intensely monotheistic. He believed that there was only one God. But here he was, wandering among various shrines to a whole panoply of gods. He knew that he was not at home. This really was an away fixture.

At some point (it doesn't say when), he sat down and read their poetry. He found out as much about the Athenian culture as he possibly could. And then he threw himself into the fray, going to the synagogue and the market place and debating with the people there. Athens was a place that thrived on debate. They loved to hear and discuss new ideas - especially about religion. After making something of an impact, Paul was

invited to speak at what I guess amounted to the theology department of Athens University. He can't have had long to prepare, and yet he knew this was a crucial opportunity - but what was he to say? Even though their devotion to pagan gods had disturbed him, he couldn't just stand up and rubbish them; that would be it. They'd just stop listening. He had to present his message about Jesus in a way that was that relevant to the context in which he found himself.

So he cleared his throat and spoke: "Men of Athens!" he said, "I see that in every way you are very religious." He then spoke about an altar he'd seen dedicated to an unknown God. You see - he had really done his homework. Back in the sixth century BC, there was a Cretan hero and philosopher called Epimenides, and he had been called to Athens to help the city to overcome a terrible plague. The Athenians' own oracle had declared that the city was under a curse because of war crimes committed in the past, and none of the gods they worshipped seemed to have the power to lift the curse. As a way of resolving this dilemma, Epimenides suggested that there may be a god whose name they did not yet know. To test this idea, he sent some sheep out onto Mars Hill in Athens to graze and said that if any sheep lay down they would be sacrificed on an altar dedicated to this unknown god. Some sheep did lie down, and they were sacrificed - and the plague was duly lifted.

Saint Paul then refers to this altar and he quotes a line from a poem about how we are all God's offspring - a poem written by Epimenides.

Paul didn't soften his message. He didn't mince his words; He talked about repentance and judgement - and resurrection. Some even sneered, but others showed an interest; they wanted to know more. And, in time, the people there would turn away from paganism and churches would be built where once their shrines had stood. They would embrace this faith that had sounded so strange to them but now seemed to make perfect sense.

What this amazing story gives us is a model of how we should engage with the world around us. What is God wanting to say to people today? To friends and relations who do not share our beliefs but are intrigued by how we are responding to things? To those with whom we come into

contact through work in Zoom meetings or Team meetings or by email? To those who choose to watch - maybe even for a moment - some of our online services? To those struggling to make sense of these strange times in which we live?

And perhaps one thing we can say - because we are modelling it and we are living it day after day after day - is that God – our God – is in the thick of this stuff with us. That the God who made the world and everything in it does not live in shrines or church buildings made by human hands. That he is not far from each one of us. For “In him we live and move and have our being”

The Church may not be at the heart of the affairs of men and women as once it was. We may feel that we are not at home in this culture, but in our homes and amongst those with whom we spend our days, we can show what it means to live and move and have our being in God. We can worship and pray to and be consoled by a God who – whether we are home or away - never leaves our side and from whose love we can never be separated.