**MORNING PRAYER The Fifth Sunday of Easter 2024**

## THE INTRODUCTION

The Lord has risen indeed. Alleluia! *Luke 24:34*

The truth is Christ was raised to life – the firstfruits of the harvest of the dead. As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be brought to life. *1 Corinthians 15:20, 22*

The angel said to the women: ‘Do not be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he promised.*’ Matthew 28:5–6 altd*

We have come together as the family of God in our Father’s presence, to offer him praise and thanksgiving, to hear and receive his word, to bring before him the needs of the world and to seek his grace, that, through his Son, Jesus Christ, we may give ourselves to his service.

Jesus said: ‘The first commandment is: “Listen Israel! The Lord our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.” The second is this: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’

Silence. [Kneel]

Let us confess our sins to the Father and seek his pardon and peace.

Almighty and merciful God,

**we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed.**

**We have not loved you with all our heart;**

**and we have not loved others as Christ loves us.**

**We are truly sorry.**

**In your mercy, forgive us.**

**Help us to amend our lives;**

**that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways,**

**to the glory of your name. Amen.**

May God our Father,

who by our Lord Jesus Christ

has reconciled the world to himself

and forgives the sins of all who truly repent,

pardon and deliver us from all our sins,

and grant us the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

[Stand for hymn if used]

MORNING ACCLAMATION OF CHRIST

O Lord, open our lips,

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Eternal God,

we praise and thank you

for the day on which you created light and saw that it was good;

the day on which the disciples discovered the empty tomb and met the risen Christ.

This is the day that you have made; we rejoice and are glad in it.

Blessed be God for ever.

## THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Psalmody[Stand/Sit]

Psalm 22. 25-31

25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation; I will perform my vows in the presence of those that fear you.

26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek the Lord shall praise him; their hearts shall live for ever.

27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall bow before him.

28 For the kingdom is the Lord’s and he rules over the nations.

29 How can those who sleep in the earth bow down in worship, or those who go down to the dust kneel before him?

30 He has saved my life for himself; my descendants shall serve him; this shall be told of the Lord for generations to come.

31 They shall come and make known his salvation, to a people yet unborn, declaring that he, the Lord, has done it.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son :

and to the Holy Spirit;

and shall be for ever. A–men.

THE READING FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS [Sit]

A reading from Acts (8.26-40)

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Get up and go towards the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ (This is a wilderness road.) So 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 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over to this chariot and join it.’

So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’

He replied, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him.

Now 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. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.’

The eunuch asked Philip, ‘About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?’

Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.

As 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?’ He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

When 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. But 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.

This is the word of the Lord.  **Thanks be to God.**

Silence.

Glorious Lord (Black Book of Carmarthen, thirteenth century)

*Welcome Glorious Lord!*

May church and chancel praise you;

May chancel and church praise you;

May hill and valley praise you;

May woods and orchards praise you.

*Welcome Glorious Lord!*

Abraham, first of the faithful, praised you;

May life eternal praise you;

May birds and insects praise you;

May green grass and stubble praise you;

Aaron and Moses praised you.

*Welcome Glorious Lord!*

May male and female praise you;

May planets and stars praise you;

May fish in flowing waters praise you;

May all good things created praise you.

We praise you, Lord of glory.

*Welcome Glorious Lord!*

 [Stand for hymn if used]

THE NEW TESTAMENT READING [Sit]

A reading from 1 John (4.7-21)

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In 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.

Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So 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. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world. There 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.

We love because he first loved us. Those 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. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

This is the word of the Lord.  **Thanks be to God.**

THE GOSPEL CANTICLE**:** Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel [Stand]

*1* Blessed be the Lord the / God of / Israel : for he has come to his / people and / set them / free.

*2* The Lord 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 who / hate us.

*4* To show mercy / to our / forebears : and to re/member 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 before him / 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 pre/pare his / way,

*8* To give his people knowledge / of sal/vation : by the for/giveness / of their / sins.

*9* In the tender compassion / of our / God : the dawn from on / high shall / break up/on 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.

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.

THE GOSPEL READING [Stand]

Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to St John (15.1-8)

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

‘I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide 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.

‘I 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. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord.  **Praise to you, O Christ.**

HOMILY by Rhiannon Johnson

It was one of those evenings in late April, early May when the plant life around us said that spring was truly underway, but it still felt cold, damp and uncomfortable. It was not the best night for visiting a vineyard in the Vale of Glamorgan, but the group I belonged to had scheduled the trip, booked the minibus and we were going, rain or shine.

It was over thirty years ago, but that evening has stayed with me vividly because of what I learnt about vines and vinedressers.

That evening, the vinedresser was an enthusiastic middle-aged man, completely in love with his vineyard and the idea of making wine, even if we were not exactly in the South of France. The family had bought a home with a pony paddock some years before and, when the daughter and her pony had grown up and left home, the man had decided to fulfil a life-long dream and own a vineyard.

We stood in the former pony paddock looking at his vines before being taken away to, I think, the former garage to taste last year’s vintage and buy some for ourselves.

I remember what I saw so clearly. The vines were bare and were bleeding. Clear sap oozed from multiple cuts on them. Their bare stems writhed like bodies in pain. It was not what I had expected.

The jolly owner explained that they had just finished pruning these vines. I believe he used the word ‘scouring’. The pruning was far more violent and extensive than I would have expected, having only pruned roses before. I think the vinedresser must have been prepared for a reaction like mine because he explained what he had done in a way I will always remember.

He told us that, left to itself, a vine will produce a lot of leaf and many small, bitter clusters of fruit that never truly mature. The vine puts its energy into its survival as an individual plant and puts on leaf to soak up the sunshine and to feed itself well.

The vinedresser, however, wants the plant to be fruitful and, to do that, he must convince the plant that it is likely to die. Only then will put its energy into, not its own survival, but the survival of the species, and produce plentiful large, sweet fruits.

He may have been a bit eccentric, definitely an enthusiast, but he loved those plants and I found a wine I enjoyed very much. It was a good evening out but, more than that, the Sunday before we had heard this reading from the Gospel of John and the words echoed in my head as I looked at the scoured vineyard. I wondered if, left to ourselves as Christians, we did a lot of things that made us feel good as individuals but did not make us very fruitful in the way God wants us to be fruitful.

I wondered if the decline and weakness of the church in our days was to force us to think less about our own salvation as individuals and more about the mission of God to the whole world, to make us bear fruit that will last.

As a Diocese we are about to start a ‘Pruning for Growth’ strategy which the Bishop will announce at an extraordinary Diocesan Conference on July 6th. The details will be given us then, but we can be sure that there will be some hard decisions to be taken but also that they will be taken with great care. Pruning can never be pleasant for the plant, but the vinedresser does it because he loves the plants and their fruit too much to let them waste their energy on things that do not, in the end, help the vineyard to flourish.

In the meantime, for us as individuals, can you take some time to consider your own fruitfulness for God? How you can stay rooted in Christ? What you can let go and allow to be pruned away so that whatever energy you have goes into the things that bear lasting fruit?

AN AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

The Apostles’ Creed [Stand]

I believe in God, the Father almighty,

creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s 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,

and 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.

*[Stand for hymn if used]*

THE PRAYERS

In the power of the Spirit, and in union with Christ Jesus, let us pray to the Father.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful Father, we pray for ourselves and all Christians,

that we may be a royal priesthood, a holy people, to the praise of Jesus Christ our Redeemer …

 Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for *Dorrien* our bishop and for all bishops and other ministers, that they may remain faithful to their calling and rightly proclaim the word of truth …

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for children and young people and for all who are new in the Faith. Direct and guide them in the way that leads to you …

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for *Charles* our *King*, and for those who bear the responsibility of government in this and every nation, that your people may rejoice in your gifts of true justice and peace …

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the people of *this nation, this parish/city/village*, asking that you will show your mercy to them all …

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are sick or in any other kind of trouble, that you will deliver them and keep them in our love …

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the victims of sin and those who minister to them, that you will be their help and defence..

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray that we may all be strengthened in our faith, our love and our service …

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the departed, commending them to your eternal love …

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

*The people may be invited to share their petitions aloud or to pray silently.*

Lord God, King of the Nations, We beseech you to hear our prayers for peace, and especially for Ukraine, Gaza and Israel at this time. May those who work for peace be strengthened by your Spirit. Turn the hearts of those inclined to violence, and bring dismay upon all tyrants and warmongers. Help us and the leaders of the nations to know the ways which will bring peace, and restore justice, and deliver those who find themselves on the frontline of war.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to you, Lord God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

 As our Saviour taught us, we boldly pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven**

**Hallowed be thy name,**

**Thy kingdom come,**

**Thy will be done,**

**On earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our trespasses**

**As we forgive those**

**Who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation,**

**But deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,**

**The power and the glory,**

**For ever and ever . Amen**

*The Collect of the Day*

Almighty God, through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ you 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, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

*The second collect, for peace.*

O God, the author of peace and lover of concord, to know you is eternal life, to serve you is perfect freedom: defend us in all assaults of our enemies, that we, surely trusting in your protection, we may not fear the power of any adversaries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*The third collect, for grace.*

O Lord and heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, we thank you for bringing us safely to the beginning of this new day: defend us by your mighty power that we may be kept free from all sin and safe from every danger; and enable us in everything to do only what is right in your eyes; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## THE CONCLUSION

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. **Amen.**

Suggested Hymns:

*God is love/ His the care*

*One shall tell another*

*Thine for ever, God of love*

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