

The Third Sunday of Easter – a liturgy for worship at home

Introduction

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

We continue our celebration of Easter, our joy that Christ is risen, and walks with us to help us share his resurrection already now in this life until one day he calls us to share in its fullness. May we welcome the risen Lord now as he speaks to us and shows himself to us through this time of worship. Let us prepare to meet him by calling to mind the fears and failures that beset us as we strive faithfully to follow him.

Act of Penitence

We are often too full of ourselves and our concerns to recognise the risen Lord among us. Let us ask him to forgive us.

Lord Jesus, you are one of us; you walk with us on the road of life:
Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you speak to us your Good News that clarifies our joys and our pains and our life itself: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you break for us your life-giving bread so that we will break the bread of our own lives in your service. Lord, have mercy.

Have mercy on us, Lord; forgive us for all the ways we lapse or stray from your road of life. Make us aware how much you are with us always as our companion on this road to everlasting life. Amen.

Act of Praise

The **Gloria** or some other hymn of praise, or the **Easter Anthems**, comprising various verses from the New Testament:

Christ our passover has been sacrificed for us, so let us celebrate the feast.

Not with the old leaven of corruption and wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Christ once raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him.

In dying, he died to sin once for all; in living, he lives to God.

See yourselves, therefore, as dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Christ has been raised from the dead; the first fruits of those who sleep.

For since by one man came death, by another has come also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

(from: 1 Corinthians 5: 7b – 8; Romans 6: 9 – 11; 1 Corinthians 15: 20 – 22)

Collect of the Day

Almighty Father, who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord: give us such knowledge of his presence with us, that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life and serve you continually in righteousness and truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Today's readings

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles (3:12 – 19a)

After Peter saw the healing of the man at the Beautiful Gate, he 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? The 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. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And 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. "And now, friends, I know that you acted in

ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.

For the word of the Lord: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 4: 2, 4, 7 & 9

When I call, answer me, O God of justice; from anguish you released me, have mercy and hear me!

It is the Lord who grants favours to those whom he loves; the Lord hears me whenever I call him.

‘What can bring us happiness?’ many say. Lift up the light of your face on us, O Lord.

I will lie down in peace and sleep comes at once, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A reading from the first letter of St John

(3:1 – 7)

See 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. Beloved, 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. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

For the Word of the Lord: Thanks be to God.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke. (24:36b – 48)

Glory to you, O Lord.

While the disciples were talking, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look 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.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence. Then 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.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

For the Gospel of the Lord: Praise to you, O Christ.

Homily

I am wondering if I ever told you about a lady called Mrs Beamish. You won't know her, and she isn't a former parishioner of mine, but there are a couple of people I can think of that came quite close to matching her reputation. Mrs Beamish is in fact the subject of a delightful song by Richard Stilgoe and Peter Skellern. (Do you remember Peter Skellern and his hit song? ‘You're a lady, I'm a man, you're supposed to understand the way these things are really meant to be.’). Anyway, he and Stilgoe once wrote and performed a song about a lady called Mrs Beamish, who you may or may not understand or have some sympathy for. In the song she complains about all the new-fangled ways that have been introduced in her parish church by the new vicar. God forbid – people are now clapping and even raising their hands while singing, and the hymns, well if she hadn't heard them in her childhood they weren't proper hymns. And sometimes the beloved organ is replaced by those awful stringed instruments and tambourines. Oh, and there was one more monstrous innovation, as the chorus of the song makes clear:

*"Don't you dare shake hands with me, or offer signs of peace,
You lay a finger on me and I'll send for the police,
Don't whisper 'peace be with you' - this is the C of E,
So bend the knee, say 'thou and thee' - and keep your hands off me!"*

Which reminds me, not long before I came to Tenerife, I went to take the Sunday service at a country church in Shropshire that I hadn't been to before. As I stood at the back of the church just outside the vestry, about to process in to begin the service, a latecomer walked past me. 'Good morning Sir', he said, 'just so as you know, we're not into any of that handshaking, peace stuff here!' I told him not to worry, as I would wait to shake hands with him and wish him peace after the service. I can't remember whether we did, or whether he carefully snuck out of the church, thus missing out on my warm greeting. But bless him! Bless Mrs Beamish, and all other poor souls who feel so threatened by ancient practices that have been reintroduced into Christian worship in recent decades, even helping to raise many churches from the dead!

Peace be with you! The very words of the risen Jesus as he greeted his disciples. It sounds an odd greeting, but, of course, these were the usual words with which one Jew greeted another, and they still are. The Hebrew word for 'peace' is 'Shalom.' Its meaning is very profound. It is wishing the other peace at the deepest level – peace of body, mind and spirit. It expresses love, friendship, solidarity. It is that level of peace which is intended in the Peace greetings in our services. So when we exchange the Peace we are greeting each other with the words of Jesus, and with the same meaning. We recognise that the risen Jesus stands here among us and in us, and as us. He brings his peace to us.

Of course, in these Covid times we can't officially touch each other with hugs or handshakes unless we're from the same household. But let us never regard the Peace as a folksy or even an intrusive interlude in the service. It is in fact part of our sacramental encounter with the Lord. He meets and greets us not only through scripture and bread and wine but through one another. He shares his peace with us, for us, and with the intention that we communicate its intention and meaning to others, those we relate to, day by day and whoever we may meet.

Our regular community gathering, the Lord's Supper is a demonstration of union, of oneness, between God and ourselves, with each other in the

Christian life, and between us and the world. Our Christian family meal is the sacrament of unity and peace, and a foretaste of our complete union with God and with one another in eternity.

But eternity or eternal life is not just about our future destiny. As the scholar-Bishop Tom Wright has put it, 'the Resurrection stories in the Gospels do not say Jesus is raised, therefore we're going to heaven.... They say Jesus is raised, therefore God's new creation has begun and we've got a job to do.' The Resurrection of Jesus did not happen simply to reassure his disciples about a future for them beyond the grave. Like most Jews of that generation, they already believed in the resurrection and a life to come.

The Easter event was first of all a vindication, God's big 'yes' to Jesus and all that he was about, and God's big 'no' to the violent and corrupt powers that killed him. Through the resurrection experience, the disciples finally came to understand what Jesus had been about while they accompanied him in his ministry: they came to share his vision for life on this earth; that the kingdom of God which he came to proclaim and demonstrate was about a way of life that God wished for all humanity, not simply in a future state like heaven, but here and now.

Each of us who follow Christ is called to play a part in bringing about this divine vision for life on earth. Our second reading today reminds us of how we are called to be children of God, that is to live in the Father's likeness, as made known to us most clearly in the person of Jesus. Creating and enabling such an enhanced life had been Jesus's passion while he was on earth, and he called his friends to follow him.

And that means living and sharing his Peace, his Shalom. It is a peace that expresses love, friendship, reconciliation, forgiveness, healing, justice for the poor and oppressed. The peace of Christ involves all of that and more. We receive this gift of peace from him; we must pass it on for him. For we Christians are the Body, the visible incarnate presence of Jesus Christ on earth today.

A few moments of silent reflection are recommended.

The Profession of Faith, either the following or one of the traditional creeds:

We believe in God the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.

We believe in one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Living God, long ago, faithful men and women proclaimed the good news of Jesus' resurrection, and the world was changed forever. Help us to keep faith with them, that our witness may be as bold, our love as deep, and joy and amazement as real as was theirs when he appeared to them.

Help us all to play an active part in Christ's call to be witnesses and to make disciples of all mankind. We pray for the universal church, for all ministers of the Gospel, missionaries and evangelists. We lift to you the churches in Europe; Bishops Robert and David, Archdeacon David and the support staff at the Diocesan Office; keep them focussed on the vision set before them and strength to carry it out.

Lord, hear us Lord, graciously hear us

Creator God, you gave us a beautiful world to live in and to care for. Our Stewardship has not always been mindful but through the victory of Jesus Christ, we know also that you can restore all things in glory. We pray for a change of heart and attitude, an awakening to a better way of living, and the courage to reject wrong principles. We pray for our European Environmental officer, Elizabeth Bussman and her work.

Lord, hear us Lord, graciously hear us

Father God we pray for our Church communities, that each of us will make use of our individual talents, enabling each church group to flourish as a witness to the "One Body" of the church. Help us to spread the warmth of your love to everyone we meet. We pray that soon our usual visitors will be able to safely return to us.

Lord, hear us.....Lord, graciously hear us

Loving God we pray for those who do not share our Easter joy especially those living in the shadow of darkness and despair and for those whose illness narrows their view of the world. We especially pray for all those who we know

need your touch and in the quietness of our hearts we raise before You. We particularly remember Margaret Rainton, Petrina Thompson and Carol Hart.

Lord, hear us Lord, graciously hear us

Heavenly Father, we pray for those whose hearts have been recently saddened by the death of someone close and dear to them, for those who still mourn the loss of loved ones. Help us to experience the comfort of the Holy Spirit within us, and the fellowship of the church family around us until we are reunited once more in your heavenly kingdom.

Lord, hear us Lord, graciously hear us

Faithful God in the week that lies before us may we reflect your love in our families, our church and our community; so that the world can see that we are followers of Christ and children of the most high God, and draw others into his loving care.

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

As members of a community of faith and love, made one heart and one soul by the Spirit, we can pray to the Father of all the prayer of Jesus our Lord:

Our Father.....

You may wish to offer this or an alternative prayer of spiritual communion, and/or in silence just sit in the peace of the ever-present Lord for a while.

In union, dear Father, with Christian people throughout the world and across the centuries gathered to make Eucharist, hearing your holy word and receiving the Precious Body and Blood, I offer you praise and thanksgiving.

Even though I am exiled from tasting the Bread of Heaven and drinking the Cup of Life, I pray that you will unite me with all the baptised and with your Son who gave his life for us. Come Lord Jesus, dwell in me and send your Holy Spirit that I may be filled with your presence. Amen.

Concluding Prayer

Living God, your Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in all his redeeming work; who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. Amen.

Blessing

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you, and with those you love and pray for, today and always. Amen.

Let us go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!