

Ante Communion Service: April 7, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, one God, the fountain of living water, the rock who gave birth, our light and our salvation. **Amen.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Celebrant: Let us open our hearts and minds to the truth of our lives, and let us offer that truth to God.

A moment of silence for self-reflection and confession.

People: **Gracious God, source of all life, Lord of mercy and grace, hear our prayer.**

You call us to a reconciled life, to a wholeness with each other, with you, and with your creation.

We come before you in love and trust, seeking healing of all that keeps us distant from you.

We pray that you will guide us in the footsteps of Christ, strengthen us, heal us, and that you will heal our world, so that we will be freed to serve and love and dream and be, as Christ calls us. Amen.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, let us proclaim the Good News: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven, reconciled, loved, and healed. **Amen.**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Let us pray together: **Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.**

First Reading

Acts 4:32-35

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 133

Ecce, quam bonum!

Oh, how good and pleasant it is, *

when brethren live together in unity!

It is like fine oil upon the head *

that runs down upon the beard,

Upon the beard of Aaron, *

and runs down upon the collar of his robe.

It is like the dew of Hermon *
that falls upon the hills of Zion.

For there the Lord has ordained the blessing: *
life for evermore.

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.

Second Reading

1 John 1:1-2:2

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life-- this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us-- we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel

John 20:19-31

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

Glory to you, Lord Christ.

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them.

Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me?"

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Sermon

Apostles' Creed *said by all*

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth;
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
He 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.
He will come again 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 of the People

With the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, let us pray for the church,
those in need, and all of God's creation. In peace, we pray to you, Lord God. *Silence*

For this community, the nation, and the world;

For the victims of hunger, fear, injustice, and oppression.

For the peace and unity of the world;

That a spirit of respect may grow among nations and peoples.

For all who love and trust in God, that divisions may cease;

And that all may be one, as you and the Father are one.

For the just and proper use of your creation;

That we may treat your creation with the love of the Creator.

We honor and pray for our Indigenous neighbors.

That we may dwell together in respectful harmony.

For all who are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble;

For those who minister to the sick, the friendless, and the needy.

For the special needs and concerns of this congregation.

Silence. Hear us, Lord;

For your mercy is great.

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life. *Silence.*

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever.

We pray for all who have died, that they may have a place in your eternal kingdom. *Silence.*

Lord, let your loving kindness be upon them.

May they rest in your peace eternally.

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we pray together:

**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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, now and forever. Amen.**

We pray together for Christ's presence:

**My Jesus, I believe that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the bread and wine.
I love you above all things, and long for you in my soul.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come spiritually into my heart.
I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you.
Amen.**

Celebrant: While we long to receive the sacrament of Christ's Body,

People: **We become the sacrament of Christ's Body.**

Celebrant: Let your lives be manna to feed our hunger for communion.

People: **The love we share becomes bread for the world.**

Blessing May Christ, the Son of God, be manifest in you, that your lives may be a light to the world; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be in you, among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Dismissal Go in peace and hope and joy to love and serve the Lord. Alleluia, Alleluia!
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, Alleluia!