

Our Service Together

Lent 2 March 5th 2023



An Acclamation for the Season

This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son. He is the sacrifice for our sins, that we might live through him.

Preparation

This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to 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.

Our Confession

The sun of righteousness has dawned with healing in his wings. Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.
Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. **Amen.**

The opening prayer

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 Psalmody Psalm 121 *We say the psalm aloud*

I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?

My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

He will not suffer your foot to stumble; he who watches over you will not sleep. Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord himself watches over you; the Lord is your shade at your right hand, so that the sun shall not strike you by day, neither the moon by night.

The Lord shall keep you from all evil; it is he who shall keep your soul.

The Lord shall keep watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth for evermore.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Scripture Reading Romans 4.1-5 and 13-17

What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? ²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' ⁴Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. ⁵But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

¹³For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

¹⁶For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations')—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

At the end of the reading we say:

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

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Gospel John 3.1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' ³ Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' ⁵ Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." ⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' ⁹ Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹ 'Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

At the end of the reading we say:

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

A Reflection for the day *Revd John Webb writes*

Several times recently we have had to call on the ambulance service and I have been fascinated by the rather attractive badge that para-medical crew wear. There are three distinct elements to the badge; the crown signifying the royal patronage; a wheel indicating their mobility; and a snake on a staff. Many medical organisations including the Royal Army Medical Corps use the image of a snake on a staff and if you ask them why they use that image they will tell you that it is the symbol of Asclepius who according to Greek myth had amazing powers of healing. This explanation always saddens me because I am much more familiar with this image from the story in the Book of Exodus referred to by Jesus in our reading when he said, 'And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life'.

Jesus' followers would have been very familiar with the story that when Moses was leading the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to the promised land they went through various trials and tribulations. One of these was a plague of poisonous snakes. Moses asked God what to do and he said to Moses 'make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten, when they see it, shall live. So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit anyone, they would look at the bronze serpent and live.' So the serpent on a pole became a powerful symbol of healing. I find that a particularly relevant image as we go through Lent and come to Good Friday. Jesus is inviting us to look at him on the cross that we may be healed.

In my study I have three crosses which over the years have been important to my faith as I try to understand the mystery of the cross. My first is a particularly gruesome picture of the crucifixion by

Graham Sutherland. I don't really like it but think it is important as a dramatic reminder of the unbelievable suffering that Christ went through on that day. But I cringe at that image of the crucifixion with dreadful pain, suffering and blood. That must be part of our understanding it but not the only one so in addition to the Sutherland picture I have a crucifix of Christ in Glory wearing full Eucharistic vestments showing Christ the King reigning on the cross. I also have a plain cross which importantly reminds us that 'He is risen'.

The para medics badge of the serpent on a pole is a reminder of another important aspect which should go alongside the other crosses. Just like those Israelites lost and wandering in the wilderness we can look to the crucified Jesus for healing and to guide and strengthen us as we journey with him through Lent to the pain of Good Friday to the joy of Easter.

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 *We make our intercessions*

O God of peace, who has taught us that in quietness and confidence shall be our strength; help us, as we come into your presence, to be still and know that you are God.
In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ let us pray to the Father.

As we journey through Lent may we grow in faith, understanding and service.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

Strengthen Michael and Ruth our Bishops and those who seek to serve you in this diocese May they be filled with the Spirit and serve you as the first disciples.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

Let us pray for priests, preachers and theologians as they struggle to interpret the mystery of God to be relevant for each generation. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We Pray for the King, Prime Minister, and all World leaders, that they may have the Spirit of wisdom and optimism to lead us through this difficult time. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for all who suffer. We pray particularly for those suffering as a result of the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria that there may be a generous response to their needs.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

Let us pray for our families, friends, and neighbours that we may bring light and hope in the darkest places. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for the sick, suffering and dying and we give thanks and pray for those who use their skill and risk their lives to care for them. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Hear us as we remember those who have died..... According to your promises grant them joy in your eternal kingdom. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love. The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and always. Amen

The Collect

Almighty God, by the prayer and discipline of Lent may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings, and by following in his way may we come to share in his glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

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 Conclusion

Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
as a shield overshadow me.
me, Christ over me;
Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen.

Christ,
Christ under