

# Holy Eucharist

Proper 16A, Pentecost 12

August 23, 2020

Prelude

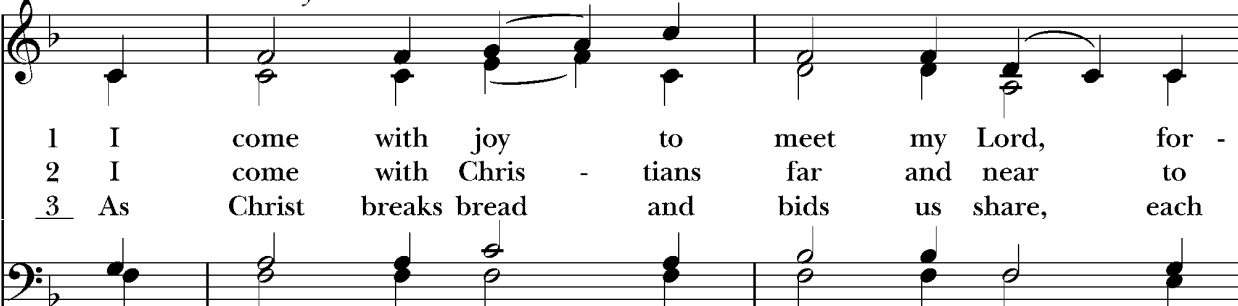
Announcements

Opening Hymn

Hymnal 304

*I come with joy*

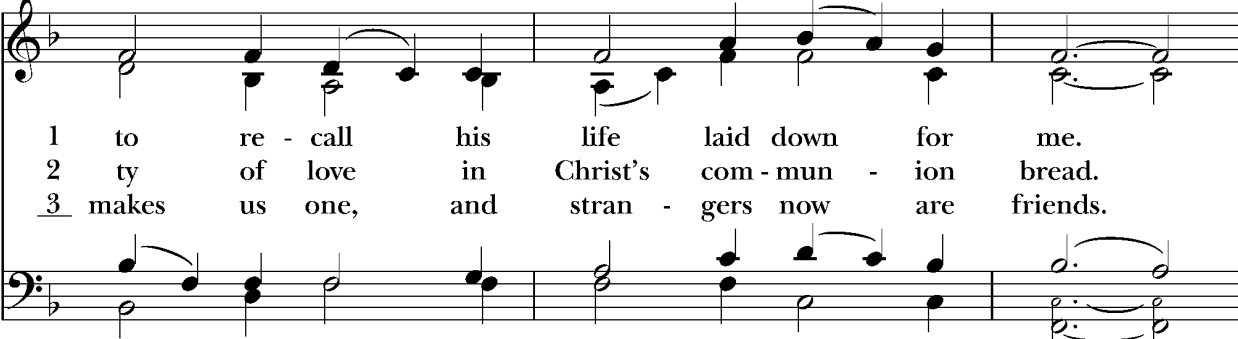
*Unison or harmony*



1 I come with joy to meet my Lord, for -  
2 I come with Chris - tians and near to  
3 As Christ breaks bread and bids us share, each



1 giv - en, loved, and free, in awe and won - der  
2 find, as all are fed, the new com - mu - ni -  
3 proud di - vi - sion ends. That love that made us



1 to re - call his life laid down for me.  
2 ty of love in Christ's com - mun - ion bread.  
3 makes us one, and stran - gers now are friends.

*Presider*        Blessed be God: + Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
*People*        **And blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.**

*The Presider begins the Collect for Purity*

## **Collect for Purity**

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you 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 Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## **Song of Praise**

*Presider and People*

**Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to God's 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.**

## **Collect of the Day**

*Presider*        The Lord be with you.  
*People*        **And also with you.**  
*Presider*        Let us pray.

Grant, O merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all peoples, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## **First Reading**

Exodus 1:8--2:10

A reading from the book of Exodus.

<sup>8</sup>Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. <sup>9</sup>He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. <sup>10</sup>Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." <sup>11</sup>Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. <sup>12</sup>But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. <sup>13</sup>The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, <sup>14</sup>and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

<sup>15</sup>The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, <sup>16</sup>"When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live." <sup>17</sup>But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. <sup>18</sup>So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?" <sup>19</sup>The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." <sup>20</sup>So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. <sup>21</sup>And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. <sup>22</sup>Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live."

<sup>2:1</sup>Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. <sup>2</sup>The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. <sup>3</sup>When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. <sup>4</sup>His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

<sup>5</sup>The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. <sup>6</sup>When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. <sup>7</sup>Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" <sup>8</sup>Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. <sup>9</sup>Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. <sup>10</sup>When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

*Reader* The Word of the Lord.  
*People* **Thanks be to God.**

## **Psalm 124**

<sup>1</sup>If the LORD had not been on our side, \*  
let Israel now say;  
<sup>2</sup>**If the LORD had not been on our side, \***  
**when enemies rose up against us,**  
<sup>3</sup>Then would they have swallowed us up alive \*  
in their fierce anger toward us;  
<sup>4</sup>**Then would the waters have overwhelmed us \***  
**and the torrent gone over us;**  
<sup>5</sup>Then would the raging waters \*  
have gone right over us.  
<sup>6</sup>**Blessed be the LORD! \***  
**he has not given us over to be a prey for their teeth.**  
<sup>7</sup>We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowler; \*  
the snare is broken, and we have escaped.  
<sup>8</sup>**Our help is in the Name of the LORD, \***  
**the maker of heaven and earth.**

## **Second Reading**

Romans 12:1-8

A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

<sup>1</sup>I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.  
<sup>2</sup>Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.  
<sup>3</sup>For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup>For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. <sup>6</sup>We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; <sup>7</sup>ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; <sup>8</sup>the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

*Reader* The Word of the Lord.  
*People* **Thanks be to God.**

*All stand as they are able.*

## Sequence Hymn

Hymnal 513

*Like the murmur of the dove's song*

1 Like the mur - mur of the dove's song, like the  
 2 To the mem - bers of Christ's Bo - dy, to the  
 3 With the heal - ing of di - vi - sion, with the

chal - lenge of her flight, like the vig - or of the  
 branch - es of the Vine, to the Church in faith as -  
 cease - less voice of prayer, with the power to love and

wind's rush, like the new flame's ea - ger  
 sem - bled, to her midst as gift and  
 wit - ness, with the peace be - yond com -

might: come, — Ho - ly Spi - rit, come.  
 sign: come, — Ho - ly Spi - rit, come.  
 pare: come, — Ho - ly Spi - rit, come.

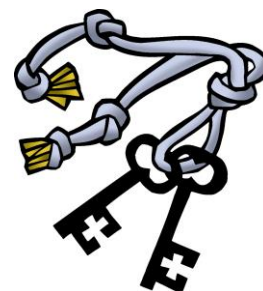
## Holy Gospel

Matthew 16:13-20

*Deacon* The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

*People* **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

<sup>13</sup>Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup>And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." <sup>15</sup>He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup>Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup>And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup>And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup>I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and



whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”<sup>20</sup> Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

*Deacon* The Gospel of the Lord.

*People* **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

## **Sermon**

*All stand as they are able.*

## **Nicene Creed**

*Presider* Let us affirm the faith of the Church using the words of the Nicene Creed:

**We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.**

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

*All remain standing as they are able.*

## **Prayers of the People**

*Presider* Let us lift our voices in prayer, joining with the faithful throughout the world who offer their intercessions this day, responding, “Lord, hear our prayer.”

*Intercessor* Give your grace to those who care for children in foster homes, sustain them with patience, and encourage them to provide a family of love and respect; let us pray. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

*Silence is kept.*

Open our eyes to behold your hand in the work of creation, that we may marvel at your intricate craftsmanship and tend the beauty that we behold; let us pray. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

*Silence is kept.*

Pour your knowledge into the minds of those who are returning to school in the next few weeks; and for those attending for the first time, still their hearts by your loving presence; let us pray. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

*Silence is kept.*

Grant us the grace to honor the many gifts that you have given, not coveting what our neighbor has received, but grateful for what you have entrusted to our care; let us pray. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

*Silence is kept.*

Reveal yourself to every nation and people, that we may know you to be the Christ, the Messiah, the one who saves our souls from the pit of darkness, and who comes carrying the lamp of charity that leads us to the divine life; let us pray. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

*Silence is kept.*

Give life to those in the tomb, opening the gates of heaven to all who desire eternal life; let us pray. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

*Silence is kept.*

Let us continue our prayers to God, who cares for the lowly and guards us in the midst of trouble. We pray today for our Bishops Bonnie, Michael, Justin, Julio, Moises,

Elizabeth, Donald and Craig. We pray for all ministers, priests, deacons, ministry teams, those in formation; and our sisters and brothers worshipping at St Aidan's, Ann Arbor, St Peter's, Detroit; and James the Apostle, Angelina, in the Dominican Republic. We give you thanks for the blessings we have received from your hands, [especially \_\_\_\_\_]. We pray for the sick, and for those in any need or trouble: \_\_\_\_\_.

*Silence is kept.*

Most loving Father, whose will it is for us to give thanks for all things, to fear nothing but the loss of you, and to cast all our care on you who care for us: Preserve us from faithless fears and worldly anxieties, that no clouds of this mortal life may hide from us the light of that love which is immortal, and which you have manifested to us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Hear us, good Lord.**

*Priest* In union, O Lord with the faithful at every altar of your Church, where the Holy Eucharist is now being celebrated, we desire to offer our praise and thanksgiving. We present to you our souls and bodies with the earnest wish that we may always be united to you. And if we cannot now receive you sacramentally, we beseech you to come spiritually into our hearts. We unite ourselves to you, and embrace you with all the affections of our souls. Let nothing ever separate us from you. **Amen.**

## **Confession of Sin**

*The Deacon says*

Let us confess our sins to God.

*Silence may be kept.*

*Minister and People*

**Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.**



*The Priest stands and says*

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

## **The Peace**

*Presider*            The peace of Christ be always with you.  
*People*             **And also with you.**

*Then the Ministers and the People may greet one another in the name of the Lord.*

## **Holy Communion**

### *How the Holy Communion is prepared*

The Officiant, Deacon, other Eucharistic Ministers, and any participating Acolytes must wash their hands, or use hand sanitizer, before celebrating and before distribution. Gloves will not be used.

The Officiant alone will bring the bread and wine from the credence table to the Altar at the time of the offertory. All of the elements for Holy Communion will be placed on the Altar for the Eucharistic Prayer.

The Officiant alone stands at the altar, with others 6 feet or more away.

The **priest's wafer and chalice** will be uncovered in front of the officiant during the Eucharistic Prayer. They **are for the officiant alone**. They are consumed entirely by the officiant, or appropriately disposed of after the service.

The priest's wafer and the people's wafers will be kept separate at all times. The **people's wafers will be a container** on the Altar, which will remain covered throughout the Eucharistic Prayer. During consecration, the Officiant will touch the container, not the wafers.

The **distribution** of consecrated wine is not permitted at this time (as of June 19, 2020 Diocese of Michigan directive).

### *How the Holy Communion will be distributed*

Everyone distributing communion will use hand sanitizer before they begin distribution. Gloves will not be used.

Communicants will be encouraged to use hand sanitizer before receiving. Hand sanitizer will be available in each pew

The bread will be distributed at the communion rail, while maintaining six feet of distance between households. Ushers will direct people forward to receive.

Masks must continue to be worn during the distribution of communion. Communicants should only lift their mask and consume the bread when they are back in their pews, or at least six feet **away from** the distribution point.

The Minister will place the bread in the hand. The distribution will happen without directly touching the hand of the person receiving. Hand-to-mouth distribution is not permitted. If hand to hand contact happens, the minister will re-sanitize.

If a blessing is preferred, the blessing will be given without touch.

*When the Instructions have been reviewed, the Priest then says*

Let us with gladness present the offerings and oblations of our life and labor to the Lord.

*A minister brings forward the alms basin.*

## **Offertory Hymn**

Doxology

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God above, you heav'nly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

*The people remain standing.*

## **Great Thanksgiving**

*Presider* The Lord be with you.

*People* **And also with you.**

*Presider* Lift up your hearts.

*People* **We lift them to the Lord.**

*Presider* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

*People* **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth.

For you are the source of light and life; you made us in your image, and called us to new life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

*The people continue to stand, or kneel as they are able.*

*The Presider continues*

Holy and gracious God: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and maker of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:  
**Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, Almighty God, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and for ever. **AMEN.**

*The Presider then continues*

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray:

**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.**

**Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

### **Breaking of the Bread**

*A period of silence is kept.*

*The Presider says*

God of promise, you have prepared a banquet for us.

**Happy are those who are called to the Supper of the Lamb.**

*The Presider says*

God's holy gifts, for God's holy people.

*The Deacon then says*

The table of Christ's body and blood is now made ready.

It is the table of company with Jesus.

It is the table of sharing with the poor and lowly of the world,  
with whom Jesus identified.

*The Presider continues*

So come to this table you who have much faith

or you who would like more; you who have been here often

and you who have not been here in a long time.

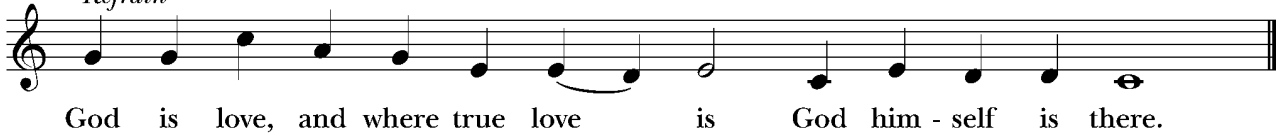
Come. It is Christ who invites you to meet him here.

**Amen. As the elements we now eat are transformed,  
may we be changed into the likeness of Christ; bone of his bone,  
flesh of his flesh, loving and caring for the world.**

### **Communion Hymn**

*Here in Christ we gather*

Hymnal 577

*Refrain*

1 Here in Christ we gath - er, love of Christ our call - ing.  
2 When we Chris - tians gath - er, mem - bers of one Bo - dy,  
3 Grant us love's ful - fill - ment, joy with all the bless - ed,

Christ, our love, is with us, glad - ness be his greet - ing.  
let there be in us no dis - cord but one spi - rit.  
when we see your face, O Sa - vior, in its glo - ry.

Let us fear and love him, ho - ly God e - ter - nal.  
Ban - ished now be an - ger, strife and ev - ery quar - rel.  
Shine on us, O pur - est Light of all cre - a - tion,

*Repeat Refrain*

Lov - ing him, let each love Christ in one an - oth - er.  
Christ, our God, be al - ways pres - ent here a - mong us.  
be our bliss while end - less a - ges sing your prais - es.

*After Communion, the Presider says*

Let us pray.

*Presider and People*

**Eternal God, heavenly Father,  
you have graciously accepted us as living members  
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,  
and you have fed us with spiritual food  
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.  
Send us now into the world in peace,  
and grant us strength and courage  
to love and serve you  
with gladness and singleness of heart;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## **Blessing**

*The priest blesses the people, saying*

Live without fear: your Creator has made you holy, has always protected you, and loves you as a mother. Go in peace to follow the good road.

And the blessing of God Almighty, + the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. **Amen.**

## **Concluding Hymn**

LEVAS 117

*I'm Goin'-a Sing When the Spirit Says Sing*

*\*Verse 2: Pray    \*Verse 3: Shout*



I'm goin' - a sing when the Spir - it says sing, sing, and o -  
 bey the Spir - it of the Lord.

## Dismissal

*Deacon* My brothers and my sisters, let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.  
*People* **Thanks be to God.**

## Postlude

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## REGARDING OFFERINGS TO ST. BARNABAS CHURCH

**To make your regular offering to St Barnabas**, please mail your check to the church: 20500 W Old US-12, Chelsea MI 48118-1309. Mail is being collected daily.

**If you wish to make an offering online**, you can use this link provided by the Diocese to do so securely: <https://www.edomi.org/give/> Contributions given here will be transferred by the diocesan Treasurer to St Barnabas.

## **CONTINUING OUR DONATIONS OF FOOD AND FUNDS TO FAITH IN ACTION**

Faith in Action is providing leadership in collecting donations to support households in need in the Chelsea and Dexter areas.

**Needed right now:** cleaning products, and personal products are always needed, as these items cannot be purchased with food stamps. **You may bring your donations to FIA**, or to Nancy who will see that they get there. ***Food will be collected at the church on August 23, the next BC meeting date. The building will be open for you to leave your donations on the table.***

Donations to help us combat the continuing effects of the pandemic can be made by PayPal at [www.faithinaction1.org](http://www.faithinaction1.org), by [Facebook](#), or by mailing a check to *Faith in Action, 603 S. Main Street, Chelsea MI 48118.*

**If you need help, please call FIA at (734) 475-3305**

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### **Enrichment for Our Spiritual Journey**

**Join St Barnabas'** twice-weekly Zoom check-in! Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. Contact Bill or Marion if you need the link.

**Watch** Washington National Cathedral's live-streamed Eucharist and Daily Office services, <https://cathedral.org/calendar/>

**Join in** a short, weekly, meditation with Presiding Bishop Curry here: <https://episcopalchurch.org/habits-of-grace>

**Watch** Bishop Bonnie Perry's sermons, <https://www.edomi.org/whatshe said/sermons/>

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### **Upcoming Commemorations**

- Aug. 23 Martin de Porres, 1639, Rosa de Lima, 1617, and Toribio de Mogrovejo, 1606, Witnesses to the Faith in South America
- 25 Louis, King of France, 1270
- 27 Thomas Gallaudet, 1902, with Henry Winter Syle, 1890



- 28 Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, and Theologian, 430; and, Moses the Black,  
Desert Father and Martyr, c. 400
- 29 John Bunyan, Writer, 1688

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**Invitation to the Table** adapted from *The Iona Abbey Worship Book*, (Glasgow, UK: Wild Goose Publications, 2001)

**Concluding prayer** at the Intercessions adapted from *The Armed Forces Prayer Book*, 1951.

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## Scripture preparation for August 30, 2020: Pentecost 13, Proper 17A

### Exodus 3:1-15

The episode at the burning bush is one of the most memorable Old Testament stories, perhaps because it portrays God's encounter with a particular person, as well as God's compassionate response to the afflictions of his people. This is the first of many divine acts that will bring forth Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt and culminate with the blessings of the new covenant of God's Law. And, as is the case in many other places in Scripture, the Lord asks for the cooperation of an individual in order to fulfill his design. He comes to Moses, not during worship and prayer, or at a busy place for everyone to see, but in the intimacy of an otherwise mundane hour of labor. For a moment, God displays dominion over time and space to express his will: it is Moses, and no one else, whom he has chosen for a momentous task. It is he whom God calls by name in a uniquely *paternal* way: "I am the God of your father," the Lord announces, before revealing his relationship with the patriarchs of Israel.

Despite the very personal nature of this passage, it is difficult to deny its outright strangeness; the Lord manifests in the form of fire, and the scene is perplexing and even frightening to Moses. Upon hearing a voice coming from a plant that burns without being consumed, Moses discovers the all-powerful God, the God in whose presence nature is elevated and freed from the menace of death. The very ground on which Moses meets God is declared sacred and undefiled. These signs suggest the heavenly plan is a return to that fellowship between the Creator and the created which had been ruptured at Eden. But for Moses, it is not enough to recognize the Lord and commune with him, as he experiences the inherently human urge to name God. The name God provides is strange because it is more a declaration than a label. "I am who I am," is the sign of one who has no beginning or end, possessing the ultimate claim of *being*. It is this consoling permanence of God that promises to be with Moses on his journey.

- In what places and circumstances have you experienced closeness with God?
- What is your interpretation of the name of God that was given to Moses?

### **Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45c**

The words of the psalm invite God's people to engage in worship that is multidimensional and ongoing. It involves giving thanks to the Lord, but also singing his praises, glorying in his name, searching for him continually, and calling to mind his great deeds. In that light, the use of language, music, and ritual are all important aspects of religious devotion. But just as necessary is an inward disposition to know the heart of God more deeply, so that our own hearts may be converted, and we can know the kind of fulfillment the world is incapable of delivering. It is not merely for the sake of triumphant commemoration that the characters and events surrounding Israel's exodus are recalled, but rather as part of a pledge of faithfulness to an ever-faithful God.

- How important is worshipful singing to you? What difference does it make in a church service?
- What are some ways in which God invites us to "continually seek his face"?

### **Romans 12:9-21**

Paul unpacks for the Christian communities of Rome the evangelical duty of mutual love (cf. John 13:34). Christ's original and most important commandment is presented in no uncertain terms and believers are asked to love others and deny themselves in ways that would have appeared as countercultural in their day as they do in ours. It is pertinent, however, to imagine a world in which Christians were anything but a majority, under circumstances that did not allow for a less-than-profound embodiment of the faith. In order for evangelizing efforts to be fruitful, the service of God was expected to encompass every aspect of life. But the Church of today is called to that same radical love, that "extra mile" which Jesus speaks of in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5:41) – not as a suggestion for the occasional act of charity, but as a way of life that involves constant renunciation, a way of life that transforms and speaks louder than words.

- Who can you visit or call today that needs your fellowship?
- What does the idea of overcoming evil with good mean to you?

### **Matthew 16:21-28**

Jesus leaves no room for ambiguity as he prepares his disciples for the kind of fate that awaits him. He discloses to them the place and culprits of his death, and they can probably deduce the time as well. To follow Jesus into Jerusalem will mean seeing him suffer and die. This must come as a shock to the disciples, and their natural reaction is to reject the prospect of a path so dooming, because they have endeared themselves to their Teacher and Lord. To put it bluntly, their suffering has already begun.

In his impetuosity, Peter, who in the previous passage had just confessed Jesus as the Christ, now defies him. "God forbid it, Lord!" he cries out. In return, Jesus reproaches him heavily by calling him the name of the enemy, Satan. This impassioned exchange seems to showcase both the frailty of the zealous disciple and the most human side of the Savior when presented with the slightest temptation to avoid the sacrifice of the Cross.

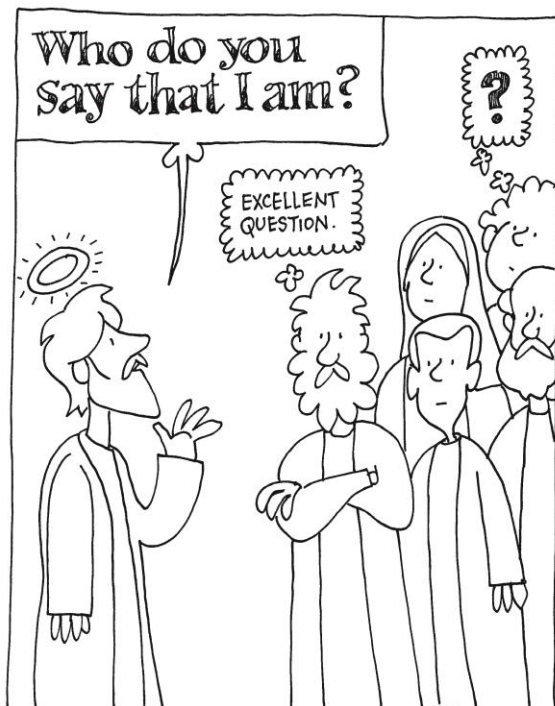
Jesus knows he must die to bring completion to the Father's plan of deliverance initiated since time immemorial. His followers are called to carry their own crosses and follow the Lord, at the risk of losing their lives for his sake. This is what being a disciple means -to proclaim that the Kingdom has come, in the example of Jesus, the ultimate servant and victim (cf. Matthew 20:28). The Lord knows that the disciples are liable to fail – several times. They will fall asleep in the garden of Gethsemane, and after Jesus is captured, the same Peter will deny knowing him. These examples of weakness, however, are part of what makes the Gospel feel genuine and relatable to Christians of different eras and cultures. The overriding message of hope of these pages is not that we are perfect, but that in seeking perfection after the heavenly Father, we are not alone. After all, Jesus' very last words in Matthew's Gospel are almost the same as the ones spoken to Moses at the burning bush, "I am with you..." (Matthew 28:20).

- How do you think the apostles feel when Jesus tells them he must die?
- What are some of the difficulties of being a follower of Jesus? How do we overcome them?

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### **Our Mission:**

We seek to grow as diverse disciples of Jesus Christ, and to serve Jesus by serving others in the world, guided by the values of Ancient Rites, Open Minds, and Affirming Hearts.



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