

Holy Eucharist

Proper 17A, Pentecost 13

August 30, 2020

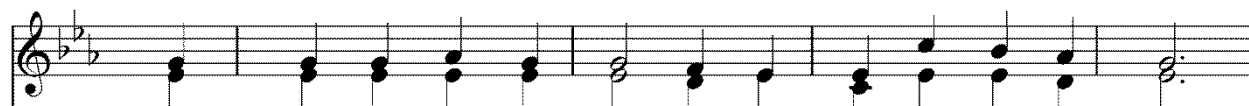
Prelude

Announcements

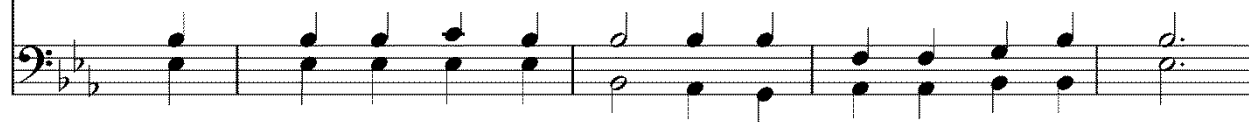
Opening Hymn

Tune: *Aurelia*

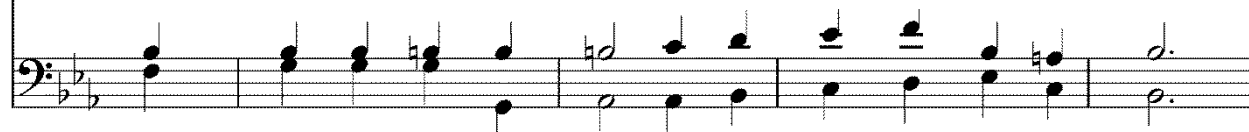
Our God, you called to Moses



1. Our God, you called to Mo- ses to set your peo- ple free.
2. And yet, O Lord, you told him to trust in what you said.
3. You call each con- gre- -ga- tion to serve those lost and poor.

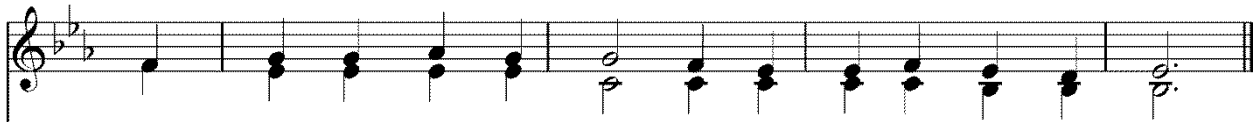
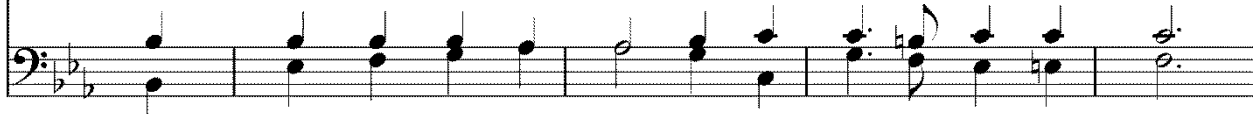


What wrongly some sup- pose is: he an- swered eas- i- ly.
Your strength would sure- ly hold him through all those days a- -head
We doubt our own vo- -cation; we ask, "Lord, are you sure?"

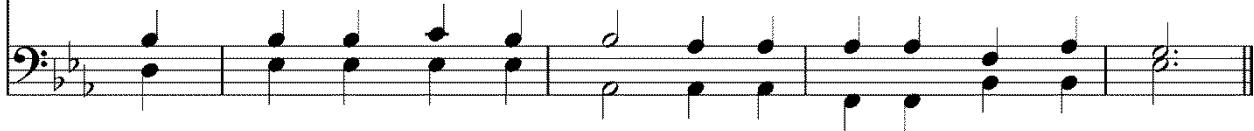




"I'm not the one you're seek-ing!" he seemed in-stead to say.
 Though many would op- -pose him, by your own name he'd know:
 Yet you give gifts for shar-ing, you show us what to say.



"My strength is not in speak-ing; God, find an- oth- er way!"
 You were the one who chose him to help your peo- ple go.
 Your Spi- rit gives us da- ring to serve Christ eve-ry day.



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 say together

**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.

Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of your Name; increase in us true religion; nourish us with all goodness; and bring forth in us the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

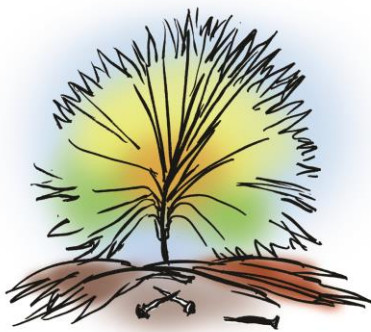
All sit.

First Reading

Exodus 3:1-15

A reading from the book of Exodus.

¹Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ²There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. ³Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." ⁴When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.



⁷Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my

people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, ⁸and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” ¹¹But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” ¹²He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.”

¹³But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” ¹⁴God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” ¹⁵God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’:

This is my name forever,
and this my title for all generations.”

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Psalms 105:1-6, 23-26, 45c

- ¹Give thanks to the LORD and call upon his Name; *
make known his deeds among the peoples.
- ²**Sing to him, sing praises to him, ***
and speak of all his marvelous works.
- ³Glory in his holy Name; *
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.
- ⁴**Search for the LORD and his strength; ***
continually seek his face.
- ⁵Remember the marvels he has done, *
his wonders and the judgments of his mouth,
- ⁶**O offspring of Abraham his servant, ***
O children of Jacob his chosen.
- ²³Israel came into Egypt, *
and Jacob became a sojourner in the land of Ham.
- ²⁴**The LORD made his people exceedingly fruitful; ***
he made them stronger than their enemies;
- ²⁵Whose heart he turned, so that they hated his people, *
and dealt unjustly with his servants.
- ²⁶**He sent Moses his servant, ***
and Aaron whom he had chosen. 45cHallelujah!

Second Reading

Romans 12:9-21

A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

⁹Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

All stand as they are able.

Sequence Hymn

Tune: *Winchester New*

O God, the things that make for peace

1. O God, the things that make for peace seem
2. We thank you that your love ex- -tends be-
3. We long to live your way, O Lord, to

The musical notation consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The melody is primarily in the treble clef, with some notes in the bass clef. The lyrics are written below the treble clef staff.

hid- den, dis- tant, out of reach. Your peace be- gins when
 -yond the cir- cle of our friends. You teach us: Give the
 see re- la- tion- ships re- stored; may we, in all we
 we em- brace your Son — your won- drous gift of grace.
 stran- ger bread And see that en- e- -mies are fed.
 Say and do, seek peace and there-fore hon- or you.

Holy Gospel

Matthew 16:21-28

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

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

²¹Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” ²³But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

²⁷“For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. ²⁸Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”



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

Deacon God is the great “I AM” in whose Name we pray, responding, “Lord, hear our prayer.”

Intercessor That we may open our ears to the cries of those who suffer, freeing them from enslavement to poverty, abuse, and lack of opportunity, taking our share in the saving acts of God; let us pray. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Silence is kept.

That the leaders of the nations may lead their people with integrity, honoring all that is past and moving into the challenges that define a new life; let us pray. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Silence is kept.

For the courage to lift up our crosses to the light of day, carrying them on our journey of faith, uniting ourselves with the Christ of the passion, so as to share in the glory of his resurrection; let us pray. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Silence is kept.

That we be given the strength to leave behind the fruits of temptation, turning our gaze upon that which is nourishing and sound, living a life of love, honor, and respect for others, full of rejoicing and thanksgiving; let us pray. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Silence is kept.

For all laborers, that they may receive a fair wage, a safe working environment, the companionship of fellow workers, and the respect of those who exercise authority over them; let us pray. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Silence is kept.

For those who have died surrounded by family and friends, [remembering especially _____], and for those who were unloved and unmourned, that all may have a place in God’s kingdom; let us pray. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Silence is kept.

May the Name of God be grafted on our hearts as we continue our prayers. 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 John’s, Royal Oak; and St Bartholomew, San Cristobal, and all the parishes that have suffered in the hurricanes 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

to be said

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

O Master, let me walk with thee

Hymnal 660

1 O Mas - ter, let me walk with thee in low - ly
 3 Teach me thy pa - tience; still with thee in clos - er,
 4 in hope that sends a shin - ing ray far down the

paths of ser - vice free; tell me thy se - cret;
 dear - er com - pa - ny, in work that keeps faith
 fu - ture's broad - ening way, in peace that on - ly

help me bear the strain of toil, the fret of care.
 sweet and strong, in trust that tri - umphs o - ver wrong,
 thou canst give, with thee, O Mas - ter, let me live.

After Communion, the Presider says

Let us pray.

Presider and People

**Almighty and everliving God,
 we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food
 of the most precious Body and Blood
 of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ;
 and for assuring us in these holy mysteries
 that we are living members of the Body of Christ,
 and heirs of your eternal kingdom.
 And now, send us out
 to do the work you have given us to do,
 to love and serve you**

as faithful witnesses of Christ our Savior.
 To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit,
 be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

Blessing

The priest blesses the people, saying

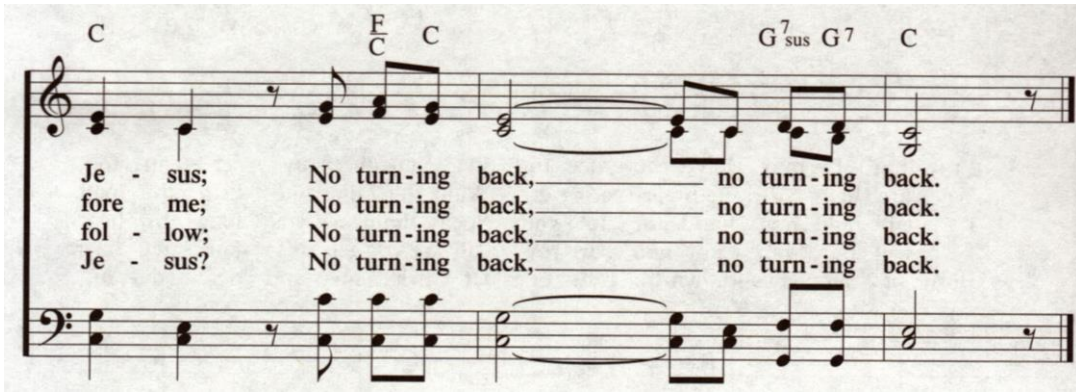
Live without fear: your Creator has made you holy, has always protected you, and loves you as a mother. Go in peace to follow the good road.

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

Chorus Book 70

I have decided to follow Jesus



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.

CONTINUING OUR DONATIONS OF FOOD AND FUNDS TO FAITH IN ACTION

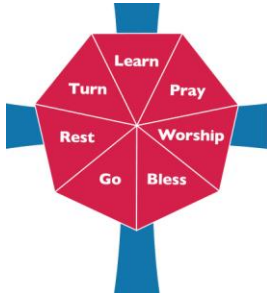
Faith in Action is providing leadership in collecting donations to support households in need in the Chelsea and Dexter areas.

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 September 20, 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, 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

Enrichment for Our Spiritual Journey



The Way of Love material can be found here:
<https://episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love>

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/whatsheaid/sermons/>

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Upcoming Commemorations

- Aug. 30 Charles Chapman Grafton, Bishop of Fond du Lac, and Ecumenist, 1912
- 31 Aidan, 651, and Cuthbert, 687, Bishops of Lindisfarne
- Sep. 1 David Pendleton Oakerhater, Deacon and Missionary, 1931
- 2 The Martyrs of New Guinea, 1942
- 3 Prudence Crandall, Teacher and Prophetic Witness, 1890
- 4 Paul Jones, 1941; and, Albert Schweitzer, 1965
- 5 Gregorio Aglipay, Priest and Founder of the Philippine Independent Church, 1940

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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 September 6, 2020: Pentecost 14, Proper 18A

Exodus 12:1-14

Not only are there cooking directions, there's even a dress code and disposal instructions. Sandals on, loins girded and a staff in hand – seems like an easy enough outfit to throw together. All the leftovers needing to be burned is also a cinch, since that's what will happen if I'm roasting *anything* over a fire. Further instructions make it clear that the food must be eaten in haste, much like a teenager after football practice. All the old jokes about the Episcopalian who used the wrong salad fork are thrown out. There are no salad forks for this meal. In fact, there aren't any forks at all.

This recipe is certainly for an extraordinary circumstance. That is, the circumstance of getting out of Dodge fast. The original diners were getting out of town to end their long enslavement to the Egyptians. The people of God were to mark their own doors, lest the Lord kill their firstborn along with the Egyptian firstborn.

Suddenly, my comedic musings on this passage grind to a halt. The lamb must be killed, and its blood used to mark the doorposts of each Israelite home so that the Lord would pass over as he struck down the firstborn children and animals in Egypt. This would be a night of death and destruction, of plague and sorrow. The fury of the Lord will rain down on the land of Egypt while the people of God sheltered in their homes, quickly eating a roast lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Then, when the aftermath of the death and destruction turned each Egyptian home into a morgue, they would slip away into the desert.

The Passover was a feast that commemorates a violent event after a series of violent events in Egypt. As we have learned from our own nation's history, human slavery does not just fade away with time and good intentions. Slavery is maintained by violence and usually comes to a violent end. The command to remember the slavery and to remember God's deliverance is a way to remember God's grace and deliverance.

- Do you remember a time when you felt delivered from a place of hardship? How do you commemorate that deliverance?

Psalm 149

This psalm captures the crazy exuberance that is possible for the people of God. The joy in this psalm is shared by the whole community. This is not private revelry; everyone is involved.

Music abounds, and everyone whirls around, dancing. The whole community is singing at the top of its lungs when we notice a peculiar thing about the choir. Everyone in the choir is holding a two-edged sword. They have swords to execute judgment on oppressive kings.

This psalm reminds me of the *Magnificat*, in which Mary sings that God raises up the lowly and pushes down the proud. In Psalm 149, it is the festive choir that introduces God's justice in the world.

All this leads me to conclude that the praise and worship that we do on Sunday cannot be disconnected from what God is doing in the world throughout the week. God's interest in

justice flows from the praises of his people. For me, this helps connect my worship with real, practical problems in the world that God is moving to fix.

- What are some of the issues in the world where we can see God's justice?
- How is your worship of God moving you toward seeing the world's inequalities?

Romans 13:8-14

Before he became a follower of Jesus, the great father of the church, St. Augustine, read these words of St. Paul. After reading them, he shut the book, and then he observed, "By a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away."

I confess that I had a different reaction to these words in Romans. My reading of this passage, at first glance, made me feel like the apostle is chiding me about how I spend my free time in the evenings. I confess that his words seem to be rather meddlesome, even 2,000 years after they were written.

How could this rather negative message be to St. Augustine a message of light and serenity? Perhaps I should remind myself that the power of the Holy Spirit is always to bring the right word at the right time. For St. Augustine, these were the right words for that moment.

Perhaps they are the right words for our moment, too. We are reminded in these verses that "salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers." Every time we move toward the light of God, we are moving deeper into the Kingdom of God. We are easily distracted by the neon lights that signal the presence of what tourist brochures call "nightlife," but we never mistake neon lights for the sun.

For Paul, it is still night, but the dawn is almost here. Get ready, he says, to live the way we will live for eternity, in the light and warmth of God.

- What are the worthwhile pursuits of life that you might be missing by staying up too late? What distracts you from being a light to a dark world?

Matthew 18:15-20

"Mr. Peters, we apologize for your long wait at the front desk. In order to keep your loyalty here at our hotel we would like to offer you a complimentary three-night stay at any of our worldwide locations. We will also throw in a couple of spa passes and trays of chocolate-covered strawberries." Indeed, these are words I always like to hear. I also like to hear that I'm getting a big refund from the IRS. What I don't like to hear is that I sinned against someone. I don't like it one bit. I'd much rather talk about something else.

One of the most unpleasant activities in human life is confrontation. Especially when a relationship is at stake. I can come up with a million excuses to put off and avoid confrontation with someone who is hurting me or my community. Jesus clearly states that the responsibility to confront lies with the person who is offended. The community is slowly drawn in to the controversy, but not too soon.

The goal of this confrontation is to "gain your brother." The goal is always reconciliation. Even when a member is declared a gentile and tax collector, the goal is reconciliation.

How does Jesus treat tax collectors and gentiles? He engages them with truth and love. In fact, Matthew, the traditional author of this gospel, was a tax collector. Jesus called Matthew just like he calls all of us. He calls us to a ministry of reconciliation, even when it's difficult and painful.

I have observed confrontation many times, and I can report that the goal of the confrontation was rarely restoration and reconciliation. Too often the goal of the confrontation was to initiate a separation so everyone could go on with their lives.

Reconciliation is difficult. The cross, the ultimate symbol of reconciliation, stands before us and behind us as we pick up the phone and ask if we can meet to talk about something that happened.

- Can you think of an example of a confrontation that resulted in reconciliation? What are some practical steps to take that may result in reconciliation after confrontation?

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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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