

# Holy Eucharist

September 3, 2023

Zoom link:

<https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/85887946777?pwd=eig94MEdsMUh6clV6b2dUblFOQ3I2Zz0>

9

Meeting ID: 858 8794 6777

Passcode: 782611

## Proper 17A: the 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

### Prelude

### Opening Hymn

*God is love*

### Hymnal 379

1 God is Love, let heaven a - dore him; God is Love, let  
2 God is Love; and Love en - folds us, all the world in  
3 God is Love; and though with blind - ness sin af - flicts all

earth re - joice; let cre - a - tion sing be - fore him  
one em - brace: with un - fail - ing grasp God holds us,  
hu - man life, God's e - ter - nal lov - ing - kind - ness

and ex - alt him with one voice. God who laid the earth's foun -  
ev - ery child of ev - ery race. And when hu - man hearts are  
guides us through our earth - ly strife. Sin and death and hell shall

da - tion, God who spread the heaven a - bove, God who breathes through  
 break - ing un - der sor - row's i - ron rod, then we find that  
 nev - er o'er us fi - nal tri - umph gain; God is Love, so

all cre - a - tion: God is Love, e - ter - nal Love.  
 self - same ach - ing deep with - in the heart of God.  
 Love for ev - er o'er the u - ni - verse must reign.

*Presider* Blessed be † the one, holy, and living God.  
*People* **Glory to God for ever and ever. Amen.**

*The Presider begins the 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.**

*The following is sung, all standing as they are able*

**Song of Praise**  
*Holy ground*

**Chorus Book 50**

D G<sup>2</sup>/<sub>B</sub> G D A/<sub>D</sub> G<sup>2</sup>/<sub>D</sub>

We are stand - ing on ho - ly ground,

G F#m7 Bm Em A7

And I know that there are an-gels all a-round.

G/A D D sus D G/D D A/D G<sup>2</sup>/D G

Let us praise Je-sus now. We are

D/F# G D/A A7 D G/D D

stand-ing in His pres-ence on Ho-ly ground.

### 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.

<sup>1</sup>Moses 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. <sup>2</sup>There 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. <sup>3</sup>Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." <sup>4</sup>When 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." <sup>5</sup>Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." <sup>6</sup>He 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.

<sup>7</sup>Then 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, <sup>8</sup>and 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. <sup>9</sup>The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup>So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." <sup>11</sup>But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" <sup>12</sup>He 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."

<sup>13</sup>But 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?" <sup>14</sup>God 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.'" <sup>15</sup>God 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.**

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

*to be prayed in unison*

- <sup>1</sup>Give thanks to the LORD and call upon his Name; \*  
make known his deeds among the peoples.**
- <sup>2</sup>Sing to him, sing praises to him, \*  
and speak of all his marvelous works.**
- <sup>3</sup>Glory in his holy Name; \*  
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.**
- <sup>4</sup>Search for the LORD and his strength; \*  
continually seek his face.**
- <sup>5</sup>Remember the marvels he has done, \*  
his wonders and the judgments of his mouth,**

**<sup>6</sup>O offspring of Abraham his servant, \***  
**O children of Jacob his chosen.**  
<sup>23</sup>**Israel came into Egypt, \***  
**and Jacob became a sojourner in the land of Ham.**  
<sup>24</sup>**The LORD made his people exceedingly fruitful; \***  
**he made them stronger than their enemies;**  
<sup>25</sup>**Whose heart he turned, so that they hated his people, \***  
**and dealt unjustly with his servants.**  
<sup>26</sup>**He sent Moses his servant, \***  
**and Aaron whom he had chosen.**  
<sup>45c</sup>**Hallelujah!**

**Second Reading**

Romans 12:9-21

A Reading from Paul's letter to the Church in Rome.

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

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

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

*All then stand as they are able.*

**Sequence Hymn**

**Hymnal 675**

*Take up your cross, the Savior said*



1	Take	up	your	cross,	the	Sa - vior	said,	if
2	Take	up	your	cross,	let	not	its	weight
4	Take	up	your	cross,	then,	in	his	strength,
5	Take	up	your	cross,	and	fol - low	Christ,	nor



1 you would my dis - ci - ple be; take up your cross with  
 2 your weak spi - rit with a - larm; his strength shall bear your  
 4 calm - ly ev - ery dan - ger brave: it guides you to a -  
 5 think till death to lay it down; for on - ly those who



1 will - ing heart, and hum - bly fol - low af - ter me.  
 2 spi - rit up, and brace your heart, and nerve your arm.  
 4 bun - dant life and leads to vic - tory o'er the grave.  
 5 bear the cross may hope to wear the glo - rious crown.

*All remain standing as they are able.*

## Holy Gospel

Matthew 16:21-28

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

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

<sup>21</sup>Jesus 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.

<sup>22</sup>And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." <sup>23</sup>But 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."

<sup>24</sup>Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup>For 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?

<sup>27</sup>"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. <sup>28</sup>Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."



*Gospeller* The Gospel of the Lord.

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

## Sermon

Bill Stech

*All then 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* Brothers and sisters, children of God, be kindly affectioned one to another with love. And let us come before God, saying, “We glory in your holy name, and offer to you our prayer, O Lord.”

*Intercessor* Lord Jesus, you bid your disciples take up their cross and follow you: may your holy Church desire, above all, the things of God that we might overcome evil with good. We glory in your holy name, **and offer to you our prayer, O Lord.**

*Silence is kept*

Lord God of our forebears, you know the sorrows of the afflicted: Deliver those who are being oppressed. And grant your peace to all the world. We glory in your holy name, **and offer to you our prayer, O Lord.**

*Silence is kept*

Good Lord, you make known your wondrous works: reveal yourself in the works of your hands as you did to Moses our forebear on the holy mountain. Accept our thanks and praise for all the blessings you give abundantly to us [especially\_\_\_\_\_]. We glory in your holy name, **and offer to you our prayer, O Lord.**

*Silence is kept*

O Lord, you are ruler of all things in heaven and earth. Hear our prayers for this parish family. Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the penitent. Give to us all a burning heart for you and for our congregation. Grant us all things necessary for our common life, and the embrace of the ministries with which you have gifted everyone. Bring us all to be of one heart and mind within your holy Church. We glory in your holy name, **and offer to you our prayer, O Lord.**

*Silence is kept*

Strong Lord, make us weep with those who weep. Reveal your strength to the weak, the lowly, the sad and the forgotten [especially\_\_\_\_\_], that they may rejoice in all your marvelous works. We glory in your holy name, **and offer to you our prayer, O Lord.**

*Silence is kept*

Almighty God, you reward each one according to their works: Give to [\_\_\_\_\_ and all] the dead rest from their labors and life everlasting. We glory in your holy name, **and offer to you our prayer, O Lord.**

*Silence is kept*

*Presider* For what other people and situations shall we pray today?

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth: Grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may always be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer, and know ourselves to be surrounded by their witness to your power and mercy. We ask this for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whom all our intercessions are acceptable through the Spirit, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**



## **Confession of Sin**

*The Presider says to the people*

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

*All remain standing, or kneel, as they are able.*

*Silence may be kept.*

*Minister and People*

**God of all mercy,  
we confess that we have sinned against you,  
opposing your will in our lives.  
We have denied your goodness in each other,  
in ourselves, and in the world you have created.  
We repent of the evil that enslaves us,  
the evil we have done,  
and the evil done on our behalf.  
Forgive, restore, and strengthen us  
through our Savior Jesus Christ,  
that we may abide in your love  
and serve only your will. Amen.**

*A 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.**

## **Prayers for those celebrating their birthdays and anniversaries**

*In September, we celebrate the birthdays of Austin, Kailyn, Alan; the anniversaries of Larry & Melanie and Alan & Kitty, and any others you wish to remember in prayer.*

*Those who will be celebrating their birthday or anniversary in September are invited to the front of the nave.*

*Prayer for a Birthday*

**O God, our times are in your hand: Look with favor, we pray, on your servants Alan, Austin, Kailyn, ... as they begin another year. Grant that they may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen their trust in your goodness all the days of their lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*Prayer for an Anniversary*

Eternal God, creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation, and giver of all grace: Look with favor upon the world you have made, and for which your Son gave his life, and especially upon

Larry & Melanie, Alan & Kitty, and all couples. Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their spirits in your Spirit, that they may continue to grow in love and peace with you and one another all the days of their lives. **Amen.**

*All then stand as they are able.*

## **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.*

*The People then are seated.*

## **Announcements**

## **Holy Communion**

*Presider* Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. For everything in heaven and on earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom, and you are exalted as head over all. *1 Chronicles 29:11*

*The people stand as they are able when the offerings are presented and placed on the Altar.*

## **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 as they are able*

## **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.**

*The Presider proceeds*

Blessed be your holy name, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for you have revealed yourself to be the only, the eternal, the great I AM.

From the flames of the burning bush, you anointed Moses to lead your people out of hardship and bondage to the land of promise.

In the fire of the prophets, you spoke of a day when every sin and sorrow would be burned away, and all the earth would be ablaze with your glory.

In the fullness of time, you revealed your way of overcoming evil in the crucible of your Son's passion and death; through his resurrection, you proclaimed once again that you are the great I AM for all generations.

And so we give you thanks, with your church on earth, and all the company of heaven, as we lift our voices in your unending praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

*The Presider continues*

Lord God, as you made the earth beneath Moses's feet into holy ground, sanctify this meal to bring us into your sacred presence.

As we remember your Son's saving mercies, send down your Spirit to anoint + your church for ministry.

By that same Spirit bless + this bread and cup that they may be for us the body and blood of our Savior Jesus Christ;

who, at supper with his disciples, took bread, gave you thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to them, saying, "Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.

After supper he took the cup. Again he gave you thanks, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "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. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Great is the mystery of faith.

**Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

*The Presider continues*

God of deliverance, who commissioned Moses for a purpose beyond his comprehension, send forth your church with an imagination shaped for your kingdom. Give your disciples grace to bless those who persecute them, to be patient in suffering, to persevere in prayer, and to rejoice in hope. Stretch every heart to find life in you by losing it, and strengthen your people with courage and wisdom to take up their cross and follow your Son.

Make your people on earth ready for a purpose beyond our imagining, a life beyond our deserving, a glory beyond our reckoning, until your kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven, and you bring us with the saints onto eternal holy ground, aflame with your love, most holy Trinity, now and forever. **AMEN.**

*The Presider then continues*

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now 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*

This is the true bread which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.  
**Whoever eats this bread will live for ever.**

The Gifts of God for the People of God.

*All are welcome to receive Holy Communion.*

*After all have received, the Presider then says*

Let us pray.

*Presider and People*

**God of abundance,  
you have fed us  
with the bread of life and cup of salvation;  
you have united us  
with Christ and one another;  
and you have made us one  
with all your people in heaven and on earth.**

**Now send us forth in the power of your Spirit,  
that we may proclaim your redeeming love to the world  
and continue for ever  
in the risen life of Christ our Savior. Amen.**

## Blessing

*A priest blesses the people, saying*

We go out, not to take Jesus to people, but to meet Jesus where he already is. And may the + Holy eternal Majesty, the Holy incarnate Word, and the Holy abiding Spirit, bless you for evermore. **Amen.**

## Closing Hymn

*I have decided to follow Jesus*

## Chorus Book 70

1. I have de - cid - ed \_\_\_\_\_ to fol - low Je - sus; I have de -  
2. The world be - hind me, \_\_\_\_\_ the cross be - fore me; The world be -  
3. Tho' none go with me, \_\_\_\_\_ still I will fol - low; Tho' none go  
4. Will you de - cide now \_\_\_\_\_ to fol - low Je - sus? Will you de -

cid - ed \_\_\_\_\_ to fol - low Je - sus; I have de - cid - ed \_\_\_\_\_ to fol - low  
hind me, \_\_\_\_\_ the cross be - fore me; The world be - hind me, \_\_\_\_\_ the cross be -  
with me, \_\_\_\_\_ still I will fol - low; Tho' none go with me, \_\_\_\_\_ still I will  
cide now \_\_\_\_\_ to fol - low Je - sus? Will you de - cide now \_\_\_\_\_ to fol - low

Je - sus; No turn - ing back, \_\_\_\_\_ no turn - ing back.  
fore me; No turn - ing back, \_\_\_\_\_ no turn - ing back.  
fol - low; No turn - ing back, \_\_\_\_\_ no turn - ing back.  
Je - sus? No turn - ing back, \_\_\_\_\_ no turn - ing back.

## Dismissal

*Minister* And now, my sisters and brothers, I bid you go in peace to love  
and serve our Lord.

*People* **Thanks be to God.**

## Postlude

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### This week in prayer

**Please remember these persons and congregations in your prayers this week:**

**Our Bishops** Bonnie, Michael, Justin, Moises (TEC); Elizabeth, Donald and Craig (ELCA)  
**and for** all priests, deacons, Ministry Teams, and those in formation

#### **Anglican Cycle of Prayer:**

September 3 Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean

#### **Diocese of Michigan Cycle of Prayer:**

September 3 Nativity Church, Bloomfield Twp; Cathedral of the Epiphany, Santo Domingo,  
Church of the Redeemer, Barahona, DR

**St Barnabas Cycle of Prayer:** Mary V, Michael V, Kathy W

**and our continuing prayers for:** Bob, Carlos, Jim M, Mardi, Robert, Selenah

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**Faith in Action** continues to provide leadership in collecting donations of food to support households in need in the Chelsea and Dexter areas. They remain in need of our support and help. You may bring your donations to FIA, or to [Nancy](#) who will see that they get there. **If you bring food directly to FIA**, please let Nancy know, so she can continue to keep our records of donation. If you write a check, please make it to *Faith In Action*. The **next Food Drive is September 17**. Please contribute as generously as you can.

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### Upcoming Commemorations

- Sep 03 Prudence Crandall: Teacher and Prophetic Witness, 1890
- 04 Paul Jones, Bishop, 1941; and, Albert Schweitzer, Missionary Doctor, 1965
- 05 Gregorio Aglipay: Priest and Founder of  
the Philippine Independent Church, 1940
- 06 Hannah More, Religious Writer and Philanthropist, 1833
- 07 Elie Naud: Huguenot Witness to the Faith, 1722
- 08 Nikolai Grundtvig: Bishop and Hymnwriter, 1872; and,  
Søren Kierkegaard: Teacher and Philosopher, 1855
- 09 The Martyrs of Memphis: Constance, Thecla, Ruth, Frances,  
Charles Parsons, and Louis Schuyler, 1878

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## A look at Paul Jones, Bishop 1941



On September 4th, the Episcopal Church celebrates and remembers the life of the Rt. Rev. Paul Jones, 4th Bishop of the Missionary District of Utah, and Founder of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship. He became bishop in 1916 and was a prominent pacifist.

As the fever for the United States to enter World War I strengthened, Bishop Jones' pacifist views were considered controversial. He believed and stated that "war is unchristian." He spoke out openly and frequently about his opposition to war. His views faced opposition in much of the Church, especially his home diocese.

In April 1918, a commission of the House of Bishops forced Paul Jones to resign his post as Bishop of Utah because of his outspoken opposition to World War I. Jones then served as a chaplain at Antioch College and founded the Fellowship of Reconciliation. In the 1930s, Jones was deeply committed to assisting Jewish and other refugees fleeing the Nazi regime in Germany. He pushed the Episcopal Church to take up the cause of refugees, a topic that-- like today-- was not without controversy.

As a result of his efforts, the Episcopal Church formally established the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief which later became the Episcopal Relief & Development. Jones' title as bishop was restored in 1939 with seat but no voice in the House of Bishops. Until his death on September 4, 1941, he dedicated his life and ministry to peace rooted in the Gospel.

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### September 3, 2023 – Proper 17A, Pentecost 14

#### 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.

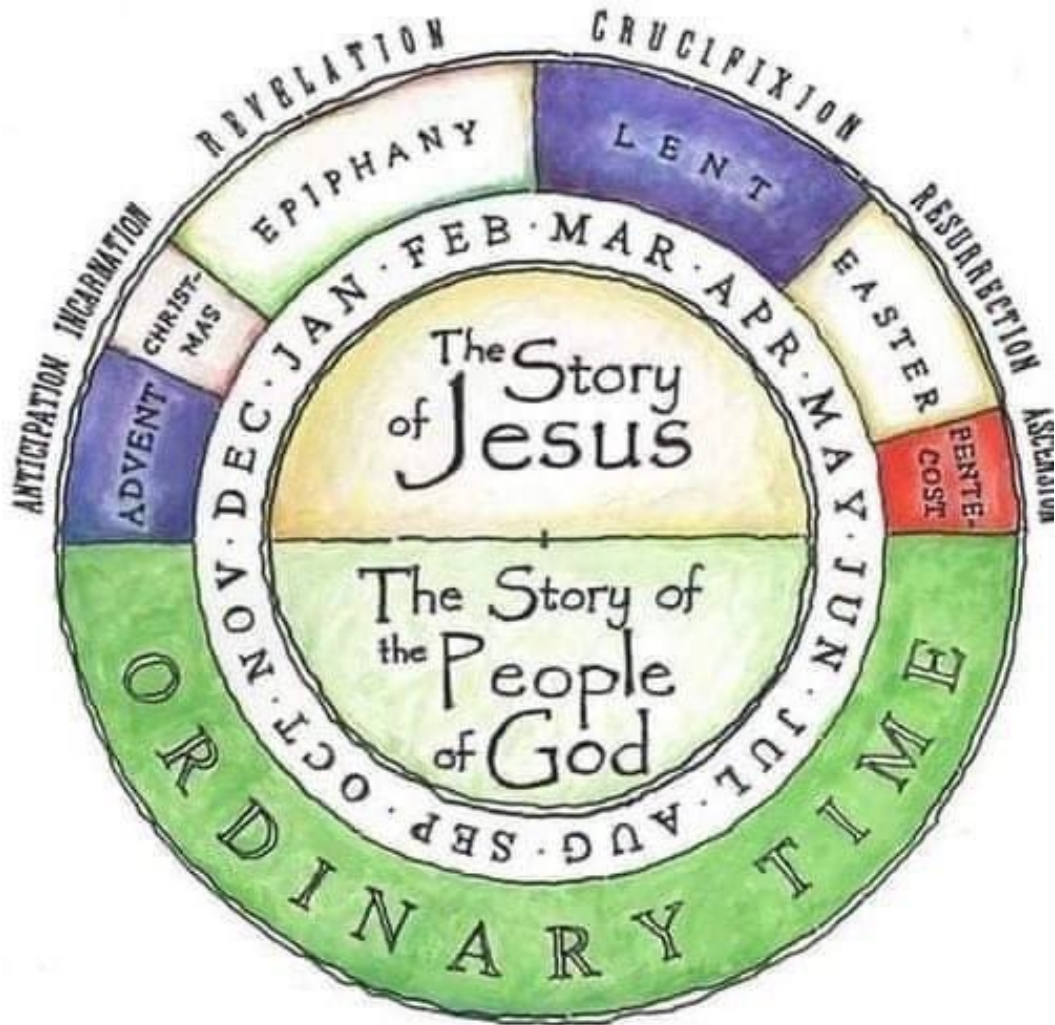
In his impetuousness, Peter, who in the previous passage had just confessed Jesus as the Christ, now defies him. "God forbid it, Lord!" he cries out. In return, Jesus reproaches him heavily by calling him the name of the enemy, Satan. This impassioned exchange seems to showcase both the frailty of the 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?

*This Bible study was written by Ignacio Gama.*



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**Eucharistic prayer** from Wells, Samuel and Abigail Kocher. *Eucharistic prayers*. Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2016, pp.260-261.

**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.



**St Barnabas Episcopal Church**

20500 W Old US-12  
Chelsea MI 48118  
stbarnabaschelsea.org