

Fifth Sunday of Easter

FutureChurch Online Liturgy of the Word

Introductory Rites

Introductory Remarks

Prepared by the Leader. Main points to consider:

- *The readings for today – the Fifth Sunday of Easter – are mission-and-ministry-oriented.*
- *The Gospel’s call to image Christ, and God by extension, is without qualification. We are each called to and capable of being the presence of Christ regardless of gender, race, age, sexual orientation, etc.*
- *The first reading from Acts is traditionally interpreted as a scriptural foundation for the diaconate. But:*
 - *It is unclear what exactly what ministry these seven were chosen to provide*
 - *Nowhere are these seven actually identified as “deacons.” That title is reserved in Scripture for Phoebe of Cenchrae alone (Romans 16)*
 - *What is clear, is that the early Christian community was fearless and proactive in adapting, restructuring in order to respond fully to the needs of the entire community, but especially the most vulnerable*
- *Our second reading from 1st Peter reminds us that we are all baptized into the priesthood of Christ.*
- *Reading today’s texts out of context could lead one to believe that only men were engaged in ministry in the early Christian community, but that couldn’t be further from the truth: Mary and other women were present at Pentecost; Prisca/Priscilla, Lydia, (both hosted, led house churches) and Tabitha are all important leaders and ministers in the early community we read about in Acts (but not on Sundays). And of course there are the many women of Paul’s letters and ministry, two among them of particular note tonight: Phoebe (deacon, patron, and likely carrier and interpreter of the Letter to the Romans), Junia who is “prominent among the apostles” (and for centuries misrepresented as Junius).*
- *Women have – since the beginning – taken up important leadership and ministry roles in the Church, whether recognized or not, ordained or not...tonight we continue that proud tradition and pray that today’s Church would act with the same fearlessness and creativity in responding to the needs of the world.*

Litany of the Saints

Leading from introductory remarks

Leader: And so, as we prepare ourselves for tonight's prayer and sharing – on this day set aside for celebrating mothers and motherhood in all its forms --
We take moment to root ourselves in this rich and proud history,
And to call upon our foremothers in faith, affirming their presence among us,
and ask them to pray with and for us.
Please respond: **"Pray with us"**

Mary, Mother of Jesus
Mary Magdalene, first witness to the Risen Christ and Apostle to the Apostles...
Phoebe, patron to many and deacon of the community at Cenchreae...
Junia, prominent among the apostles...
Lydia and Prisca, leaders of house church...
Desert mothers, wise women...
Macrina the Younger, theologian and saint...
Theodora, bishop...
St. Hildegard of Bingen, abbess, visionary, and doctor of the Church...
St. Catherine of Siena, mystic-activist, reformer, and doctor of the Church...
St. Teresa of Avila, reformer, theologian, and doctor of the Church...
St. Therese of Lisieux, patron saint of women's ordination...
Dorothy Day, Catholic Worker and Servant of God ...
Sr. Thea Bowman, Evangelist, Story-teller, Singer, and Servant of God...

We pause now, in silence, for us to call to mind and heart those women from history or from your own lives, our foremothers in faith, who have been the image of Christ to us. *(after a minute of silence)* all you holy, wise women...

Sign of the Cross

Leader:

In the name of God, in whose divine image we are created,
Of Christ Jesus, the Word made flesh and born of a woman,
and the Spirit, who gifts and guides us,
(making the sign of the cross)

ALL: AMEN

Greeting

Leader: May the healing peace of Jesus,
the abundant Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you,

ALL: And also with you.

Opening Prayer

Leader:

Let us pray.

We celebrate your everlasting faithfulness and love, O God,
And give you thanks and praise for the wonders you have worked
through your servants in every age.

Your divine presence within and among us
Encourages us to name our needs,
And empowers us to claim our strengths.

Continue to root us ever more deeply in your love,
that we may extend that love in service to each other and to all creation,
co-creating the wholeness of truth and life you desire.

We make this prayer in the name of Jesus,
Who lives and thrives with you, with us all,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

ALL:

AMEN

LITURGY OF THE WORD

****Texts have been adapted for inclusive/expansive language****

First Reading

Lector:

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles,

As the number of disciples continued to grow,
the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews
because their widows
were being neglected in the daily distribution.
So the Twelve called together the community of the disciples and said,
"It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table.
Select from seven from among you,
who are acknowledged to be filled with the Spirit and wisdom,
whom we shall appoint to this task,
whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer
and to the ministry of the word."

The proposal was acceptable to the whole community,
so they chose Stephen, filled with faith and the Holy Spirit,
also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas,
and Nicholas of Antioch, a convert to Judaism.

They presented them to the apostles
who prayed and laid hands on them.

The word of God continued to spread,
and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly;
even a large group of priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

All: The Word of God
Thanks be to God

Psalm

Psalmist: The response is:
"Let your mercy be on us, O God, as we place our trust in you."
R "Let your mercy be on us, O God, as we place our trust in you."

Exult in God, you who are just;
praise from the upright is fitting.
Give thanks to God on the harp;
with the ten-stringed lyre chant praises. **R**

Upright is the word of God,
whose works are all trustworthy.
God loves justice and right;
the earth is full of God's kindness. **R**

The eyes of God are on those who stand in reverence,
upon those who hope in God's loving kindness
To rescue them from death
and preserve them in spite of famine. **R**

Second Reading

Lector: A reading from the First Letter of Peter,

Beloved:

Come to Christ, a living stone, rejected by human beings
but chosen and precious in the sight of God,
and, like living stones,
let yourselves be built into a spiritual house
to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices
acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For it says in Scripture:

*Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion,
a cornerstone, chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in it shall not be put to shame.*

Therefore, its value is for you who have faith, but for those without faith:

*The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,
and*

*A stone that will make people stumble,
and a rock that will make them fall.*

They stumble by disobeying the word, as is their destiny.

You are “a chosen people, a royal priesthood,
a holy nation, a people set apart,
so that you may announce the praises” of the One
who called you out of darkness into wonderful, divine light.

ALL: The word of God
Thanks be to God

Gospel Acclamation

Leader/Russ: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

ALL: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Leader/Russ: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” says Christ Jesus
“No one comes to God but through me”

ALL: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Gospel

A reading from the Gospel according to John:

Jesus said to the disciples:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me.

In God’s house there are many dwelling places.

If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be.

Where I am going you know the way.”

Thomas replied,

“Rabbi, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?”

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to Abba God but through me.

If you know me, then you will also know God.

From now on you do know and you have seen God.”

“Teacher,” Philip said, “show your Abba, and that will be enough for us.”

Jesus answered,

“Have I been with you for all this time and you still do not know me, Philip?

Whoever has seen me has seen God.

How can you say, ‘Show us your Abba’?

Do you not believe that I am in Abba God and God is in me?

The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own.

It is Abba God, living in me, who is accomplishing the works of God.

Believe me that I am in God and God is in me,

or else, believe because of the works themselves.

Amen, amen, I say to you,

whoever believes in me will do the works that I do,

and will do greater ones than these,

because I am going to Abba God.”

The Good News of Our Salvation

ALL: Praise to you, O Christ.

FAITH SHARING

Reflection

– CWP Video: www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/05102020

Questions for Shared Reflection:

*The first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, presents a snapshot of the early Christian community – empowered by the Spirit - adapting and restructuring to creatively and fully respond to the needs brought to them. **What are the needs of the world and the Christian community today? How might we as Church adapt, restructure, reform to respond to those needs?***

*Sister Donna leaves us with two questions to reflect on: **Who are the prophets you met this week who manifested God to you? In what ways were you a prophet for others?***

CONCLUDING RITES

Closing Prayer

Leader: Nourished by God's word and strengthened by this community,
Let us pray together,

**ALL: Loving God, Holy One,
Your desire is for our wholeness and well-being.
We hold in tenderness and prayer the collective suffering of our world at this time.
We grieve precious lives lost and vulnerable lives threatened.
We ache for ourselves and our neighbors, standing before an uncertain future.
We pray: may love, not fear, go viral. Inspire our leaders to discern and choose wisely, aligned with the common good.
Help us to practice physical distancing, revealing to us new and creative ways to hold each other fast, so we may care for each other in tender solidarity.
Call us to profound trust in your faithful presence,
You, the God who does not abandon,
You, the Holy One, breathing within us, breathing among us,
breathing around us, in our beautiful yet wounded world. AMEN**

Adapted from "Prayer during a Pandemic" by Sr. Chris Koellhoffer, IHM

Blessing

Leader: And may the God of hope fill us with every comfort and joy in believing.
May the peace of Christ abound in our hearts and minds.
and may the Holy Spirit gift and guide us
(making Sign of the Cross) now and forever,

ALL: AMEN

Dismissal

Leader: Our time of prayer and reflection is ended. We go forth to be the Body of Christ in the world. Alleluia! Alleluia!

ALL: Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!