

# **A Service of Praise, Prayer and Proclamation for Sunday 29 March 2020 Fifth Sunday in Lent**

*(for use at home)*

## **PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING TO GOD**

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!

Revelation 5.12

We are not people of fear:  
we are people of courage.  
We are not people who protect our own safety:  
we are people who protect our neighbours' safety.  
We are not people of greed:  
we are people of generosity.  
We are your people God,  
giving and loving,  
wherever we are,  
whatever it costs  
For as long as it takes  
wherever you call us.

Gracious God, we humbly thank you  
for life and health and safety,  
for freedom to work, leisure to rest,  
and for all that is beautiful in creation and human life.  
But, above all, we praise you for our Saviour,  
Jesus Christ,  
for his death and resurrection;  
for the gift of your Spirit;  
and for the hope of sharing in your glory.  
Fill our hearts with all joy and peace in believing;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Spend a few moments recalling the blessings God has granted you and those whom you love. Give silent thanks to God*

## **THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

Thank you, Father, for making yourself known to us  
and showing the way of salvation  
through faith in your Son.  
We ask you now to teach and encourage us  
through your word,  
so that we may be ready to serve you;  
for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Ezekiel 37: 1-14

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup> He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. <sup>3</sup> He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” <sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup> I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.” <sup>7</sup> So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. <sup>8</sup> I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” <sup>10</sup> I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. <sup>11</sup> Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ <sup>12</sup> Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup> And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup> I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD.”

Hear the word of the Lord,  
**thanks be to God.**

Psalm 130

<sup>1</sup> Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.  
<sup>2</sup> Lord, hear my voice!  
Let your ears be attentive  
to the voice of my supplications!  
<sup>3</sup> If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,  
Lord, who could stand?  
<sup>4</sup> But there is forgiveness with you,  
so that you may be revered.  
<sup>5</sup> I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;  
<sup>6</sup> my soul waits for the Lord  
more than those who watch for the morning,  
more than those who watch for the morning.  
<sup>7</sup> O Israel, hope in the LORD!  
For with the LORD there is steadfast love,  
and with him is great power to redeem.  
<sup>8</sup> It is he who will redeem Israel  
from all its iniquities.

*The Second Reading, from the New Testament*

Romans 8.6-11

<sup>6</sup>To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, <sup>8</sup>and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup>But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

*The Gospel John 11.1-45*

<sup>11</sup>Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup>Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup>So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." <sup>4</sup>But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup>Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, <sup>6</sup>after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. <sup>7</sup>Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." <sup>8</sup>The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" <sup>9</sup>Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. <sup>10</sup>But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." <sup>11</sup>After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." <sup>12</sup>The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." <sup>13</sup>Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. <sup>14</sup>Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. <sup>15</sup>For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." <sup>16</sup>Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

<sup>17</sup>When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup>Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, <sup>19</sup>and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. <sup>20</sup>When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. <sup>21</sup>Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup>But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." <sup>23</sup>Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." <sup>24</sup>Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." <sup>25</sup>Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, <sup>26</sup>and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup>She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." <sup>28</sup>When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." <sup>29</sup>And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup>Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup>The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because

they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup> When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” <sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. <sup>34</sup> He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” <sup>35</sup> Jesus began to weep. <sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” <sup>37</sup> But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” <sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” <sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” <sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” <sup>43</sup> When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.” <sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

*The Sermon (prepared this week by Father Alasdair)*

Psalm 130 opens with the words, Out of the depths have I called to you, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice!

This opening verse from today’s psalm could well be the opening line of the whole world’s prayers today as we face the fear and uncertainty of where the current coronavirus pandemic will take us and eventually leave us.

Church buildings all over the world, and now here in Melbourne, are closed for public worship, but that does not mean that the churches are no longer in existence.

God’s people are God’s church. We used to gather in church buildings, now we must find other ways to be together in spirit, remaining God’s people and continuing to do God’s work. As we read from St Paul today, we now must set our minds on the spirit in order to experience the life and peace that Christ brings and not be overwhelmed by preoccupation with the flesh.

This is our opportunity to be creative. This is our opportunity to find new ways to cry out to each other as we continue to cry out to God.

Our Gospel reading today is the Story of Lazarus. It comes from the first section of the Gospel which is often referred to as the Book of Signs. It contains a very important sign for us in our current situation.

The raising of Lazarus is the last and greatest sign of who Jesus truly is. The raising of not a freshly dead person, but of a four day dead corpse reveals the great power and glory of God, through this miracle of Jesus. The story also shows us the great faith of Mary and Martha, and the great hope that their faith gives them.

When Lazarus dies, Mary and Martha call Jesus and he immediately comes. They believe in Jesus as the Messiah, absolutely. They have faith that when they call, Jesus will come. That is the faith gives them the hope that when he comes, he will do something about the situation they face.

Underlying this hope is their belief that for Jesus death is nothing. As St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans Chapter 8, verses 38-39, For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation (one might add here “including coronavirus, and social distancing”), will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. I think that Mary and Martha had a glimmer of this deep down in the faith of their hearts.

Imagine how the two girls felt when their brother walked from the tomb! Their faith was true! The hope they had in Jesus was true! The glory of God was revealed to them, in their darkest hour! As we struggle with the current pandemic, and seemingly get bound down in the earthly, fleshly business of dealing with it, do not get so lost that we lose our faith. Like Martha and Mary we know that if we take the time to set our mind on the Holy Spirit, and call upon him, he will come. We know then the hope in the conviction that something will be done. We do not know what that will be, but my hope is that The Spirit will enable one of God’s people to come upon an answer that will eradicate, cure or control this virus. That’s my hope. But my faith tells me that this will not happen without God being involved.

May God bless us all, and grant us his peace.

### *The Apostles’ Creed*

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father;  
from there he will come to judge  
the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

## **CONFESSION OF SIN**

Return to the Lord your God, who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

Joel 2.13

Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4.16

Let us now confess our sins to almighty God.  
Heavenly Father,  
you have loved us with an everlasting love,  
but we have broken your holy laws

and have left undone what we ought to have done.  
We are sorry for our sins  
and turn away from them.  
For the sake of your Son who died for us,  
forgive us, cleanse us and change us.  
By your Holy Spirit,  
enable us to live for you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*One or more of the following passages may be said as an assurance of God's forgiveness.*

Christ died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6.10–11

God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2.4–5

Jesus is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 7.25

## **THE MINISTRY OF PRAYER**

Intercessions prepared by Elizabeth Burton

God our Creator, at the beginning of time you breathed life into your creatures: hear our prayers for your world and its people.

We pray for all whose lives are suffering from the disaster of COVID – 19. Help us to have faith in this time of trouble: to show courage in the weeks or months of lock-down which are ahead.

We pray also for all suffering from war and oppression, the hungry, the homeless and refugees.

Guide the leaders of the world and all who work for justice, peace and an end to this epidemic.

Breathe on your children your spirit of hope and possibility. O God, put your spirit within us, and we shall live.

God, our Redeemer, you hold before us the choice of life or death: hear our prayers for your worldwide church.

We pray for your church facing a period of lock-down, in many parts of the world, because of the coronavirus epidemic. Lord help us, for your people are in grief as they search for acceptance they cannot worship together at Passiontide and Easter.

We pray for the leaders of churches and for all who minister in your name at this unprecedented and difficult time.

Breathe on your church your spirit of passion and power. O God, put your spirit within us, and we shall live.

God our Companion, you have shown to your people the way of true love: hear our prayers for the communities in which we live.

Help us through the dangers and uncertainty of this epidemic. We ask comfort for all those whose loved ones are sick or have died. We pray your help for all medical and nursing staff caring for the sick. Strengthen all who have become unemployed or lost their business through this disaster. May we show love and patience with our family, friends and neighbours.

Breathe on your children your spirit of reconciliation and love. O God, put your spirit within us, and we shall live.

God our Comforter, you wept at the death of your friend Lazarus: hear our prayers for all those in need, and for those who minister to them.

We pray for all whose lives are bound by fear, anxiety, confusion, despair or pain; for the lonely, the forgotten and all who mourn; for the sick, especially those suffering with COVID-19, and all who are close to death.

Breathe on your children your spirit of comfort and consolation. O God, put your spirit within us, and we shall live.

God our Resurrection and Life, by your dying and rising you bring new life to others: hear our prayers for all who have died.

We give thanks for the faithful people of this parish who have gone before us: for those whose yearly remembrance occurs at this time: Iris Tiller; Patrick Robinson; Frances Joyner; Alma Locke; and Irene Watson.

Call us forth from the tomb and set us free from all that binds us in death, that with Lazarus and your friends in every age, we may rise to new life with you forever.

O God, put your spirit within us, and we shall live.

*The Lord's Prayer*

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.

**THE SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE**

Loving God, we thank you for hearing our prayers,  
feeding us with your word,  
and encouraging us in our meeting together.

Take us and use us  
to love and serve you  
and all people,  
in the power of your Spirit  
and in the name of your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May the God of peace equip us with everything good for doing his will, working in us what is pleasing to God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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