

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD

Fifth Sunday of Easter

This is a celebration of the Word to aid your worship this Sunday alone or with your household. If possible, place a simple cross or crucifix prominently in the room and light one or more candles. You can also place an image of the Virgin Mary there. If there is more than one person present, choose someone to lead the prayer and one or two people to do the readings.

Whoever leads the prayer can say:

The Lord Jesus has “called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light”. We hear him do that very concretely in the Gospel today. He reassures us with these words: “Do not let your hearts be troubled.... Trust in God still, and trust in me.... Where I am you may be too.... I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.... Whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself.” This is the Word of God that “continued to spread” so that the number of disciples “greatly increased”. This increase is the fruit of our trust in Christ. He it is who calls us to become the “living stones” which make up the Church. We are “people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light”.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

After a moment of silence, let everyone begin by making the Sign of the Cross:

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

HYMN

Choose an appropriate hymn.

We place ourselves before the Lord, beginning with an act of contrition, such as:

O my God,
I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee,
and I detest all my sins because of thy just punishments,
but most of all because they offend Thee, my God,
who art all good and deserving of all my love.
I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace to sin no more
and to avoid the near occasion of sin.
Amen.

The following are the readings of the Fifth Sunday of Easter.

**A reading from
the Acts of the Apostles**

6:1-7

ABOUT THIS TIME, when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenists made a complaint against the Hebrews: in the daily distribution their own widows were being overlooked. So the Twelve called a full meeting of the disciples and addressed them, “It would not be right for us to neglect the word of God so as to give out food; you, brothers, must select from among yourselves seven men of good reputation, filled with the Spirit and with wisdom; we will hand

over this duty to them, and continue to devote ourselves to prayer and to the service of the word.” The whole assembly approved of this proposal and elected Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these to the Apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

The word of the Lord continued to spread: the number of disciples in Jerusalem was greatly increased, and a large group of priests made their submission to the faith.

The word of the Lord.

R Thanks be to God.

————•PSALM 32•————

R (22) May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you.

Or: Alleluia!

Ring out your joy to the Lord, O you just;
for praise is fitting for loyal hearts.

Give thanks to the Lord upon the harp,
with a ten-stringed lute sing him songs. *R*

For the word of the Lord is faithful
and all his works to be trusted.

The Lord loves justice and right
and fills the earth with his love. *R*

The Lord looks on those who revere him,
on those who hope in his love,
to rescue their souls from death,
to keep them alive in famine. *R*

**A reading from
the first Letter of Saint Peter**

2:4-9

THE LORD IS the living stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him; set yourselves close to him so that you too, the holy priesthood that offers the spiritual sacrifices which Jesus Christ has made acceptable to God, may be living stones making a spiritual house. As scripture says: See how I lay in Zion a precious cornerstone that I have chosen and the man who rests his trust on it will not be disappointed. That means that for you who are believers, it is precious; but for unbelievers, the stone rejected by the builders has proved to be the keystone, a stone to stumble over, a rock to bring men down. They stumble over it because they do not believe in the word; it was the fate in store for them.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

The word of the Lord.

R Thanks be to God.

Alleluia, alleluia! Jesus said: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” **Alleluia!**

JESUS SAID TO his disciples: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father’s house; if there were not, I should have told you. I am going now to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you with me; so that where I am you may be too. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said, “Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus said: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you know my Father too. From this moment you know him and have seen him.”

Philip said, “Lord, let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied.” “Have I been with you all this time, Philip,” said Jesus to him, “and you still do not know me? To have seen me is to have seen the Father, so how can you say, ‘Let us see the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak as from myself: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing this work. You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; believe it on the evidence of this work, if for no other reason.

“I tell you most solemnly, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Allow for a few minutes of silent reflection. The following passage could be read:

M E D I T A T I O N O F T H E D A Y

Yes, Lord, We Follow You

Let us march forward intrepidly to meet our Redeemer, Jesus, pursuing our onward course without swerving until we come to the assembly of the saints and are welcomed by the company of the just. It is to join our Christian forebears that we are journeying, to those who taught us our faith.... In the place where the Lord will be everyone’s light, the true light which enlightens every human person will shine upon all. In the house where we are going the Lord Jesus has prepared many resting places for his servants, so that where he is we also may be. This was his express desire. Listen to his own words: In my Father’s house there are many resting places. And: I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be.

You may say, perhaps, that he was speaking only to his disciples, and it was to them alone that he promised there would be many resting places.... And what of that statement of his about people coming from all sides to take their seats in the Kingdom of God? Have we any grounds for doubting that God’s will is effective? With Christ, surely, to will a thing is to accomplish it. In short, the Lord has not only shown us the way we are to travel, he has also pointed out our destination. Where I am going you know, he says, and the way there is known to you. This destination is our Father’s house, and our way to it is Christ, as his own words assure us: I am the way, the truth, and

the life.... Let us set out, then, upon this way, holding fast to the truth and following in the footsteps of life. Christ is the way that leads us, the truth that strengthens us, and the life that restores us to life in him.

To make sure that we really understand his will, our Lord prays a few minutes later: Father, it is my desire that those whom you have given me be with me where I am, so that they may see my glory. How graciously our Lord asks his Father here to grant what he himself had promised earlier! The promise came first and then the request, not the other way round. Conscious of his authority and knowing the gift was at his own disposal, he made the promise; then as if to exemplify his filial submission, he asked his Father to grant it....

Yes, Lord Jesus, we do follow you. But we can only come at your bidding. No one can make the ascent without you, for you are our way, our truth, our life, our strength, our faith, our reward. We belong to you; be the way that carries us onward, the truth that inspires us with courage, and the life that fills us with renewed vigour.

SAINT NILUS OF SINAI

Saint Nilus († 430) was a monk, theologian, and ascetic writer. He was a student of Saint John Chrysostom. This excerpt is from Celebrating Sundays: Reflections from the Early Church on the Sunday Gospels © Stephen Mark Holmes 2012. Published by Canterbury Press. Used by permission.

INTERCESSIONS

In a group, the leader can begin with these words:

God has called us out of darkness and into his wonderful light. Counting on the Father's boundless mercy, we now pray:

That all members of the Church may be strengthened in holiness and truth, and walk in the fear of the Lord. Lord, in your mercy,

R Hear our prayer.

(Holy Father's Intention:) We pray that deacons, faithful in their service to the Word and the poor, may be an invigorating symbol for the entire Church. Lord, in your mercy, *R*

That divisions will be healed, violence will cease, and the peace and justice of God's Kingdom will reign in every nation on earth. Lord, in your mercy, *R*

For family members who are separated from their loved ones at this time, may the Holy Family watch over them and console them. Lord, in your mercy, *R*

For the poor, the vulnerable, the lonely, and the forgotten: that they know the security and love of Jesus. Lord, in your mercy, *R*

For an end to the coronavirus pandemic, for God's mercy on all who are suffering and dying, and for strength and protection on all healthcare workers dedicated to fighting it. Lord, in your mercy, *R*

Personal intentions

Our Father....

In a group, the leader could offer some words of consolation at this moment, such as:

Lord Jesus, we offer ourselves to you, with all our worries and concerns. Make us the living stones of the Church in this difficult time, and when we are free once more to gather in our churches, may we be strengthened in faith, hope, and charity.

An Act of Spiritual Communion:

My Jesus,

I believe that you are present in this Holy Sacrament of the altar.

I love you above all things

and I passionately desire to receive you into my soul.

Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,

come spiritually into my soul

so that I may unite myself wholly to you now and for ever.

Amen.

May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and lead us to everlasting life. And may the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.

To conclude the celebration, you can sing or recite the following or another suitable hymn. Turn and face an image of Mary, if you have one.



*Regina cæli, lætare, alleluia,
quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia,
resurrexit sicut dixit, alleluia;
ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.*

Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia!
for he whom you were worthy to bear, alleluia!
has Risen as he said, alleluia!
Pray for us to God, alleluia!

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Prayers of Trust

Father, who can describe your trustworthiness, your love, your delight in being loved by your tiny unworthy creatures? Your blessed Spirit moves in us, and we catch a vision, a presence, a joy that pulls us forward to a complete abandonment to you: such that even in darkness and pain and doubt, we can never turn from you or withdraw from you or forget your name.
(Fr Francis Martin)

We have gathered some prayers on the theme of this Sunday's Gospel, which could be used during the week and beyond.

O God,
our refuge and our shield,
even when we walk in the shadow of death you are there at our side.
Be with your people in this time of danger: bring strength to the afflicted
and protection to those untouched by disease.
Give us love and courage,
that we may trust in your power to save and reach out to all who need our care.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PRAYER OF TRUST IN JESUS

O sacred heart of Jesus, I place my trust in thee,
Whatever may befall me, Lord, though dark the hour may be;
In all my woes, in all my joys, though nought but grief I see,
O sacred heart of Jesus, I place my trust in thee.

When those I loved have passed away, and I am sore distressed,
O sacred heart of Jesus, I fly to thee for rest.
In all my trials, great or small, my confidence shall be
Unshaken as I cry, dear Lord, I place my trust in thee.

This is my one sweet prayer, dear Lord, my faith, my trust, my love,
But most of all in that last hour, when death points up above,
O sweet Saviour, may thy face smile on my soul all free.
Oh may I cry with rapturous love, I've placed my trust in thee.

PRAYER OF SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

O Christ Jesus,
when all is darkness
and we feel our weakness and helplessness,
give us the sense of your presence,
your love, and your strength.
Help us to have perfect trust
in your protecting love and strengthening power,
so that nothing may frighten or worry us,
for, living close to you,
we shall see your hand,
your purpose, your will through all things.

PRAYER OF SAINT JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

O Mother of Jesus, and my mother,
let me dwell with you, cling to you and love you
with ever-increasing love.

I promise the honour, love, and trust of a child.

Give me a mother's protection,

For I need your watchful care.

FROM THE END OF THE TE DEUM

May your mercy always be with us, Lord,

For we have hoped in you.

In you, Lord we put our trust:

we shall not be put to shame.

Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you,
All things are passing away:
God never changes.
Patience obtains all things
Whoever has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices.
(Saint Teresa of Ávila)

