

ST STEPHEN'S EASTER LITURGY
4th APRIL 2021- EASTER SUNDAY

INTRODUCTION

Happy Easter!

Easter Sunday is right at the centre of the Christian hope. With the Resurrection of Jesus, a light of hope has shone into the darkest corners of the world and of our hearts. That hope has never been extinguished – and will never be.

As you prepare your heart to meet with God in Word and sacrament, take a moment to allow the cares of the day to fall away as you remind yourself of the glorious Good News: He is risen!

OPENING ACCLAMATION

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

Amen.

Christ yesterday and today,
the beginning and the end,

Alpha and Omega,
all time belongs to him,
and all ages;

**to him be glory and power,
through every age and for ever. Amen.**

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

PRAYERS OF PENITENCE

Knowing we are in the presence of God, who is love, we recognise that we are not always as loving as we might be. So we say how sorry we are, and we remember that God forgives us and never stops loving us.

We have lived by our own strength,
And not by the power of your resurrection.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes,
As faithless and not believing.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

We have lived for this world alone,
And doubted our home in heaven.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL VOWS

God our Father,
Your gift of water brings life and freshness to the earth;
In baptism it is a sign of the washing away of our sins,
And the gift of life eternal.

Sanctify this water, we pray.
Renew the living spring of your life within us,
That we may be free from sin
And filled with your saving health;
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in
the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

With the help of God, I will.

Will you persevere in resisting evil,
and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the
Lord?

With the help of God, I will.

Will you proclaim by word and example
the good news of God in Christ?

With the help of God, I will.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all people, loving your
neighbour as yourself?

With the help of God, I will.

May the God of love and power

Forgive you and free you from your sins,
Heal and strengthen you by his Spirit,
And raise you to new life in Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE GLORIA

*[Knowing we are loved and forgiven, we join in these ancient
words of praise to God.]*

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his 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.**

THE COLLECT (*“collecting” together all our prayers so far*)

Lord of all life and power,
Who through the mighty
resurrection of your Son
overcame the old order of sin and death
to make all things new in him:
grant that we, being dead to sin
and alive to you in Jesus Christ,
may reign with him in glory;
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit
be praise and honour, glory and might,
now and in all eternity.

Amen.

NEW TESTAMENT READING

Acts 10.34-43 (New Living Translation)

Then Peter replied, “I see very clearly that God shows no favouritism. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee, after John began preaching his message of baptism. And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with

power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

“And we apostles are witnesses of all he did throughout Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him to life on the third day. Then God allowed him to appear, not to the general public, but to us whom God had chosen in advance to be his witnesses. We were those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead. He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name.”

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING

John 20.1-18 (NRSV)

Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the first and the last, says the Lord, and the living one;
I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John
Glory to you, O Lord.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb.

He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, O Christ.

REFLECTION (Lindsey Coulthard)

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

We could be mistaken for having celebrated Easter rather too early here! Or perhaps you're wondering what I'm talking about. You see, a few months ago, back in January when the days were short and the nights seemed to go on forever, the cold was biting and the virus cases were rising; the third lockdown was well underway and it seemed more than ever, that winter would never end. For many, if not most, this was and perhaps still is, a time of deep, dark struggle. A time of

pain and of loss. A time of separation and sorrow. A reflection, if you like, of Jesus' journey to the cross and our journey through Lent with Him.

Here at St. Stephen's we placed a poster in the noticeboard on Droitwich Road and I wonder how many people noticed it? I wonder if you read it as you passed by... It contains an Easter message: **God brings good from bad, light from darkness, hope from despair.** It contains an Easter message because we are Easter people.

For much of the secular world, once the chocolate has been eaten and the fluffy chicks and rabbits have disappeared, the long lunch and bank holiday weekend of Easter becomes a distant memory. But as Easter people – though it may not have always felt like it these past twelve months; we live in perpetual light and we live in perpetual hope. And that is what we celebrate in abundance today!

Today we celebrate light. The Paschal candle, or Jesus candle, represents the light of creation, the light that existed before anything else was created: God from God, Light from Light. And we'll join in those words together, later on in the service. Let them linger in your heart when you say them. God from God, Light from Light. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, all that was in darkness is brought out into the light. Jesus is the light that pierces the grave and Jesus is the light that pierces our

darkness. Once that light has broken in, no matter how tiny the gap, His light will always shine out in the darkness.

Our Gospel reading today begins in the dark. It's a motif that runs throughout St. John's Gospel. At the very beginning in John's prologue we read that the 'The light (shone) in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.' Mary Magdalene went the tomb, 'early on the first day.....while it was still dark'. But the giant stone which had been placed over the entrance to the tomb had been rolled away. All that was hidden in darkness could not be contained. Jesus is no longer there. Death could not, death did not, death will not have the last word....

Christ is the light of the world.

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Today we celebrate hope. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus offers hope to the hopeless. At times over the past year, it may have been difficult to maintain a sense of hope, and many of us will be able to identify with that. Perhaps the disciples experienced something similar. All their hopes and dreams were shattered by Jesus' arrest. All their hopes and dreams were shattered by his death on the cross. And as tragic as these events were to the disciples, it was crucial for us all. Jesus' purpose was about to be completed -but we know how it ended. Most importantly, we know what

transpired over the few days that followed. And that is what gives us hope. Today and every day, by the grace of God, hopelessness is destroyed by hope.

Mary Magdalene went to the tomb to grieve, to console herself. Surely, she could never have expected to discover the stone rolled away. Likewise, the disciples could never have expected to find an empty tomb. And yet, that is exactly what they found. Jesus was no longer held within the confines of the grave. That Friday over 2000 years ago must have felt so dark and bleak. But then.....the sun rose on that most glorious day of all when Mary and the disciples discovered that the tomb was empty. It's because of this that we can boldly proclaim 'everyone who believes in Jesus will have their sins forgiven' and 'all who believe in Him will be saved'.

As Easter people, we are charged with being reflectors of that light and sharers of that great hope. As our poster on the notice board declares: (today especially and everyday) 'God brings good from bad, light from darkness, and hope from despair.' By his death and resurrection Jesus gave us the greater hope that death was not the end; we are all promised new life in God's presence forever. God's grace and mercy extends to everyone and no one is excluded.... Christ is the hope of the world.

Alleluia. Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

PRAYERS

As we celebrate the risen Christ,
Let us pray to the God of life,
In whom we live.

That the Church of God
may be bursting with new life,
filled with love
that takes even death in its stride;
that new and mature Christians together,
all in their various ministries,
may work in God's strength
for the coming kingdom.
Silence

You are our God
who does all things well.

That the inhabitants of our planet
may recognise God's glory all around,
co-operate in the sharing of his gifts,
and cultivate the habit of caring love.
Silence

You are our God
who does all things well.

That God will bless our homes and families,
our places of work and leisure,
with new life and the hope of new possibilities
touching the ordinary with beauty and joy.

Silence

You are our God
who does all things well.

That all who feel trapped or imprisoned -
physically, mentally or spiritually -
may feel the stones rolled away
and new light pouring into their lives.

From within our own community we pray especially for:
Adrina and Alan Price, Pam Mallaber, David New and Anna
Clements.

And in a moment of silence we hold before you those who are
on our own hearts and in need of prayer.

Silence

You are our God
who does all things well.

That those who have died to this earthly life
may find the fulness of God's eternity,
flooded with the light of his love.

That those who are bereaved and in sorrow

may know your comfort and peace,
especially those who have lost loved ones during this
pandemic.

We remember those who have recently died, including David
Walker.

And we remember with love and gratitude: Bill Poole, Marian
Stinton, Pat Carpenter, Emily Jones, Brian Purvis, Barbara
Irvine, Jim & John Hellicar, David Phillips, Sheila Wilshaw, and
John Smith.

Grant is with them a share in your eternal kingdom.

Silence

You are our God
who does all things well.

That we may live each moment thankfully,
Assured of God's company and mercy.

Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

[At this point, the Church service includes the longer Eucharistic Prayers, which conclude with the Lord's Prayer.]

Rejoicing in the presence of the Risen Christ among us, we pray the Lord's Prayer together as Jesus taught us, saying:

**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.
Lead us not into
temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the
power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

**Our Father, who art in
heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily
bread.
And forgive us our
trespasses,
as we forgive those who
trespass against us.
And lead us not into
temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

RECEIVING OF COMMUNION

Jesus is the Lamb of God
who takes away the sin of the world.
Blessed are those who are called to his supper.
**Lord, I am not worthy to receive you,
but only say the word, and I shall be healed.**

The body and blood of Christ,
Keep us in eternal life.
Amen.

[If you have received a consecrated wafer, this is the time to consume it. Then pause for a few moments in quiet reflection and thanksgiving.]

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God of Life,
who for our redemption gave your
only begotten Son
to death on the cross,
and by his glorious resurrection
have delivered us from the power
of our enemy:
grant us so to die to daily sin,
that we may evermore live with him
in the joy of his risen life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

**Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Strengthen us
in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.**

BLESSING

God the Father,
by whose love Christ was raised from the dead,
open to us who believe the gates of everlasting life.
Amen.

God the Son,
who in bursting from the grave has won a glorious victory,
give us joy as we share the Easter faith.
Amen.

God the Holy Spirit,
who filled the disciples with the life of the risen Lord,
empower us and fill us with Christ's peace.
Amen.

And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always.
Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

With the power that raised Jesus from the dead at work
within us,
Let us go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia!
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!

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