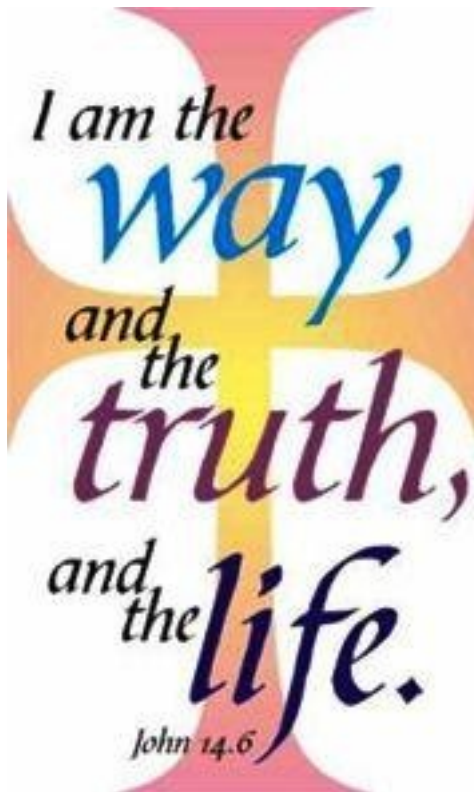


CNI
CHURCH
NEWS
IRELAND

Worship resources Easter 5



One of the biggest questions we must face as followers of Christ is that of how our faith interacts with the crises in our world, and our engagement with them. It can be tough to walk the line between faith as an escape that makes us feel safe by “protecting” us from the world’s problems, and faith as little more than a framework for directing our own efforts to fix things. The third way – that of participating in God’s saving work while simultaneously trusting God for the outcome in our lives and world – is not always easy to live. But it is the challenge we are given this week through the Scriptures.

May we find both assurance and a call to action in our worship this week.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

[Acts 7:55-60](#): Stephen who has been on trial, expresses his vision of Jesus glorified, which angers the religious leaders, who drag him out of the city to stone him. But, Stephen, as he dies, prays for his attackers, and commits himself to God.

[Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16](#): The Psalmist (David, according to the heading) pleads for God’s protection and deliverance from enemies who seek to harm and ensnare him, and commits his soul into God’s care.

[11 Peter 2:2-10](#): Christ, who was rejected by people, but honoured by God, is the cornerstone on which God is building a spiritual temple in which followers of Christ are the stones. This community that built on Christ is called out of darkness into God’s light to be God’s holy nation.

[John 14:1-14](#): Jesus encourages his disciples to trust in him and not be troubled, for he is the way to God and God is revealed and known in him.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Acts%207:%2055-60%0A%20BOR%0ADeuteronomy%206:%2020-25%0Acw%20Psalm%2031:%201-5,%2015-16%0A1%20Peter%202:%202-10%0AJohn%2014:%201-14

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

O Almighty God,
who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men;
Grant unto thy people,
that they may love the thing which thou commandest,
and desire that which thou dost promise;
that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world,
our hearts may surely there be fixed,
where true joys are to be found;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

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.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

P Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

P For this congregation, that each member would abide in Christ's Word and become spiritually strengthened by God's grace, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P For our efforts at telling the good news about Jesus, that our Christian witness may clearly confess God's mighty deeds and that the Holy Spirit would use our Gospel efforts to bring those outside the church into His marvellous kingdom, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For this assembly of believers, that Christ's love, manifested through Word and Sacrament, would motivate our members to love one another in thought, word, and deed, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For all mothers, that God will give them patience and strengthen them in their Christian vocation as they demonstrate Christ's love to their children, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For church musicians and artists, that the Lord will abide with them and give them joy in their tasks as they lead God's people in experiencing a foretaste of the Lord's beauty which will be fully unveiled in eternal glory, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For those celebrating wedding anniversaries (especially _____), that the Lord would bless their continued union with wisdom, purity, self-sacrifice, and love, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For those who pray for healing and patience in dealing with afflictions (especially _____), that the Lord would answer their prayers according to his will and grant them faith to accept their present sufferings in full assurance of the glory that will be revealed to them on the Last Day, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For those who mourn (especially _____), that Jesus' resurrection would comfort them with the assurance that death is no longer the enemy, for Jesus has opened to us the way of everlasting life, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For those who receive Christ's body and blood today, that they would believe that in, with, and under the bread and wine Jesus abides in them and they abide in Jesus, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P Confident that You hear our prayers because they are clothed with Christ's righteousness, we commend all for whom we pray, merciful Father, trusting that You will accomplish Your will in our lives for the sake of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

C Amen.

POST COMMUNION

Eternal God,
in word and sacrament
we proclaim your truth in Jesus Christ and share his life.
In his strength may we ever walk in his way,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

PRAYERS

Mighty God,
in whom we know the power of redemption,
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,
uphold us with knowledge of the final morning
when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,
we will share in his resurrection,
redeemed and restored to the fullness of life
and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,
long ago, faithful women
proclaimed the good news
of Jesus' resurrection,
and the world was changed forever.
Teach us to keep faith with them,
that our witness may be as bold,
our love as deep,
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,
you made the world in beauty,

and restore all things in glory
through the victory of Jesus Christ.

We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love, and peace,
to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his resurrection,
teaching them to love all people as neighbours.

As his disciples in this age,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe
in which we are privileged to live
and our neighbours with whom we share it.

Open our hearts to your power moving
around us and between us and within us,
until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and enemy,
in communities transformed by justice and compassion,
and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Holy God,
you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son,
and to care for those who are our companions,
not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love.
Seeking to be true friends of all,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the world.
Guide us in the path of discipleship,
so that, as you have blessed us,
we may be a blessing for others,
bringing the promise of the kingdom near
by our words and deeds. Amen.

Blessed are you, God our Father, who calls us to dwell with you in heaven.
Hear the prayers we offer this day, and draw your holy people to your side.
Glory to you for ever and ever. **Amen**

Eternal god, in whom is all our hope in life, in death and in all eternity; grant
that, rejoicing in the eternal life which is ours in Christ, we may face whatever
the future holds in store for us calm and unafraid, always confident that
neither death nor life can part us from your love in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

We pray for those involved in the industrial and commercial life of our nation. Remove barriers of mistrust, bitterness, prejudice which sometimes exist. Help us not to undermine and belittle others by speaking badly of them or criticising them in an unjust manner. Give to all a spirit of tolerance and understanding, and an earnest desire to seek after you, that all may work for the common good. **Amen**

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

Some congregations recognize this as Earth Day Sunday. Below is one prayer to use to celebrate Earth Day

O God, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen:
You place us in your creation, and you command us to care for it.
Your works declare glory and splendour, and you call us to praise and reverence.

Where we have degraded or destroyed earth's bounty, forgive us.

Where we have taken beauty and majesty for granted, have mercy upon us.

Where we have become estranged from the creatures with whom we share this planet, grant us your peace.

Renew us in the waters of baptism, refresh us with the winds of your spirit, and sustain us with the bread of life. In the name of Jesus Christ, and for the sake of the new creation, we pray. Amen.

ELECTIONS

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the privilege of exercising our right to vote in a free election in a democratic society; we praise you for those of this nation who have gone before us through whose campaigning zeal and personal sacrifice we enjoy universal adult suffrage. We ask you for grace to use the privilege of our vote responsibly and in accordance with a well-formed conscience and the good news proclaimed by your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

O God, who from of old taught the hearts of your faithful people by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit: grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour. Amen

Grant us, Lord God, a vision of our land as your love would make it: - a land where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor;- a land where the benefits of civilized life are shared, and every one can enjoy them; - a land where different races and cultures live in tolerance and mutual respect; - a land where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love. And give us the inspiration and courage to build it. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MEDITATION

Follow thou me. I am the way and the truth and the life. Without the way there is no going, without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. I am the way which thou must follow; the truth which thou must believe; the life for which thou must hope. I am the inviolable way; the infallible truth, the never-ending life. I am the straightest way; the sovereign truth; life true, life blessed, life uncreated. *Thomas a Kempis*

The gospel of Jesus is not simply a "personal interior message or experience" which changes the way we feel. Genuine belief leads to works. Spirituality is connected to action. As Jesus says in today's gospel, "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these." The work of the gospel is reflected in the concern of the early church for the poor. In today's example from Acts, it is reflected in a concern for the widows in the community. The work of the gospel is about service and especially service to those who are most in need. It is a responsibility of the whole community - not just a responsibility for the apostles. This is important, for we desire to offer more than charity to respond to some immediate need but to create structures of justice that empower all people.

We might also think of the vision of Jesus as speaking to our world here and now. Might not Jesus envision a world where all God's people have decent, safe, and affordable housing here today? Might not Jesus envision a world in which all men and women enjoy a sense of belonging and community wherever they live? Is this not what the early community is trying to create as they appoint deacons to make sure that everyone is included in the resources of the whole? Is this not what we all want to be about?

Every citizen also has the responsibility to work to secure justice and human rights through an organized social response. US Bishops, Economic Justice for All (#120)

It is in keeping with their dignity as persons that human being should take an active part in government.

Pope John XXIII, Peace on Earth (#73) (www.coc.org/focus/ej/reflections.htm)

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

If following Christ is seen as a way to avoid suffering and struggle, we will be deeply disappointed by the message of this week's Lectionary readings. Beneath all of them lies the reality that Jesus, and those who follow Jesus, faced persecution, accusation and suffering. They were not exempt from life's troubles, and sometimes their faith even brought suffering on them. And so we witness Stephen who is stoned for his witness to Christ, but who entrusts himself to God. We read the words of the Psalmist who, facing persecution and attack, commits himself to God's care and protection. Peter tells of how Christ was rejected, but God honoured him and has built a community of light with Christ as the foundation. And Jesus, reassuring his disciples, reminds them that they can find peace in trusting him, and connecting with God through him. The gift of this week is the assurance that, even as we face suffering, our lives are in God's hands, and, if we will entrust ourselves to God's care, we will find peace and will be partners in God's work in our world. This is not the message of ease and of guarantees of the "good life" that we might hope for. But, it is something much better. It is an assurance that as we live in this world and experience its pain, along with all people, we are partners with God, and we have the confidence that our lives and their ultimate destiny are in God's hands.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: As we face the great challenges of our world, we can be tempted to one of two responses. On the one hand we can grow fearful and alarmist, desperately pointing out the crises, feeling that it is all up to us, that our future is in our hands and courting the hopelessness that this can bring. On the other hand we can use faith as an escape, a way to focus on "heaven" and ignore the problems of earth, and a doorway to a naive and passive faith that requires no engagement from us and no work on our part to change the brokenness of our world. The Scriptures call us to a different response from either of these, though. While trusting in God's care, while recognising that our future is not in our own hands, but God's, and while finding peace in the assurance of God's care and love, we are encouraged to work with God, asking boldly and courageously for God's grace to impact our world, seeking to do the "greater works" that Christ called us to, and living as God's people of light, welcoming all into God's compassion and mercy. The

assurance that faith brings gives us hope for the world and its future. The work that faith calls us to makes us participants in God's saving work in our world. These two go together, and call us, daily, to make local changes that have global impact. To consider what we buy and eat, what we wear and drive, how we vote and participate in community and social processes. Perhaps the place to start is to examine our hearts, find the places within us where we are most concerned or afraid, and ask how to lead us into faith and trust around that issue, while showing what practical steps we can take to be part of the solution to that specific global grief.

LOCAL APPLICATION: In local communities it is common for those who have the means to separate themselves from the problems of the rest of the world. We do this by creating gated communities for the wealthy, to protect them from the poor and from crime. We do this by hiding in a belief that our small efforts can make little difference. We do this by allowing our pessimism to lead us to self-interest and "us and them" thinking. But, in the Church we have no such luxury. Christ has shown us that it is in living and working for God's reign that we find the assurance and peace that we seek, and this means not separating ourselves from the world, but engaging the world in Christ's name. Rather than adopt a cynical "the world's going to hell anyway" view of things, or buying into a "Left Behind" kind of pessimism about the world, we can embrace God's saving and hopeful perspective on things and we can seek to be part of God's healing. We can trust that God is at work in the world and in our communities, and we can look for the signs. And then we can actively participate in what we see God doing in our schools, in our neighbourhoods, in our local governments, in our churches and in our homes. We can seek to live as the community of light that, in whatever small way we can, shines light into the community around us. This will almost certainly mean enduring misunderstanding and even persecution by those who are invested in the "way things are". It will mean embracing the pain of self-giving as we work on behalf of those who need to experience God's grace and compassion. And it will mean, even in the face of disillusionment and discouragement, holding fast to the assurance that Jesus offers. But, as we live as people of trust and hope, we bring hope to the world.

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

Acts 7:55-60; Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

Stephen's sermon addressed people who resisted the Easter news. They wanted to keep the world the way it had been, under old management, with a certain set of assurances and practices that they treasured. Easter is like that: It initiates an upheaval in every "business as usual" approach. It

exposes us as "stiff-necked," stubborn, and unresponsive (Acts 7:51). The reaction to Stephen's preaching is that he is stoned to death, punishment fit for a blasphemer.

The remarkable turn of the narrative is Stephen's response to the violence enacted against him. He imitates Jesus on the cross with his petition that God should forgive them (verse 60; Luke 23:34). Stephen's response is in keeping with the Friday-Sunday story of Jesus that does not give in to the power of death. The footnote in Acts 8:1 concerning Saul (Paul), who at this point still resists the news of Easter, is an indication that any of us -- like Saul -- can still be transformed, even if belatedly, by the power of new life.

The other readings offer an assurance to those who run risks for the faith. The gospel reading not only assures (John 14:1-3), but also promises to the disciples the authority to do "greater works than these" as the church sets out on its mission (verse 12). The epistle reading is a reminder to the church of its special identity, its special reception of mercy from God, and its special mandate in the world. The psalm provides an assurance to such as Stephen. Verse 5 anticipates the prayer of Jesus on the cross (Luke 23:46) and is the prayer that the church must always pray when it runs the risk of Easter obedience. by [Walter Brueggemann](#)

SERMON OUTLINE

Jn 14:1-14 Do not let your hearts be troubled most frequently read NT passage - espec at funerals....

1. Trouble 1a: follows telling Jesus telling the disciple of his departure 13.33: *where I am going you cannot come*. Naturally they are devastated - deeply troubled... As ever, Jesus brings distinctive comfort in those memorable words...

2. Trust 1b-4: *Trust in God, trust also in me* - heart of Xian faith - makes all the difference in our times of trouble!

He speaks of their Future: *There are many rooms in my Father's house - mansions (AV)* - great houses of old - wonderful concept/beautiful picture of heaven!

Vulgate = mansiones = resting places on road/pilgrimage..

Wm Temple: *wayside caravanserais along the route...*

NRSV/Ampl - *dwelling places*; **GNB/NIV/RSV** - *many rooms*; **The Message** - *plenty of room* - room for plenty!

Wm Temple: *a dragoman would make preparations for traveller.. I am going there to prepare a place for you. Jesus is the **prodomus** who went before us (Heb 6.20)*

He then makes a wonderful promise: *I will come back & take you to be with me that you also may be where I am..*

3. Truth 5-14: J proclaims the truth of the Gospel in response to Thomas' question: *Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?* Thomas' query enables us to hear a memorable reply: *I am the way (v6) & the truth & the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

a) the Way - to be followed - cf the broad & narrow way (Mt 7:13/4)

b) the Truth - to be believed - ct many false prophets...

c) the Life - to be lived - blessings of eternal life...

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

On the re-organised Episcopal Church site -

Building the Kingdom, stone by stone

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2014/04/30/5-easter-a-2014/>

And scroll down to Easter 5 at:

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2011/?cat=8>

Ministry Matters, May 18, 2014.

http://www.ministrymatters.com/bin_list/?this_sunday=1#axzz2WxzlwwWf

[Better Than Hippo Testimony](#), the Rev. James Ellis, III, *Day 1*.

http://day1.org/2920-young_leaders_series_iv_better_than_hippo_testimony

["No Power Shortage Here,"](#) the Rev. Dr. Fred R. Anderson, *Day 1*. John 14 1

- 14

http://day1.org/1090-no_power_shortage_here

CHILDREN

Easter 5A, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2011/04/year-the-fifth-sunday-of-easter-may-22.html>

[Proclaiming Faith](http://www.cyberfaith.com/proclaiming_faith.cfm), discussion, prayer, activities for primary grades, activities
http://www.cyberfaith.com/proclaiming_faith.cfm

["Who's a Baby!?"](http://annashosannas.net/Easter-5A.php) Children's Lesson for Easter 5 from Anna's Hosannas.
<http://annashosannas.net/Easter-5A.php>

[Story for Children's Worship and Family Activity](http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html), Easter 5, at *word-sunday.com: A Catholic Resource for the Lectionary* by Larry Broding.
<http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[My Faith Looks Up to Thee](#)

[Trust And Obey](#)

[O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go](#)

[Blessed Assurance](#)

[Hear Our Praises](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[I Believe That God Appeared In Human Form](#) (*Link to lyrics. The tune is the well-known song "I Believe That Every Drop Of Rain That Falls"*)

[Jesus Messiah](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Mighty To Save](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

Stand up and bless the Lord

He brought me into his banqueting house

Lord of the cross of shame

Name of all majesty

Christ is made the sure foundation

Jesus shall reign Truro

All I once held dear

He who would valiant be (Tune Monks Gate)

King of glory (Tune Gwalchmai)

Lord of creation (Tune Slane)

Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to churchnewsireland@gmail.com with the message Passwords in the title