

# The Fifth Sunday of Easter

## 7<sup>th</sup> April 2023



*What sight dearest Lord!*

*What vision of thy life!*

*Take my being – I have no other thought!*

*Saint Stephen* by Luis de Morales

The Greeting

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus,  
giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ.  
Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:  
let us sing to God with thankful hearts.  
Open our lips, Lord:  
and we shall praise your name.

### HYMN

Come, ye faithful, raise the anthem,  
cleave the skies with shouts of praise;  
sing to him who found the ransom,  
Ancient of eternal days,  
God of God, the Word incarnate,  
whom the heaven of heaven obeys.

Bring your harps, and bring your incense,  
sweep the string and pour the lay;  
let the earth proclaim his wonders,  
King of that celestial day;  
he the lamb once slain is worthy,  
who was dead, and lives for ay.

Ere he raised the lofty mountains,  
formed of the seas, or built the sky,  
love eternal, free and boundless,  
moved the Lord of life to die,  
foreordained the Prince of princes  
for the throne of Calvary.

Laud and honor to the Father,  
laud and honor to the Son,  
laud and honor to the Spirit,  
ever Three and ever One,  
consubstantial, co-eternal,  
while unending ages run.

Opening Prayer

Eternal God,  
whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life:  
grant us to walk in his way,  
to rejoice in his truth,  
and to share his risen life;  
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

Like Mary at the empty tomb,  
we fail to grasp the wonder of your presence.  
Lord, have mercy.

Like the disciples behind locked doors,  
we are afraid to be seen as your followers.  
Christ, have mercy.

Like Thomas in the upper room,  
we are slow to believe.  
Lord, have mercy.

Absolution

May the Father of all mercies  
+ cleanse you from your sins,  
and restore you in his image  
to the praise and glory of his name,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

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

Almighty God,  
who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ  
have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life:  
grant that, as by your grace going before us  
you put into our minds good desires,  
so by your continual help  
we may bring them to good effect;  
through Jesus Christ our risen Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen

## The Stoning of Stephen

<sup>54</sup> When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. <sup>55</sup> But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup> “Look,” he said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” <sup>57</sup> But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. <sup>58</sup> Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup> While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” <sup>60</sup> Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he died.

This is the word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

Psalm 31 1-5, 15-16

<sup>1</sup> In you, O LORD, I seek refuge;  
do not let me ever be put to shame;  
in your righteousness deliver me.  
<sup>2</sup> Incline your ear to me;  
rescue me speedily.  
Be a rock of refuge for me,  
a strong fortress to save me.



<sup>3</sup> You are indeed my rock and my fortress;  
for your name's sake lead me and guide me,  
<sup>4</sup> take me out of the net that is hidden for me,  
for you are my refuge.  
<sup>5</sup> Into your hand I commit my spirit;  
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.  
<sup>15</sup> My times are in your hand;  
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.  
<sup>16</sup> Let your face shine upon your servant;  
save me in your steadfast love.

The Epistle  
1 Peter 2. 2-10

## The Living Stone and a Chosen People

<sup>2</sup> Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. <sup>2</sup> Like new born infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— <sup>3</sup> if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.  
<sup>4</sup> Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and  
<sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> For it stands in scripture:

“See, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious;  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

<sup>7</sup> To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the very head of the corner,”

<sup>8</sup>and

“A stone that makes them stumble,  
and a rock that makes them fall.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

<sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people,  
but now you are God’s people;  
once you had not received mercy,  
but now you have received mercy.

This is the word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

#### HYMN

Jesus lives! thy terrors now  
can no longer, death, appal us;  
Jesus lives! by this we know  
thou, O grave, canst not enthrall us.  
Alleluia!

Jesus lives! our hearts know well  
nought from us his love shall sever;  
life, nor death, nor powers of hell  
tear us from his keeping ever.  
Alleluia!

Jesus lives! henceforth is death  
but the gate of life immortal;  
this shall calm our trembling breath  
when we pass its gloomy portal.  
Alleluia!

Jesus lives! for us he died;  
then, alone to Jesus living,  
pure in heart may we abide,  
glory to our Saviour giving.  
Alleluia!

Jesus lives! to him the throne  
over all the world is given:  
may we go where he has gone,  
rest and reign with him in heaven.  
Alleluia!

Gospel Reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John (Ch. 14. 1-14)  
Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus the Way to the Father

**14** “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. <sup>4</sup> And you know the way to the place where I am going.” <sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup> If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? <sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup> Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

<sup>12</sup> Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup> I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

This is the Gospel of the Lord  
Praise to you O Christ

Reflection

"I am the Way the Truth and the Life"

We are familiar with those words but they would have carried great meaning to a Jew who heard it for the first time. Jesus took three of the great basic conceptions of Jewish religion and made the tremendous claim that in him all found their full realisation and their full expression.

*I am the Way. You shall walk in the ways the Lord commanded you.*

Suppose we, lacking a satnav or indeed despite one – ask directions which turn out to be very complicated and the person giving them seeing our confusion says instead, "Come, I'll take you there". Now the PERSON is to us the way and we cannot miss it. This is what Jesus does for us. He not only gives us advice and directions and counsel. He leads us, he walks with us, he strengthens us and guides us and directs us every day if we will allow him. He does not tell us about the way. He is the way.

*I am the truth. Teach me thy way, I will walk in thy truth.*

Many people can tell us truth but no one ever embodied it. Moral truth cannot be conveyed solely in words; it must be conveyed in example. No teacher ever embodied the truth he taught except Jesus. It is not that Jesus is the peak of moral perfection rather that moral perfection finds its realisation – its embodiment - in him.

*I am the life. Thou wilt show me the path of life.*

We all want that which makes life worth living, not knowledge for its own sake, but that which is beyond happenstance and the vicissitudes of life and anchored deep in joy and peace; life which is abundant.

"I am the Way the Truth and the Life". These words, first heard in a particular time and place will, in a week or so at Pentecost, explode out with the power of the Holy Spirit which transforms frightened men and women into fearless proclaimers of the truth.

They will become the gospel – the good news. Anyone who hears them and through them is drawn to Jesus, to believe in his name to acknowledge him as both Lord and Christ, comes into this Good News, this Way, this Truth, this Life.

If you are a Christian, you are a witness to their witness down through the ages.

Let us declare our faith in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ died for our sins

in accordance with the Scriptures;

he was buried;

he was raised to life on the third day

in accordance with the Scriptures;

afterwards he appeared to his followers,

and to all the apostles:

this we have received,

and this we believe.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

In joy and hope let us pray to the Father.

That our risen Saviour may fill us with the joy of his  
glorious and life-giving resurrection ...

we pray to the Father.

Hear our prayer.

That isolated and persecuted churches

may find fresh strength in the good news of Easter ...

we pray to the Father.

Hear our prayer.

For all aid agencies that through them God may provide for those who lack food, work or shelter ...

That by his power and our co-operation, war and famine may cease through all the world ...

we pray to the Father.

Hear our prayer.

That our merciful God of steadfast love may reveal the light of his presence to the sick,

the weak and the dying,

to comfort and strengthen them

we pray to the Father.

Hear our prayer.

That, according to his promises,

all who have died in the faith of the resurrection

may be raised on the last day ...

we pray to the Father.

Hear our prayer.

That he may send the fire of the Holy Spirit upon his people,

so that we may bear faithful and joyful witness to his resurrection,

who has for our sake overcome the sting of death.

we pray to the Father.

Hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father,

you have delivered us from the power of darkness

and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:

grant that, as his death has recalled us to life,

so his continual presence in us may raise us to eternal joy;

through Christ our Lord.

These, and all the silent prayers of our hearts we offer to God.

Gathering our prayers and praise into one, let us pray as our Saviour taught us

Our Father which art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,

thy 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 thine is the kingdom,

the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

May Christ

Who out of defeat brings new hope and a new future,

Fill you with his new life;

and the blessing of + God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

be with you and those for whom you pray now and always

Amen

HYMN

Judge eternal, throned in splendour,

Lord of lords and King of kings,

with thy living fire of judgment

purge this land of bitter things;

solace all its wide dominion

with the healing of thy wings.

Still the weary folk are pining

for the hour that brings release,

and the city's crowded clangour

cries aloud for sin to cease;

and the homesteads and the woodlands

plead in silence for their peace.

Crown, O God, thine own endeavour;

cleave our darkness with thy sword;

feed all those who do not know thee

with the richness of thy word;

cleanse the body of this nation

through the glory of the Lord.