



**Community of St. Bridget**  
*an inclusive catholic experience*  
**Fifth Sunday of Easter – April 28, 2024**  
**Feast of St. Catherine of Siena (April 29)**  
 Liturgist/Homilist: Nancy Tondy



Max Harlynking on Unsplash

**Suggestion:** Please have a copy of the written liturgy on hand, a piece of bread and cup of wine/grape juice, and a small vessel of water, so you can participate fully in this liturgy.

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Come into this space, which we make special by our presence. Where the ordinary is sanctified, the human is celebrated, the compassionate is expected. Together we make it a holy place with our every act of celebration.

**ALL:** Let us celebrate the richness and diversity of life, ALLELUIA!

Lighting of the Easter Candle

From the fire of the Easter Vigils celebrated throughout the world, to the St. Bridget flame of Ireland, to our Community gathered here, we light the fire of God's desire as prophets of a new vision of hospitality to welcome all to the Banquet Table of Infinite Love, as we dance the dance of Spirit embracing all.

Opening Song: **As We Gather** Andra Moran, *Prayers from the Bridge*, © 2023.  
<https://youtu.be/i88p8jXIVeA?si=QVY8PdcAJw9q3Uct> (lyric video)

As the seagull boldly soaring sings a song in wordless flight,  
 As a mother rocks her baby humming hope's sweet lullaby  
 As the stones cry out, "Hosanna," as the rising of the tide,

May our hearts find natural rhythm singing praises with our lives.  
 As the redwoods reach to heaven, we extend ourselves to you.  
 As the strings stretch on the fretboard, let us pull ourselves in tune.  
 As a child draws her family, favorite crayon in chubby hand,  
 Each encounter of your glory, a new way to understand.

As we gather, draw us nearer. In our hunger, find your feast.  
 Deepest longings now are sated, by your presence and your peace.  
 In the wideness of your mercy, may we find ourselves at home.  
 Welcomed warmly at your table, where we never eat alone.

Today we celebrate the Fifth Sunday of Easter and the Feast of St. Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church. Our readings speak of the One who gives us everything and is our dwelling place forever. Like the branch and the vine, we are in God and God is in us. And we are called—each of us in our own unique and powerful ways—to serve, to love, to be the hands and feet and heart of God in this world, in the name of the Divine: Source of All Being, Eternal Word, and +Holy Spirit. Amen.

#### Affirmation of Baptism

In this Easter Season, we celebrate and reaffirm the Christian initiation of our Baptism with the signing of baptismal waters—reminding and reaffirming our commitment to the Holy Spirit in our lives. As we come together today to celebrate Eucharist, we affirm this initiation by blessing ourselves with the sacred water from our Earth as we sing:

**Cantor: *We shall draw water joyfully, singing joyfully, singing joyfully!  
 We shall draw water joyfully from the wellsprings of God's mercy!***

God has freed us from the bondage of fear and separation and brought us to life anew. Through this cleansing water, may the presence of the life-giving Spirit among us fill us with the grace to embrace the promise of eternal life in God's Holy Light. Amen.

Gloria: by Denise Pyles from Creation of Love, © 2010-03-19

[Praise, Give Glory to God - YouTube](#) (begin at 0:18)

*Praise, praise! Give glory to God. Nations, peoples, give glory!  
 Strong the love embracing us. Faithful our God forever.  
 Hallelujah, hallelujah! (repeat)*

### Opening Prayer

1. O Radiant Light, you gather us, you bless us, you fill us with cosmic grace. Align our voices with our hearts, that we may uplift each other with our prayers this day.
  
2. In our sacred conversations, open us to the echoes of grace within our own hearts. Shine in us, as we rise with one another to dance the Dance of Divine Life.

**ALL:** For it is in you that we live and move and have our being. Amen.

### LITURGY OF THE WORD

*We now call upon the Spirit of Our Living God as we listen to the Scripture readings broken open and shared by all.*

**First Reading:** Acts 16:40; 17:1b-4, 10-12; 16-19, 22-24, 25b, 27b-28a, 32-34

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles:

After being released from prison in Philippi, Paul and Silas went to the house of Lydia, a leading dealer in purple cloth. She was a new follower of Jesus. They encouraged all who gathered in her house before leaving Philippi.

After a long journey, they reached Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue. Paul went into the synagogue, as was his custom. On three consecutive Sabbaths, he discussed and debated the scriptures with them, interpreting them, and explaining that the Messiah had to suffer and then rise from the dead. "And this Jesus whom I proclaim to you," Paul said, "is the Messiah." Some were convinced and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many Greeks including a number of the leading women.

From Thessalonica, Paul and Silas went to Berea. Upon arrival, they went to the Jewish synagogue. These Jews were students of Scripture. They received the word with all willingness, and examined the Scriptures to see how Paul's interpretation was supported by the text. Many believed, including not a few Greek women and men of high standing.

... Later, the believers sent Paul to Athens, where he was distressed to see the city full of idols. He debated in the synagogue with the Jews and God-fearing Greeks. He debated daily in the marketplace with whomever happened to be there. Some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also debated with him. Some

said, “What does this babbler say?” Others said, “He seems to be proclaiming foreign deities.” They said this because Paul was preaching about Jesus and the resurrection.

Then they brought Paul to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?” Paul then stood up among them and said, “People of Athens, I see how very religious you are in every way. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I found an altar with the inscription: ‘*To an unknown god.*’ What you worship as ‘unknown’, I proclaim to you: The God who made the world and everything in it, is the God of heaven and earth, and does not live in shrines made by human hands. It is God who gives everything – including life and breath – to everyone. Indeed, God is not far from each one of us. For in God, we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, “We, too, are offspring of the Divine.”

Paul also spoke to them about the resurrection of the dead. Some sneered; but others said, “We are eager to hear more from you about this.” Paul left, but some of the Athenians joined Paul and became believers, including Dionysius the Aeropagite (a member of the high court of appeals), a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

The inspired words of an Early Church Historian. Amen.

**Responsorial:** Psalm 22:10-11; 23-24a; 25-26, adapted from *Merrill*

**Cantor:** *The Beloved dwells among us.*

Beloved, You are the One who took me from the womb.  
 You kept me safe upon my mother’s breasts.  
 Upon You I rested from my birth. Ever since  
 my mother bore me,  
 You have been my strength. **R**

I will tell of Your Name to all I meet!  
 In the midst of the assembly, I will praise You!  
 All who are in wonder of the Mystery, give praise! **R**

To You, O Beloved, I lift up my voice in the great congregation.  
 You promise to remain with those whose love is steadfast.  
 The hungry shall eat and be satisfied.  
 Those who seek You shall sing praise!  
 Your heart shall be our dwelling place forever. **R**

**Cantor: Alleluias****Second Reading - Gospel:** John 15:1-2, 4-5, 8

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John:

“I am the true vine, and my loving God tends the vine. God cuts off dead branches. Even branches that do bear fruit may need pruning to flourish.

“Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you abide in me. I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who abide in me, and I in them, bear much fruit. You must be rooted to bear fruit. Your fruitfulness is God’s glory.

“Love in action is your fruitfulness. Do not love only in word. You show yourselves to be my disciples by the fruit you bear, which is the Beloved’s glory.”

The inspired words of the evangelist, John. Amen.

**Cantor: Alleluias****Third Reading:** *The Monastic Way* by Joan Chittister, May 2023

An excerpt from the writings of Sr. Joan Chittister:

The great saints confront us with being keepers of the Garden wherever we are. Wherever we are, they show us, justice must reign, equality must prevail, and the defense of the little ones of God must be assured. By us.

Catherine of Siena is clear about the implications of it. When anything deviates from the Will of God, we must leap to the bar to defend those on whom the burden will fall most heavily, most urgently, most unfairly. We must carry on our own shoulders our weakest as well as our strong.

“Cry out with a thousand tongues,” Catherine of Siena writes. “I see the world is rotten because of silence.”

It is your voice and mine, alone as well as together, that are meant to raise the alarms. If we don’t point out the breakdowns in human community and make clear the unseen millions in need, they go on being unseen by the many.

There is someone right now, right here, who is crying out for help. Whose voice are you not listening to today?

The inspired words of the modern theologian Joan Chittister. Amen.

Homily/Reflection: Nancy Tondy

Today's first reading mentions a number of women we don't usually hear about. These were women "of high standing," converts to the Jesus movement, who contributed their time, talents, and resources to support and grow small communities in the early church. We honor them as spiritual ancestors, branches that are close to the root of the vine.

In our gospel, Jesus uses the powerful imagery of the vine and branches to tell us who God is, who he is, and who we are. God is the vine grower. Jesus is the vine. And we are the branches.

Permanent and firmly planted, the vine constantly nourishes all parts of the plant. It grows horizontally, keeping its branches equal in their relationship to itself and to each other. Pruning keeps the branches close to the vine. Each branch is adorned with leaves, rich with chlorophyll and the power to make food. Just as the vine feeds the branches, the branches feed the vine and each other. *The branches cannot live apart from the vine, and the vine can do nothing without the branches.* But even when a branch dies, its organic matter returns to the soil to provide nutrients for the plant. These connections allow the branches to produce their fruit. And it all happens naturally for the vine that is tended by a loving grower.

What then is the fruit? If the fruit is justice, how do we bring it about? How do we "carry on our own shoulders our weakest as well as our strong"? We live in a world of overwhelming need. Surrounded by inequality, hunger, loneliness, and the horrors of war, we can feel helpless. We can feel that we are not enough or can never do enough.

But a branch does not have to try harder or do more. It never needs to be what it is not. *It only needs to stay connected.*

What we choose to do, and what we are able to do flow from who we are. And who we are flows from our connection with the One in whom we live and move and have our being.

*You are invited to share the wisdom welling up in you at this time.*

*Holding all our shared thoughts in the sacred space among us, let us now proclaim our affirmation of faith:*

### Affirmation of Faith

3. We believe in the Holy One, a Divine Mystery beyond all definition and rational understanding, the heart of all that has ever existed, that exists now, or that ever will exist.

4. We believe in Jesus, messenger of the Divine Word, bringer of healing, heart of Divine compassion, bright star in the firmament of the Holy One's prophets, mystics, and saints.
5. We believe that we are called to follow Jesus, as a vehicle of Divine love, a source of wisdom and truth, and an instrument of peace in the world.
6. We believe in the Spirit of the Holy One, the life that is our innermost life, the breath moving in our being, the depth of living in each of us.
7. We believe that the Compassion and Companionship of Jesus is here and now, stretched out all around us to empower those with eyes to see it, hearts to receive it, and hands to make it happen. Amen.

#### Prayer of the Faithful

1. Holy Wisdom whose presence fills our ever-expanding universe, you live in every insect, flower, and beast. You are the ultimate depth of everything that exists.
2. Knowing this, we bring our cares and concerns—for our families, our countries, our leaders, and our world. After each request, we respond:  
***Risen Jesus, we awaken to your call!***

*For whom or for what shall we pray?*

Loving Creator, we thank you for opening us to the web of life, where every being is made in your image, and every encounter is a sacred communion. As we travel on this sacred journey, make us beacons of light, vessels of love, and conduits of transformation. Amen.

#### LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

##### Sign of Peace

As we prepare for this sacred meal, we reaffirm that just as Jesus was anointed, so is each of us. And so, we celebrate our Creator's fruitful love as we extend our blessing to one another with joy. May the peace that our risen brother, Jesus, offers be always with us! Amen.

**Offertory (all raise bread and cup)**

Blessed are you, Source of all Life! Through your goodness we have this bread, this fruit of the vine, all creation, and our own lives to offer. Through this sacred meal may we become your new creation.

**ALL:** Blessed be God forever!

3. Holy Mystery, we offer this prayer in union with the whole Church. In this bread and fruit of the vine, you give us food for body and spirit. May our strength be renewed by your generous blessings that will bring us health of mind and body. Grant that the healing work which you have begun in the life, death, and rising again of Jesus, bring us to eternal life in Your Presence. We ask this through Jesus, our brother. Amen.

The Holy One is with us, abounding in Love!

4. We open our hearts in Christ, who lives and loves, heals, and empowers through us!

5. Let us give thanks to the Source of all Life.

Loving God, we praise you with greater joy than ever during this Easter Season, as we celebrate Jesus' death and rising to new life as witness to the life of compassion and love we are all called to live. As the universe resounds with Easter joy, we join our voices with St. Catherine of Siena and all the angels and saints in an endless hymn of your glory:

***Holy, Holy: Upper Room – Here In This Place*** Christopher Grundy on *Come to the Feast* © 2002 Hand and Soil Music. Released 2002-01-01 (adapted).

[https://youtu.be/sgkWXOSGmOQ?si=p\\_EWsVpinJGkro10](https://youtu.be/sgkWXOSGmOQ?si=p_EWsVpinJGkro10) (lyric/video)

Holy One, may your presence here open our minds may your Spirit among us help us to find you are rising up now like a fountain of grace from the holy ground here in this place. Here in this place.

Holy, holy, holy God of love and majesty the whole universe speaks of your glory from the holy ground here in this place. Here in this place.

**ALL:** Spirit of Life, all that exists is blessed and enlivened by your presence. May these gifts of bread, fruit of the vine, and our very lives, be



+transformed into food that will nourish and sustain us in our time of need.

On the night before he died, Jesus did more than ask us to remember him. He showed us how to live when he washed the feet of his friends. At the Table, he took the Passover Bread, spoke the grace, broke the bread, and offers it to us now, saying:

**ALL:** *Take and eat, all of you. This is my body, the Bread of Life given to strengthen you. (All raise bread)*

Jesus then raised a cup of blessing and spoke the grace, saying:

**ALL:** *Take and drink of this Cup of Life, the Covenant made new again through my life in you. Whenever you remember me like this, I am among you. (All raise cup)*

Let us proclaim the sacred presence of our Loving God:

**Cantor:** *Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ is with us now!* (x2)

**(All raise bread and cup)**

**ALL:** For it is through learning to live as Jesus lived,  
And why he lived,  
And for whom he lived,  
That we awaken to your Spirit within,  
Moving us to worship you truly,  
Life-giving God,  
At this time and all time and in all ways.

**Cantor:** *Amen!*

Communion Rite - We pray as this bread and cup are shared among us:

6. Loving God, you call us to live the Gospel of peace and justice.  
*We will live justly.*
7. Loving God, you call us to be your presence in the world. *We will love tenderly.*
1. Loving God, you call us to speak truth to power.  
*We will walk with integrity in your presence.*

This is the Bread and Cup of Life, through which we are nourished, and we nourish one another.

**ALL:** We share this bread and fruit of the vine today committing ourselves to be Easter people, people who see beyond the barriers, the pain, the darkness and hard times, people who live in faith, hope, and love in all the seasons of our lives, whatever the ups and downs.

*All are welcome to receive at our Tables of Friendship!*

Communion Meditation: **Ground and Source of All That Is** words and music by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan © 2004 Worldmaking.net. Richard Bruxvoort Colligan and the River's Voice.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VB7kDHYncil> (no video)

Ground and source of all that is, one that anchors all our roots,  
Being of all ways and forms, deepest home and final truth,  
We live and move in you; we live and move in you.

Lover of ten thousand names, holy presence all have known,  
Beauty ever welcoming, mystery to stir the soul.  
We live and move in you; we live and move in you.

Nature by whose laws we live, author of our DNA,  
All-compelling call to life, drawing one and all the same,  
We live and move in you; we live and move in you.

Energy of heav'nly spheres, spark within the insect mind,  
Unseen pulse to charge our plans, ringing order and surprise.  
We live and move in you; we live and move in you.

Call to kindness, call to serve, freedom for our chosen course,  
Guide and friend for all who dream, nourished by our ground and source.  
We live and move in you; we live and move in you.

*We pray in the Name of Jesus:*

2. O Holy One, you are within, around and among us. We celebrate your many names. Your wisdom come; your will be done, unfolding from the depths within us.
3. Each day you give us all that we need;  
You remind us of our limits, and we let go.  
You support us in our power, and we act with courage.

4. For you are the dwelling place within us,  
The empowerment around us,  
And the celebration among us, now and forever. Amen.

### Closing Prayer

5. Ground of Our Being, we thank you for nourishing us in this sacred gathering. Illuminate our paths as we go forward.
6. Guide us through the shadows of doubt this day and this week. And may our love continually bear fruit in our actions.

**ALL:** Shine in us, O Light of Easter's Dawn. For You are the Fire that has birthed all things. Amen.

### Announcements

Blessing - Let us extend hands to one another for our mutual blessing:

7. As we stand on the threshold of possibility, we are enfolded in the tender embrace of hope. May we allow the blessings of Easter to awaken in us a deep sense of gratitude for the gift of life.
1. May we dance with the rhythm of resurrection, feeling the heartbeat of the universe in the beauty of nature and the poetry of existence, as our souls sing the song of rebirth.
2. May we live as pilgrims of the heart, finding the courage to embrace the unknown and the grace to discover the sacred within the ordinary. Let us honor every blessed step in the name of the Divine: Source of All Being, Eternal Word, and +Holy Spirit. Amen.

*(chanted)* Go in the peace of Christ, Alleluia, Alleluia!

**Cantor:** *(chanted)* **Thanks be to God, Alleluia, Alleluia!**

Closing Hymn: **Alphabet Mantra** Jan Phillips, *Singing for the Soul*. 2008

<https://youtu.be/ukWYFrmWGYI?si=dmiPURvXoMOPSeK3> (no video)

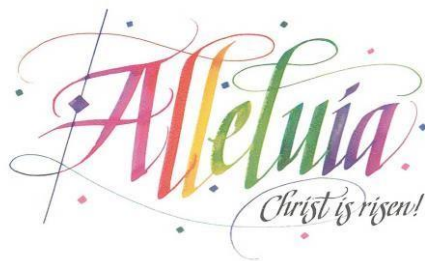
Like the all in the oneness, like the branch and the vine  
Like the call and the answer, like the drink and the wine  
Like the earth and the heavens, like the forest and trees  
Like the gate and the pathway, like the hawk and the breeze

Like the iris and petals, like the jewel and the mine  
 Like the known and the knowing, like the laugh and the line  
 Like moonlight and darkness, like nowhere and near  
 Like the oak and the acorn, like pain and the tear

Like the quest and the seeker, like rain and the flower  
 Like the sea and the islands, like time and the hour  
 Like union and yearning, like the vision and view Like  
 waves and the water, so I am to you.

So, I am to you, Love. And you are to me.  
 We dwell in each other like salt in the sea.

O alleluia, o alleluia, O alleluia, o alleluia. (repeat)



***Thank you for your courage to worship in a spirit of equality and justice!  
 You are welcome to invite a friend to join us again and support this  
 Community with your presence and prayer.***

\*Scripture readings taken from the Catholic Comprehensive Lectionary, published by Women's Ordination Conference (Cycle B, Easter Season and Pentecost, 2023-2024).

Prayers and blessings inspired by The Work of the People ([theworkofthepeople.com](http://theworkofthepeople.com)).

A guide to one way of pronouncing some of the words in today's scriptures:

- \*Philippi is pronounced Phil-ip-I. The first two "i"s are short. The last is a long "i".
- Thessalonica is pronounced Thes-a-lone-I-ka (the "i" is pronounced as a long "e").
- Areopagus is pronounced "Air-ee-O (short o, as in hot) -pe-gus.
- Pronounced Dye-a-knee-shush.
- Pronounced Air-ee-O (as in hot)-pe-gite (as in kite).
- Da (as in hat)-MER-is (as in is).