



**Community of St. Bridget**  
*an inclusive catholic experience*

**First Sunday of Lent – February 17-18, 2024**  
**Communal Reconciliation Service**

Liturgist/Homilist: Mary Eileen Collingwood



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

---

All are welcome to come into this place that we make special by our very presence. Where the ordinary is sanctified, the human is celebrated, the compassionate is expected.

**ALL:** Together we make it a holy place with our every act of celebration.

With the flame of St. Bridget, we proclaim the transformative power of God. We give thanks that this love has been, is now, and will ever be at work within us and in all creation. Amen.

Opening Song: ***Out of the Darkness***, by Tom Kenzia; Album: Lead us to the Water; © 1998 OCP.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shV1rnWW28k>

**(no video – begin 1.07, end at 2.48)**

**Refrain:** Out of darkness the light of Christ will shine  
And the dawn of day breaks through the night.  
Then the poor and oppressed will cry out and be heard  
By the light that rises from the night.

Let the darkness flee from here.  
Put an end to sadness and fear.  
The hungry will eat, the sick will dance,  
The dead will live again. **R**

Today we celebrate the First Sunday of Lent and include our Communal Reconciliation Service. Our readings today remind us of the properties of water: it can destroy as well as enable rebirth. We ponder this paradox as we pray in the name of our Sacred Essence: Source of All Being, Eternal Word, and Holy Wisdom-Sophia. Amen.

Communal Reconciliation: ***Letting Go & Letting Come: A Litany***

O Holy One,  
Our Source and Ground of Being,  
In you we live, move, and exist.  
In your image we have been made.  
You celebrate the goodness of our humanity,  
and call us to live fully and love deeply.  
Yet, today we admit that, in many ways,  
we choose to live beneath our good humanness.  
In things we have done, and things we have left undone,  
we have neglected our calling to be your image bearers  
to all of creation.

**1.** O Compassionate One, we come to you this day:

- to grieve for what we should have done and did not
- to change what we ought to change but have not
- to break open our hearts to things we are refusing for some warped reason to even consider

**2.** We have refused to even think about renewing old commitments that we've allowed to go to dust:

- spending time with our loved ones
- visiting the aging people of our community
- exercising for health's sake
- taking time to read your Word

**3.** We've closed our minds:

- to the thought of reconciling with old friends whom we have hurt
- to put the effort into reviving old spiritual practices that we allowed to die in our youth but failed to substitute for as we aged.
- to repent old abrasions, quick words, harsh judgments made in haste and expiated never

**4.** to all the opportunities to share out of our abundance with the hungry, the naked, and the stranger who are in need

- to steward creation responsibly, thinking only of ourselves and not of future generations, or the One who gifted us such a beautiful world.
- to be silent as the war machines of our world continue to annihilate and cause more division among your people.

We have closed the doors of our hearts, as time went by, to so many of the things we need to live full and holy lives.

**ALL:** In Christ we open ourselves to the powers of mercy as we begin the work of forgiving ourselves, our neighbors, and our enemies.

Song for Reflection: **Turn Our Hearts**, by Barbara Bridge; text and music © 2002, Barbara Bridge, OCP.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGIve3J7pTw> (no video)

*Turn our hearts to you O God,  
with you there is healing,  
wholeness and forgiveness,  
freedom from fear,  
lasting peace.*

With Sincerity of Heart, we pray:

5. Give us eyes to see,  
ears to hear,  
and hearts that are open.

**ALL:** *Let it be!*

6. May we live into the fullness of our humanity,  
the humanity that you called “good.”

**ALL:** *Let it be!*

7. May we live with hands open in generosity toward You,  
our neighbor, and even our enemy.

**ALL:** *Let it be!*

1. May we take seriously the call of Jesus to embrace our struggles,  
instead of seeking struggles for our enemies.

**ALL:** *Let it be!*

2. May we steward the earth, and our brief lives here, with gratitude and care.

**ALL:** *Let it be!*

3. May we tune our hearts to the music of the Spirit, following Her lead  
as we take the next right step on our journey.

**ALL:** *Let it be!*

4. May we live lives that imitate Jesus, being broken and poured in love for others.

**ALL:** *Let it be!*

5. May we practice resurrection, here and now.

**ALL:** *Let it be!*

May we experience the full and abundant life, to which Jesus invites us. Amen.

In Christ, our power to forgive is realized. May we continue to find generous and courageous expression in, with, and through one another as we absolve ourselves, our neighbors, and our enemies. We breathe deeply of the Spirit, as we continue Love's reconciling work!

**ALL:** Let us give life to ourselves and others through: +the love of God, the peace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, now and always. Amen.

### Opening Prayer

O Holy One, you call us to discover the life of spiritual wisdom, to live and as divine presence. Help us to learn this way of the open hand and the open heart, to let the abundance of the universe flow through us and find its way back home to your heart. We ask that Your Eternal Light shine upon us this day, as we come together sharing our faithful imaginations in creating a sacred space and prayerful experience as we begin our Lenten journey. Amen.

### LITURGY OF THE WORD\*

*We sense the movement of the Spirit of Life  
as we listen to the Scripture readings broken open and shared by all.*

**First Reading:** Genesis 7:11-18; 8:6-7a, 11-13, 18-19; 9:9-11, 13, 16, abridged in parts.

A reading from the book of Genesis:

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, all the underground springs of the earth erupted, and all the windows of the heavens were thrown open. Rain poured on the earth for forty days and forty nights.

On the day the rain began, Noah, his wife, their sons and their wives entered the ark. With them came everything and anything that had the breath of life in it, creatures of all genders. Then God shut the door behind them.

The flood continued for forty days. The waters rose and bore the ark up, high over the ground. The flood deepened on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water...

After 40 days, Noah opened a window he had made in the ark, and sent out a dove... When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a

freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water was receding from the earth. After 7 days, he sent out the dove again, but this time it did not return. By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, Noah opened the hatch of the ark and saw dry ground.

Noah disembarked, together with his wife, their sons and daughters-in-law. Then all the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds - every creature on the face of the earth, came out of the ark, one kind after another.

And God said, "I am making My covenant with all of you, your descendants, and with... every living creature on earth that, never again, will all life be destroyed by floodwaters. No. Never again will a flood destroy the earth.

"I am setting My bow in the clouds, a sign of the covenant between Me and Earth. When the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between Myself, your God, and every living thing, every last living creature on earth."

The inspired words from our ancient literary tradition. Amen.

**Responsorial:** Psalm 25 (*Psalms for Praying* by Nan Merrill)

**Cantor:** *O God, help me know your ways, teach me your paths.*

Compel me to know your ways, O God;  
Instruct me upon your paths.  
Lead me in your truth, and teach me,  
For through You will I know wholeness;  
I shall reflect your light both day and night. **R**

I know of your mercy, Blessed One,  
And of your unconditional Love;  
You have been with me from the beginning.  
Forgive the many times I have walked away from you  
Choosing to follow my own will.  
I seek your guidance, once again,  
I yearn to know your Peace.  
Companion me as I open to your Way! **R**

You are gracious and just, O Spirit of Truth.  
You enjoy teaching all who are open,  
all who choose to live in truth.  
Your paths are loving and sure, O Holy One,  
and those who give witness to You through their lives  
are blessed beyond measure. **R**

**Acclamation: *Spirit of the Living God*** by Michael Crawford; WMG; UMPG, LatinAutor, Adorando Brazil, Capitol CMG Publishing, and 6 Music Rights Societies  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GO\\_B0DpTbUI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GO_B0DpTbUI) (lyric/video-end at 1.31)

Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me (x2)  
Melt me. Mold me. Fill me. Use me.  
Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me.

**Second Reading – Gospel:** Mark 1:12-15  
A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark:

Immediately after Jesus' baptism, the Spirit drove him into the desert. Jesus remained in the desert for 40 days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him.

After John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the good news."  
The inspired words of the evangelist, Mark. Amen.

**Third Reading:** 1 Peter 3: 18 - 22  
A reading from the first letter of Peter:

This is what Jesus the Christ experienced: he suffered because of the mistakes and evil acts of others. He clung to justice in the face of injustice for the sake of the unjust. In this faithful endurance, God was revealed to us. Jesus was put to death in the flesh, then transformed, alive in the Spirit. In the Spirit, the risen Christ visited those who were lost in the Flood in the days of Noah and incorporated them into the family of God. All those who did not heed God's call when the ark was being built were gathered again in the basin of God's love.

In the Flood, only a few were spared— eight in all. They were saved through water. In the same way, the waters of baptism flood us with new life. Baptism is not a literal cleansing of the body, but a spiritual renewal and a rebirth of conscience through the resurrection of Jesus the Christ. The Christ has gone into the Cosmos and is with God. Among all angels, powers, and authorities, this Cosmic Christ is the definitive word.  
The inspired words attributed to the apostle, Peter. Amen.

Shared Homily: Mary Eileen

In the Story of Noah and the Ark, we learn that if people do not conform to God's ways, destruction will surely follow. It is the compassionate God who makes a commitment with the people and the earth that kindness and mercy will be granted to those who believe.

When Jesus leaves the desert, overcoming all the temptations that he experienced there, he immediately commits himself to exhorting the crowds that the time is now to change their ways. It is God's time! Kairos time! God's ministering, comforting and empowering presence is at hand NOW!

And Peter recaps the story of Jesus to his community, ending his message with proclaiming that Jesus' spirit is alive to all who are baptized into the faith, who experience a spiritual renewal and a rebirth of conscience through the resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

All of these scripture passages have a common theme: conform and believe in God's faithful presence that will raise us from despair and transform our lives.

The rainbow becomes a sign of commitment between God and creation. Jesus' passion, death, and rising becomes a sign of commitment to his faithful followers. Baptism, a sacramental sign of commitment, becomes the catalyst that has supported and animated the followers of Jesus to this day.

It is our faithful commitment to Our Creator's vision for the world and humankind that is our only true indicator and measure of the kind of attention we give to any other system or group of people that would take us in the opposite direction.

The path of faith leads to life, not death—a faith that reaffirms life even in the face of death. It is an act of continuous renewal as trust in God drives away all that can lead us astray. We pray to accept God's abiding presence in all our trials, to conform our measure of living to God's ways of living. When we give witness to God through our lives, we have been assured that we will be blessed beyond measure.

There is a high cost of choosing to accept and spread this Good News—as Noah and Jesus and Peter can attest. Yet we believe that the Light of Christ rises from the darkness, dispelling the night. This light will flow through us so we can find our way back.

We take this vision and pray that we learn to speak words that will give life and comfort to the yearnings of others. May this Lenten season be a catalyst for our rebirth, and new life for those we encounter.

*Please share how these scripture passages have come to life for you.*

*Holding these thoughts in the sacred space among us and strengthened by the support of one another, we now proclaim our affirmation of faith:*

### Affirmation of Faith:

6. We believe in The Source of All Life, creator and nurturer of all, who is ever and always present with us. We believe in Jesus, the Anointed One, who is our love, our hope, and our light.
7. We believe in Sacred Spirit, the breath of wisdom Sophia, the power of the winds enwrapping us in glory. We believe the Holy Spirit energizes and guides us to build caring communities and to challenge oppression, exploitation, and injustices and to make the world a better place by our presence.
1. We believe that the Holy One loves us passionately and forgives us everything. We believe that we are radiant images of our Creator who calls us to live fully, love tenderly, and serve generously.
2. We believe we are called to care for each other and all of creation. We believe in the Communion of Saints, our forever friends, who support us on life's journey, who walk with us in love, who are never far from us, who are separated from us by a mere veil, always near, opening our minds to what is difficult to see.
3. We believe in Mary, the mother of Jesus, whose resolve made it possible for her son, Jesus, to become prophet and teacher who journeyed on the earth blessing the sick, making whole the broken, healing many, instilling faith in his followers, so that they insure his legacy for all eternity.
4. We believe in the Cosmic Christ, the everlasting Presence, one with the universe. We believe in the partnership and equality of women and men in our church and our world. Amen.

### Prayer of the Faithful

O Holy One of mystery and compassion, who chose us before we were formed in the life-giving waters of the womb, who dedicated and appointed us to bring healing and love to your people and all creation, we now bring to this Table our blessings, cares, and concerns. After each request, our response remains:

***We awaken to your call.***

*(For whom and for what shall we pray?)*

Cosmic Oneness, you dwell in every creature. We know you hear our prayers and continually pour out your mercy and grace. Make us mindful of our worthiness, always enveloped in your love and compassion. Strengthen our faith as you work through us to co-create your ever-expanding Kingdom. 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 brother Jesus offers, be always with us!

### Offertory: (All raise bread and cup)

We place on our plate the harvest to be won by labor's love. And into the cup we pour all the sap which is to be pressed out this day from Earth's fruits.

**ALL:** O Gracious One, giver of the gifts we bring, receive them from all those gathered here today, affirming the sacrament of your Presence among us.

The Holy One is with us, abounding in Love!

5. Giving thanks to the Source of All Life, we open our hearts in the name of Jesus, who lives and loves, heals and empowers through us.
  
6. All Embracing Presence, the first passion of Jesus was his passion for You and his passion for justice; namely, to incarnate your justice by demanding for all a fair share of a world belonging to and guided by your covenant with Israel. In solidarity with Jesus, and with all the faithful women and men who have gone before us, we lift up our hearts in song:

**Holy, Holy, Holy** by Christopher Grundy on *Stepping In* © 2012.

<https://youtu.be/GUm2bEGB2dU> (no video)

Holy, holy, holy God of love and justice  
The whole universe and everything beyond it,  
Every galaxy and flower,  
Every singing bird and falling drop of rain  
Is ablaze  
With your glory, glory, glory!  
O, God most wonderful.  
Blessed is the One who comes in your name!  
Hosannah! Hosannah!

7. Loving Creator, we see around us the work of your hands, the fruit of your wisdom and love. The unfolding story of creation witnesses unceasingly to your creative power. We, your creatures, often deviate from that wisdom, hindering your creative presence in our midst.
  
1. Sending among us Jesus, our Light and Hope, you birth afresh in our world the power of Sophia Wisdom, and in the gift of this Spirit, your creative goodness blooms anew, amid the variety and wonder of life.

Generous Gifter of Life, make us ever more aware of the presence of Your Spirit in these, our gifts, as we celebrate the +transformative energy within this bread and fruit of the vine given to nurture afresh in us, the discerning gifts of wisdom, light, and truth.

2. As a Christian people we celebrate the Open Table, proclaimed by Jesus our liberator and our friend, a Table of abundant life, inclusive love, and liberation, where all are welcome, and from which no one is to be excluded.

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 raise bread)**

**ALL:** *Take and eat, all of you. This is my very Self which I give to you. (pause)*  
When supper ended, Jesus took the cup, spoke the grace, and offers it to us now, saying: **(All raise cup)**

**ALL:** *Take and drink this cup, the life of the new and everlasting covenant. It is poured out for you and for all, so that you might be free. Whenever you remember me like this, I am among you. (pause)*

We give thanks for who we are in this Unfolding Love:

**ALL:** Matter becomes conscious, the universe coming to reflect on itself: earthen vessels that hold a treasure, a temple of the Spirit, the Body of Christ.

**(All raise bread and cup)**

**ALL:** All honor to the Creator of All, the Giver of Life,  
To Jesus, the Risen One,  
And to the Spirit, Bond of Love.  
Let glory and praise be sung!

**Cantor:** Amen! (x2)

We pray as these gifts are shared among us:

3. Loving Teacher, you call us to live the Gospel of peace and justice,  
*We will live justly.*
4. Loving Companion, you call us to be your presence in the world.  
*We will love tenderly.*
5. Loving Prophet, you call us to speak truth to power.  
*We will walk with integrity in your abiding presence.*

**(Presider raises bread and cup)**

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

**ALL:** What we have heard with our ears, we will live with our lives; as we share communion, we will become communion, both Love's nourishment and Love's challenge.

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

Communion Song for Meditation: **God Be the Love** (O Christ Surround Me) written by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan; recorded by The River's Voice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBJDWSufLPg> (lyric video)

God be the love to search and keep me  
God be the prayer to move my voice  
God be the strength to now uphold me  
O Christ surround me (x2)

Bind to myself the Name of Holy  
Great cloud of witnesses enfold  
Prophets, apostles, angels witness  
O Christ surround me (x2)

Brightness of sun and glow of moonlight  
Flashing of lightning, strength of wind  
Death of the sea to soil of planet  
O Christ surround me (x2)

Walking behind to hem my journey  
Going ahead to light my way  
And from beneath, above and always  
O Christ surround me (x2)

*Together we pray to God as Jesus did:*

**6.** 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.

**7.** 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.

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

### Closing Prayer

Compassionate One, faithful to the covenant you have made between you and all creation, we are refreshed with the life-giving water you provide. We hear your call to go out into the world, rebirthing your Word within your people and the world you have created. May we be forever reminded that you are walking beside us on this journey. Amen.

### Announcements

Blessing - *All are invited to extend your hands for our mutual blessing:*

2. Faithful and loving God: Bless each of us as we begin our journey to return to you once again, and come closer to who you have called us to be.
3. We make a +cross on our forehead as a sign of our commitment to follow The Way of Jesus. May we remain faithful to this commitment and challenge ourselves to become better persons, more closely in line with Jesus' teachings and ministry. Amen.

We go into this week, held together by the Source of All That Is, clothed in the nature of Jesus our Companion, and reinforced by the strength of +Wisdom-Spirit within us. Amen.

Closing Song: ***Beyond the Days*** by Ricky Manalo, CSP; © 1987, published by OCP.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSgUNV6HnIM> (lyric/video)

**Refrain:** Beyond the days of hope and myst'ry  
we see a light of faith renewed,  
and in our longing we thirst for guidance  
to walk with you day by day.

Forty days and nights, you guide the steps of our journey.  
May your presence be felt in the whisper of your voice. **R**

Not on bread alone are we to walk on this journey.  
Speak the words that give life to the yearnings of our hearts. **R**

In your hands, O God, we feel the touch of your guidance.  
Keep us safe in your care: may your gentleness be there. **R**

On our Lenten path we see the dawn of a new day.  
Be our vision of hope; be the promise of our lives. **R**

***Thank you for your courage to worship with us in a spirit of equality  
and justice!***

***You are welcome to **invite a friend and join us** again to support this  
Community with your presence and prayer.***

\* Contains excerpts from Joan Chittister's *Summons to Live Anew, Lent 2024*.

\*\* Scripture readings taken from the Comprehensive Catholic Lectionary made available through the Women's Ordination Conference.