



Community of St. Bridget
an inclusive catholic experience
Fourth Sunday of Easter – April 20-21, 2024
World Day of Prayer for Vocations
Liturgist/Homilist: Donna Nagel



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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.

Welcome to the Community of St. Bridget. We make this gathering special by our presence, where the ordinary is sanctified, the human is celebrated, and the compassionate is expected. Together we make this occasion 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: ***Hallelujah is Our Song*** by Sarah Hart; Sarah Kroger, Sarah Hart, Josh Blakesley, Trey Heffinger performed by Chirs Brunelle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTY8Y3eFLqQ> (no video)

What hope we have
Even in the longest night
For the light will overcome
We will not fear
For we know the sun will rise
Hallelujah is our song

What peace we have
Even in this wounded world
Where the battle rages on
We will not fear
For we know who heals our souls
Hallelujah is our song

Refrain: Hallelujah! Hallelujah! He is risen over all
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah is our song

What joy we have
For the stone is rolled away
And the tomb holds nothing now
No sting of death, No power over sin or grave
Hallelujah is our song. **R**

Today we celebrate the Fourth Sunday of Easter sometimes called Good Shepherd Sunday. It is also a day we pray for vocations to the religious life and priesthood. We will take a broader look at what being a Good Shepherd means for us in our present day and include all vocations in our prayers, for each one of us has a critical role to play in God's Kingdom. Let us begin our liturgy asking God's continued blessing in the name of our Sacred Essence: Source of All Being, Eternal Word, and Holy Wisdom-Sophia. 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 - no video)

*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 Holy One, it is good news indeed that there is no hiding from the Risen One. He comes to us breathing the Spirit into our unbelieving hearts and offering us a peace which surpasses all understanding and giving us strength to pursue our chosen vocation:
2. ...the Spirit's peace gives us renewed purpose, a blessed unrest realizing that the Easter story is about our own resurrection after all, and that we have work to do in the interim:

ALL: ...proclaiming God's love, healing the brokenhearted, speaking out for creation, and above all, opening to the evolving push and pull of Spirit's call. 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 4:8-12

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles:

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke up: "Leaders of the people! Elders! If we must answer today for a good deed done to a person who was unable to walk, and explain how this person has been made whole, then you and all the people of Israel must realize that it was done in the name of Jesus the Christ who was crucified and is risen. In the power of that Name, this person stands before you perfectly sound. This Jesus is 'the stone rejected by the builders that has become the cornerstone.

The inspired words of the writer of the Acts of the Apostles. Amen.

Responsorial: Psalm 118 (Nan Merrill, adapted)

Cantor: *The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.*

We give thanks to You, O Beloved, for You are kind and Your steadfast love endures forever. **R**

With You beside me, I do not fear. What can others do to me? You live within me and answer my prayers as I face the fears that well up from within. **R**

I give thanks to You, O Beloved, who answers our prayers and invites us to new life. The stone which the builders rejected has become the foundation of our lives. This is the day which You have made: let us rejoice and be glad! **R**

Blessed are all who dwell in the house of Love! You lead the Way; You forgive our misguided ways and bring Light into darkness. **R**

Alleluia by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan and the River's Voice

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/hUtb30LhoWM> (no video)

Alleluia! The Word of God is living!

Alleluia! The Gospel is among us! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Second Reading - Gospel: John 10:11-18

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John:

Jesus said: I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd would die for the sheep. The hired hand, who is neither shepherd nor owner of the sheep, catches sight of the wolf coming and runs away, leaving the sheep to be scattered or snatched by the wolf. That is because the hired hand works only for pay and has no concern for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me, in the same way Abba God knows me and I know God —and for all these sheep I will lay down my life.

This is why Abba God loves me — because I lay down my life only to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down freely. I have power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it up again. This command I received from my Abba.

The inspired words of the evangelist, John. Amen.

Third Reading: 1 John 3:1-2

A reading from the first letter of John:

See what love Abba God has lavished on us in letting us be called God's chosen ones! Yet that in fact is what we are.

The reason the world does not recognize us is that it never recognized God. My dear friends, at present we are God's chosen people; but it has not been revealed what we are to become in the future.

We know that when it comes to light we will be like God, for we will see God as God really is.

The inspired words of the writer of John's letter. Amen.

Shared Homily: Donna Nagel

Recently I read that many people no longer attend church services because the prayers, readings, and sermons are no longer relevant. That thought came to my mind as I read today's Gospel. I suspect few of us are familiar with herds of

sheep and the shepherds who watch over them. Today most of the young and even adults participate in some type of team sport or group activity. So perhaps if we think of Jesus as a team leader or coach it would be more meaningful to today's listeners. A good coach or team leader works with the members to bring the best out of them recognizing the special talents of each person. If one member goes astray, the coach or leader works with that person to bring them back to the mission or goals of the group. They function, in other words, like Jesus, the Good Shepherd in our Gospel today. The bottom line, a good leader never gives up on working to bring the best out of their team members.

Turning our attention to vocations, we may recall the emphasis that the traditional church placed on religious vocations. While acknowledging the vocations of marriage, parenthood and the single life, there was nothing as important as serving God as a priest, brother, or religious sister. Today we are more enlightened and know that no matter what we choose to do with the life God has given each of us, we play a critical part in building up the Body of Christ. And the fact that we are all God's chosen ones, as written in John's letter today, makes our contribution as essential as the next person's.

Reflecting upon the vocation of Jesus, we find that Abba God sent Him not to fulfill the Jew's expectation of a king that would make them conquerors and rule their nation in place of the Roman emperor. Rather, Jesus' vocation was to teach them the truth of who they were. Jesus wasn't sent to die for our sins, but to bring the good news that our status is rooted in the unlimited love God has for each one of us. Realizing how blessed we are, our response to God's gracious gift is our commitment to transform our lives to live in a manner that reflects our blessedness; our vocation is to be the People of God. Yes, we have suffering in this life and even death to contend with, but God never abandons us and will raise us up as God did Jesus.

Jesus' invitation to follow him is open to all of us no matter what our vocation might be. Our responsibility to answer Jesus' commandment to love one another, to be forgiving, compassionate and merciful is meant for all followers of Jesus, not only for those called to ordained ministry. It is up to each one of us to live as Jesus intended, and this is what gives us the ability to heal others when we take the time to listen to them and minister to their needs. We, like Peter in the first reading today, can and will accomplish miracles through the power of God's life in us. We may never know the good we do for someone in need, but if we dedicate our efforts to the love of God, God will work miracles through us.

Let us go forward then thanking God for our vocation and praying that we remain open to the mission God asks of us.

How do you describe your vocation in life?

How has who you are and what you do brought new life to others?

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. Ever present Creator: Life-giving Word: Ruah, Breath of Life, we stand present at our Tables holding our blessings, cares and concerns.
2. We ask that your healing power become a cleansing balm upon the Spirit within us, our families, our countries, our leaders and our world. After each request, we respond: ***Risen Jesus, we awaken to your call!***

All knowing and ever living Source of Light, we give back to you what you have so graciously given to each of us. We trust that by breaking open our hearts, our lives will bear fruit. We hope that by following Jesus' lead, we will fall in love with the Spirit that dwells within us and thereby love all who we touch.

Seed of Compassion, hold these prayers, and the prayers hidden deep within our hearts not yet ready to surface, within your ever-loving embrace. Amen

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Sign of Peace

As we prepare for the 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)

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 the 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.

3. Holy Mystery, 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. 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.
5. We praise you, O God of wonder and life, with greater joy than ever during this Easter Season, as we celebrate Jesus' life and ministry as witness to the life of compassion and love we are all called to live. As the universe resounds with Easter joy, we lift up our hearts with the choirs of angels and sing this endless hymn of your glory:

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!

6. 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.

7. 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.

ALL: 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.

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

Jesus then raised a cup of blessing, spoke the grace, and offers it to us now, saying:

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

We raise our voices to the sacred presence of our Loving God:

ALL: In every creature that has ever breathed, *Christ has lived*
In every living being that has passed on before us, *Christ is transformed*
In our breaking open the word and the bread, *Christ is with us still!*
In everything yet to be, *Christ will come again.*

(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!

We pray as these gifts are shared among us:

2. Loving Teacher, you call us to live the Gospel of peace and justice,
We will live justly.
3. Loving Companion, you call us to be your presence in the world.
We will love tenderly.
4. Loving Prophet, you call us to speak truth to power.
We will walk with integrity in your abiding 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 cup 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: ***We Say Yes To You*** by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan
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OneLicense.net, CCLI and Worldmaking.net.

<https://www.worldmaking.net/we-say-yes-to-you> (video/lyrics)

Verse 1: We say yes to you. We believe in you. You bear the presence of Christ.
We say yes to you and what you're called to do. You bear the presence of Christ.

We say yes to you. (Repeat twice at end of song.)

Verse 2: Oh you are blessed to live out your call and be true. No more no less, so do what is yours to do. (Repeat verse 1, then repeat verse 2)

We now pray in the Name of Jesus:

5. Great Divine Spirit of Love that is at the core of everything and from which all life flows,
We acknowledge your healing and transforming power.
6. May the spirit of unconditional love and forgiveness flow through each of us and enable the realm of love to spread throughout the world.
7. Like the flowers in the fields,
ensure that we have the basics we need to live,
and give us the love and commitment
to ensure that others have what they need too.
1. Give us the courage to acknowledge when we have done wrong,
to seek forgiveness from those we have hurt,
and to forgive those who have hurt us,
so that we may be reconciled.
2. We acknowledge the power of self-giving love to transform individual hearts and the world. We recommit ourselves to the unconditional love of others and the work of justice and peace. Amen.

Closing Prayer:

Loving Creator, help us never forget you have given us Jesus as our model and guide. He is always within, beside and among us to show us the way. May we always choose to follow his lead no matter what path in life we take so we will accomplish the mission for which we were created. We make this request in his name as he instructed us to do. Amen.

Announcements

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

God, we ask your blessing upon us as we go forth today and every day strengthened by the gifts of the Holy Spirit to work tirelessly for peace and justice for all creation. And we ask your blessing upon all our efforts to serve you and one another in the name + of the Blessed Trinity. Amen.

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

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

Closing Song: **The Summons** Words and Music by John L. Bell from the Album: God Never Sleeps ©1995

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

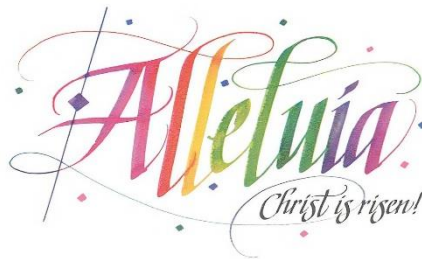
Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known,
Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name? Will you care for
cruel and kind and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare? Will you let
me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name? Will you set the
prisoners free and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen, And admit to
what I mean in you and you in me?

Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name? Will you quell the
fear inside and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around Through
my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Your summons echoes true when I but call your name! Let me turn and
follow you and never be the same.
In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show. Thus I'll move
and live and grow in you and you in me.



***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.***

*Today's Scripture readings are taken and adapted from the Inclusive Lectionary, cycle B,
published by Quixote Center, MD. The Psalm is adapted from Nan Merrill's *Psalms for Praying*.

