

EASTER 5 SERVICE (10TH May 2020)

May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Opening prayer:

Lord of life and death, we seek your presence at this time in our worship. Without you, O God, our worship is only an empty form of self-indulgence. But with you, it becomes a life-transforming communion. Enter our worship now, O Lord, and make it real. Amen!

Music:

I pay my respect to the traditional custodians of this land in which we live, work, play and worship. To the elders and members of the Yorta Yorta nation, past, present and emerging.

Please join me in this prayer of thanksgiving and confession:

We thank you O Lord, for your presence and your mercy and truth that leads us on our way to life everlasting. We are locked down in our own homes and towns and many find no peace in the disruptions. And yet as we gather in your presence at this time, we find your peace that overcomes any fear. We rest in the promise that he who rose from the grave has overcome sin and death and won the victory for us in all our struggles. And so, we come before you with thanksgiving and praise.

Jesus, our teacher, healer and friend, forgive our lack of trust in you, the timidity of our faith and the blindness that fails to see our wrongdoing. Renew us, heal us and transform us into the people you want us to be. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen!

Declaration of Forgiveness:

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance that Jesus Christ has come, is coming, and will continue to come to save sinners. You hold this faith, I now declare to you all, our sins are forgiven.

Reading: John 14: 1-14 (NRSV)

14 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. 2 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? 3 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. 4 And you know the way to the place where I am going." 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

8 Phillip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Phillip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen

me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 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. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, believe me because of the works themselves. 12 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. 13 I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

Message:

I saw a cartoon of a man who went to see his psychiatrist and told him he had all kinds of fear about the future.

"Doctor," he said, "I'm worried about the Covid-19 Pandemic, the economy, political and social upheaval in Africa, climate change, our diplomatic relations with China..." and he went on and on and on.

In the final frame the psychiatrist responded: "Shut up and move over," after which he proceeded to get on the couch with his client. There is a lot of truth in that cartoon.

We are greatly troubled by what is going on in the world right now and it seem almost overwhelming. We are all on the same 'couch' so to speak.

Our Gospel lesson for this fifth Sunday of Easter tells us that the disciples are gathered together with Jesus on the last Thursday night of his earthly life. This was his farewell speech at the last supper with his disciples.

He had washed their feet and had given them a new commandment: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13: 1-20) He foretold his betrayal by Judas (John 13: 21-30) and told his disciples that he will be with them a little while longer, but where he is going, they cannot come. (John 13: 33) He also predicted Peter's denial (John 13: 36-38).

No wonder the disciples are troubled. Their beloved teacher and friend – their hero, their leader – is leaving them. To top it all off, one of their own has turned against them, and another who was seen as their leader will fail the loyalty test. They felt abandoned! It is heart rending, soul numbing experience.

The disciples knew Jesus in a close and personal way – they had walked together, talked together, ate together, shared good times and bad times together.

They felt safe and confident in his presence.

When they experienced doubt, pain and suffering they felt Jesus understood what was happening to them. When demons were encountered, he cast them out; when hunger was experienced, he multiplied loaves; when sickness threatened, he healed; when death overwhelmed, he conquered; when self-centred leaders tried to deceive, he protected with truth.

For the disciples, living with Jesus was great. Living with Jesus meant the kind of peace and security that many people have longed for at one time or another. Perhaps you have craved the presence of Jesus at such time.

- Standing at the bedside of a loved one and wishing, desperately that somehow Jesus would walk through the door and say, *“Get up and walk”*.
- Perhaps you’re watching aid workers on TV rationing out food at refugee camps to so many people and wishing that Jesus would be there and take that ration of food and stretch it to feed the multitude.
- Or, you feel rejected by those around you, and want nothing more than that Jesus would approach you as he did the lonely and outcast Zacchaeus and say, *“Come, I want to come with you to your house and be your guest tonight” (Luke 19: 1-10)*.
- Maybe you feel depressed about your life, your family; feel unloved and unwanted and you crave the loving arm of Jesus to embrace you and to hear his soothing voice *“Come to me all you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest” (Mathew 11: 28)*.

Jesus responds to their anxious minds and troubled hearts and ours by saying, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me”

Here Jesus is calling his disciples and us back to the fundamental relationship of trust. As Sarah Henrich commented in her commentary of this passage “In the face of his negative prediction about Peter’s denial, almost as if such a betrayal does not matter, Jesus says, “Don’t worry. Trust God and trust me.”

Jesus is reassuring his disciples that he is not abandoning them. Rather, he is returning to his Father and their father, which is good news for them. There are many dwellings in His Father’s house, and he goes and prepare a place for them, so that they will be with him and dwell with him in intimate relationship with the Father (14: 2-3)

But, when he told them that they know the way to the place where he is going, Thomas took it quite literally. He wants direction, he wants a road map to which Jesus responds: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (14:6).

As Elizabeth Johnson commented in her commentary of this passage: “This statement by Jesus is a promise, a word of comfort to his disciples. Jesus himself is all they need; there is no need to panic, no need for a roadmap. Jesus adds, “If you know me (and you do) you will know the Father also.”

So that there can be no misunderstanding, Jesus adds, “From now on, you do know him and have seen him” (14:7)

The whole of Jesus’ mission is to make known the Father, to reveal to the whole world who God is. He is the one who has come from the bosom of the Father and is now returning

there. He is the full revelation of the person and character of God and we need to look no further than Jesus.

Jesus is our promise, our hope and our comfort in this unprecedented time of trouble. Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life.

In him we know our way, in him we proclaim his truth and in him we participate in his risen life. Amen.

Prayer of Intercession:

Ever living God, we give you thanks that you sent your Son to be our way, our truth and our life: in confidence we bring to you our prayers for all your people.

We pray for your world: for those who live in places of conflict and war; for those who suffer disease and illnesses.

We give thanks for health workers and peacemakers whose lives manifest your spirit of peace and healing.

We pray for your church. We thank you for those who risk their lives so that others may hear your good news, and for all who minister faithfully to your people.

We pray for our community: for our families, our friends and our parish family; we thank you for those whose lives shine with your spirit of forgiveness and love; for welfare agencies and for all who in their daily lives bring your love to others.

We pray for those in need: for those who know loneliness, anxiety or grief; for those who know pain and for all who face death. We thank you for those whose lives are filled with courage in the face of adversity and for those who bring your tenderness and consolation to others.

Ever living God, dwell in us, that in our living and at our dying we may proclaim your works.

In your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen.**

Blessing: 777 (TiS)

May the grace of Christ our Saviour,
and the Father's boundless love,
with the Holy Spirit's favour,
rest upon us from above.

Amen.