

Prayers for Peace in Eastertide

Introduction

At the Easter Vigil we welcomed the light of Christ.

On that night we acclaimed

'This is the night when Christ broke the prison-bars of death and rose victorious from the underworld. This is the night of which it is written: The night shall be as bright as dayThe sanctifying power of this night dispels wickedness, washes faults away, restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to mourners, drives out hatred, fosters concord and brings down the mighty. ...Christ your Son, coming back from death's domain, has shed his peaceful light on humanity.'

And throughout Eastertide especially we rejoice at Christ's resurrection, knowing that he has overcome death so as to heal and restore our troubled world. As we pray tonight for peace we do so in the confident knowledge of our Saviour's triumph.

After his Resurrection the scriptures record that Jesus appeared to his disciples a number of times. We listen now to the account of two of those appearances as described in John's gospel.

The first takes place on the day of the resurrection.

Reading In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them 'Peace be with you', and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' After saying this he breathed on them and said 'Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.'

Reflection Even though the doors of the upper room were bolted and shut, the Risen Lord pierced through all fear and united the hearts of the disciples with the gift of peace. Deep inner peace is the root and source of the peace and joy that the world cannot give. The Risen Lord calls us to seek peace always through a commitment to non-violent conflict resolution and he calls us to transform and reconcile the world, relationship by relationship.

Prayer God of perfect peace, violence and injustice can have no part of you. May those who are at peace with one another hold fast to the good will that unites them. May those who are enemies turn away from their hatred and be healed. We ask this through Christ Our Risen Lord. Amen.

The second appearance takes place on the shore of Tiberias after the miraculous catch of fishes which we heard about in last Sunday's gospel.

Reading Jesus said to them 'Come and have breakfast' He then stepped forward, took the bread and gave it to them, and the same with the fish After the meal Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others do?' He answered, 'Yes Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him 'Feed my lambs'. A second time Jesus said to him 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' He replied 'Yes Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him 'Look after my sheep'. Then Jesus said to him a third time 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was upset that he asked him the third time 'Do you love me?' and said 'Lord, you know everything, you know I love you'. Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep Follow me'

Reflection Jesus' words in these gospel accounts are addressed to us.....Feed my sheep, follow me. We must allow the risen Lord to change us and help us to reach out in prayer and in action, to those people and situations where peace and justice are damaged or absent.

Prayer Father, fill our hearts with the fire of your love and the desire to ensure justice and peace for our brothers and sisters. By sharing the good things you give us – including the talents you have endowed us with – may we work for justice and equality for every human being, an end to all division and a global community built on love and peace. Grant this through Christ Our Lord. Amen

As we reflect in silence for a few moments on Jesus' appearances after the resurrection and his commands to his disciples and to us, his Church, please come forward and light your candles and place them on the altar – acknowledging that Christ is our light.

Intercessions

O God, tender and just, help us to remember that you call us to live in harmony with each other, seeing

the joy of your creation in our sisters and brothers. **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer**

Holy God, God of all the ages, lead us from death to life, to the stockpiling of hope and possibilities and love, rather than the stockpiling of weapons, or stones to throw, or of hatred.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

Father we pray for the healing of the earth and its peoples – especially for our sisters and brothers trapped in violence in Syria, Iraq, the wider Middle East, the Ukraine, Afghanistan, Central America and so many other places. **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer**

Heavenly Father we pray for refugees that they may find places of safety and the means to rebuild their lives. **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer**

We pray for all who work for peace and justice; for all those who are not silent in the face of injustice and suffering; and for all who take risks for peace. May we be numbered among them.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

We pray for governments and international bodies. May they seek always for justice and peace, putting the common good first in all that they do. **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.**

We say together the prayer of St John Paul II

Hear my voice, for it is the voice of the victims of all wars and violence among individuals and nations.

Hear my voice, for it is the voice of all children who suffer and will suffer when people put their faith in weapons and war.

Hear my voice when I beg You to install into the hearts of all human beings the wisdom of peace, the strength of justice, and the joy of fellowship.

Hear my voice, for I speak for the multitudes in every country and in every period of history who do not want war and are ready to walk the road of peace.

Hear my voice and grant insight and strength so that we may always respond to hatred with love, to injustice with total dedication to justice, to need with the sharing of self, to war with peace.

O God, hear my voice and grant to the world Your everlasting peace. Amen.

Leader Let us say together the prayer which Jesus taught us. *Our Father*

Leader *We close with a blessing which we say together*

May God bless us with discomfort at easy answers and half-truths, so that we will live deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people, so that we will work for justice, equality and peace.

May God bless us with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that we will reach out our hands to comfort them and change their pain to joy.

And may God bless us with the foolishness to think that we can make a difference to the world and to act in that belief.

May the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen

April 2016

The next prayers for peace will be at 6.15pm on Friday 20th May