

Call to Worship

Today the risen Lord Jesus appears to his disciples. He calls them and us, to be Witnesses of the Good News.

Hymn StF 294 (Charles Wesley, 1707-1788)

All you that seek the Lord who died,
Your God for sinners crucified,
Now, now let all your grief be o'er!
Believe, and you shall weep no more.

The Lord of life is risen indeed,
To death delivered in your stead;
His rise proclaims your sins forgiven,
And shows the living way to heaven.

Haste then, you souls that first believe,
Who dare the gospel word receive,
Your faith with joyful hearts confess
Be bold, be Jesus' witnesses.

Go, tell the followers of your Lord
Their Jesus is to life restored;
He lives to quicken humankind
He lives that all his life may find

Old testament Reading: Psalm 4

The psalmist prays that God might be the ultimate point of focus and in so doing makes space for a stronger and more vibrant witness to the faith.

A Prayer of Confession.

Forgive us Lord that in our Joy and in our Sorrow, we do not always seek you out.

Forgive Us Lord that we often fail to make you our central focus.

Forgive Us Lord our many distractions which mar and distort our love of you and Love of our neighbours.

Forgive us Lord our hesitating witness.

The Lord in Mercy hears all our Prayers and through Christ we are forgiven Amen.

A Prayer of Adoration.

God of divine Love, Father son and Holy Spirit.

Help us all to grow in Resurrection Faith.

Help us to spread your Good news.

Help us to ever praise your Holy name for you are our Rock our Redeemer our Saviour and Lord.

Amen.

The Gospel Reading: Luke 24; 35-49 and Acts 3; 12-19

Sermon/Reflection

Today we celebrate the third Sunday of Easter which means we continue reflecting on the resurrection appearances of Jesus. We continue to dwell deeply upon the Good News at the heart of our Faith revealed to us in Scripture, in the liturgy of the Church, in Creeds, Hymns and Prayers and profoundly and personally in our living relationship with Christ.

We need this season of Easter to dwell deeply upon the resurrection appearances of Jesus. For Jesus is the Author of Life and the channel of God's healing and forgiving and reconciling love. We need this period of 50 days to let it sink in and every year let us hope it sinks in more deeply, in order that we, like the first disciples, may in turn, in the age and time in which we find ourselves, be "Witnesses to the Faith".

Luke, thought to be the writer of the third Gospel as well as the Acts of the Apostles, leaves us with a most beautiful, challenging and thought-provoking two-part history. Luke is a fine Witness and lays out his intention to give an orderly account in the opening verses of the Gospel that bears his name. (Luke 1 verses 1-4) In these verses Luke speaks of

“Eyewitnesses and Servants of the Word”. We cannot of course claim to be eyewitness, but we are all called to be servants of the Word.

When Jesus appears to the disciples in today’s Gospel reading, he gives them so many points of reference to aid their faith. I have counted seven, as a start.

1. He stood amongst them.
2. He pronounces Peace.
3. He showed them the evidence of his wounds.
4. He addressed their anxiety.
5. He eats.
6. He points to the prophets and the writers of the psalms emphasising he is the fulfilment of all Scripture.
7. He calls the disciples to action to be witness to his death and resurrection to all nations beginning in Jerusalem. In so doing suggests the Holy Spirit will clothe them to do this work.

Jesus is still calling us to do this same work. He still meets us in our day to day lives, with the promise of the Holy Spirit to aid and equip us. Jesus is still addressing our anxious thoughts and calls us forward to be bearers of the Good News.

When Peter addresses the crowd in Solomon’s Portico in Acts 3, he invites them all to turn to Jesus. He is able to speak with such confidence of the forgiving love of Christ because he has experienced it first-hand. His faith is expressed as truly authentic, he becomes a vibrant witness. He informs the crowd that although they had previously turned away from Jesus it was certainly not too late, right here and right now, to come to Jesus.

In these days of gradual emergence from Lockdown, what can we learn from our reading from Luke and our reading from Acts that will equip us to grow in confidence as faithful witnesses to the Good News?

Hymn StF 444 (Attributed to St. Richard of Chichester, c. 1197-1253)

Day by day, dear Lord,
Of thee three things I pray;
To see thee more clearly,

To love thee more dearly
To follow thee more nearly,
Day by day.

Prayers of Intercession;

We give thanks today for those who first shared with us the Good News of Jesus.

We give thanks today for all those who show the Love of God in Word and Deed.

Help us to grow in confidence and live out our faith authentically.

We pray today for neighbours near and far.

For the recently bereaved, for those at war or suffering from any form of abuse.

For the lost, the lonely and those who feel unbounded and rejected.

For all who suffer in Body, Mind or Spirit.

Great God, in Christ and by the Power of the Holy Spirit, equip us and the Church to ever be instruments for your Glory and Witnesses to the Good News. Amen. *Our Father ...*

Hymn StF 348 (Anonymous)

He is Lord, he is Lord;
He is risen from the dead, and he is Lord;
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess
That Jesus Christ is lord.

He is Love, he is love;
He has shown us by his life that he is love
All his people sing with one voice of joy
That Jesus Christ is love.

He is King, he is King;
He will draw all nations to him ,he is king;
And the time shall be when the world shall sing.
That Jesus Christ is king.

He is live, he is life;
He has died to set us free and he is life;
And he calls us to live evermore,
For Jesus Christ is life.

The Grace

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you this day and ever more. Amen.