

St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church
3976 Hendricks Avenue Jacksonville, FL



Holy Communion
Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 2, 2021



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Welcome to St. Mark's

We are happy that you are here today, whether it is your first visit as our guest or as a long-time member. Children are welcome in worship! You are welcome to sit near the front where your children can see all of the activity and more fully participate. We also have bulletins made especially for children.

Holy Communion

All who come seeking Jesus are welcome to the Lord's table. Communion is received in both kinds today. Please know that your portion of bread includes a drop of wine that has been prepared in advance. Further instructions are included at the appropriate spot in this bulletin. See our website for instructions if you plan to receive communion through the drive-up option.

Worship

"ELW" refers to "Evangelical Lutheran Worship" – the red hymnal in the pew racks. The assembly reads the parts of the liturgy in bold font.

Worship folder key: **P**=Pastor, **L**=Lector/Lay Reader, **A**=Assisting Minister, **All**=All,

Singing and speaking

Sotto voce is a musical term that literally translates as "under the voice." Choral directors use this term when we don't want our choirs to "over-sing" – often because a rehearsal is going to be very long, or we want them to conserve energy for more vocally demanding music to be sung later in the rehearsal.

During this time of pandemic, worshipers are requested to sing and speak *sotto voce*, and to wear a mask that covers their mouth and nose.

Inclusive language: Copyright laws prohibit us from printing any language in our hymns and liturgies other than what is in the original. Should you find that the words used for God, or for humans, are restrictive and hinder your worship, you are welcome to say/sing other appropriate words which you find more inclusive or expansive.

Our Facility

Restrooms are located in the gym. Signs point the way, but feel free to ask an usher for assistance.

This Sunday's image of how the risen Christ shares his life with us is the image of the vine. Christ the vine and we the branches are alive in each other, in the mystery of mutual abiding described in the gospel and the first letter of John. Baptism makes us a part of Christ's living and life-giving self and makes us alive with Christ's life. As the vine brings food to the branches, Christ feeds us at his table. We are sent out to bear fruit for the life of the world.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING VOLUNTARY

The assembly stands at the sound of the courtyard bell.

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P Alleluia! Christ is risen.

AD **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

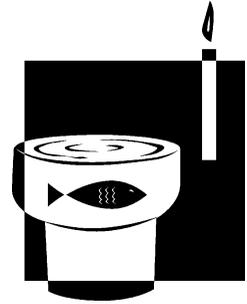
P Refreshed by the resurrection life we share in Christ,
let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Water may be poured into the font as the presiding minister gives thanks.

P We thank you, risen Christ,
for these waters where you make us new,
leading us from death to life, from tears to joy.
We bless you, risen Christ, that your Spirit comes to us
in the grace-filled waters of rebirth,
like rains to our thirsting earth,
like streams that revive our souls,
like cups of cool water shared with strangers.
Breathe your peace on your church when we hide in fear.
Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness.

(continued)

Send us companions on our journey as we share your life.
 Make us one, risen Christ.
 Cleanse our hearts.
 Shower us with life.
 To you be given all praise,
 with the Holy Spirit,
 in the glory of God,
 now and forever.



Amen.

The assembly is seated to sing the hymn.

GATHERING HYMN *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee* (ELW 836)



- 1 Joy - ful, joy - ful we a - dore thee, God of glo - ry, Lord of love!
- 2 All thy works with joy sur - round thee, earth and heav'n re - flect thy rays,
- 3 Thou art giv - ing and for - giv - ing, ev - er bless - ing, ev - er blest,



Hearts un - fold like flow'rs be - fore thee, prais - ing thee, their sun a - bove.
 stars and an - gels sing a - round thee, cen - ter of un - bro - ken praise.
 well - spring of the joy of liv - ing, o - cean - depth of hap - py rest!



Melt the clouds of sin and sad - ness, drive the gloom of doubt a - way.
 Field and for - est, vale and moun - tain, flow - 'ry mead - ow, flash - ing sea,
 Thou our Fa - ther, Christ our broth - er, all who live in love are thine;



Giv - er of im - mor - tal glad - ness, fill us with the light of day.
 chant - ing bird, and flow - ing foun - tain call us to re - joice in thee.
 teach us how to love each oth - er, lift us to the joy di - vine!

GREETING

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

A And also with you.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE

Refrain



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,



al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 1 Wor - thy is Christ, the Lamb



who was slain, whose blood set us free to be peo - ple of God.

Refrain



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,



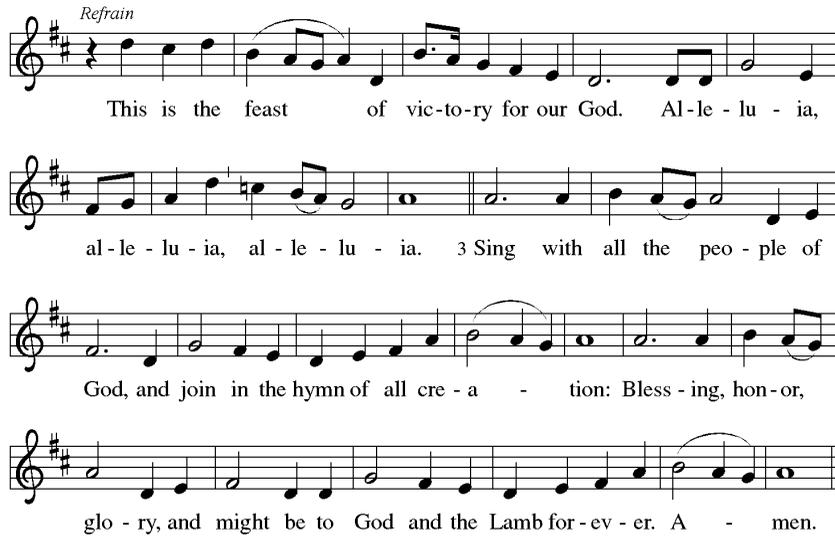
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 2 Pow - er, rich-es, wis - dom, and



strength, and hon - or, bless - ing, and glo - ry are his.

(continued)

Refrain



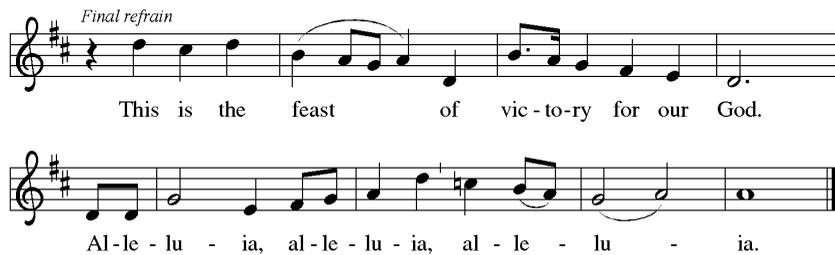
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 3 Sing with all the peo - ple of
God, and join in the hymn of all cre - a - tion: Bless - ing, hon - or,
glo - ry, and might be to God and the Lamb for - ev - er. A - men.

Refrain



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 4 For the Lamb who was
slain has be - gun his reign. Al - le - lu - ia.

Final refrain



This is the feast of vic - to - ry for our God.
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

☞ Let us pray.

O God, you give us your Son as the vine apart from whom we cannot live. Nourish our life in his resurrection, that we may bear the fruit of love and know the fullness of your joy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

☞ **Amen.**

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Acts 8:26-40

Led by the Spirit, Philip encounters an Ethiopian official who is returning to his African home after having been to Jerusalem to worship. Philip uses their encounter to proclaim the gospel to him. Upon coming to faith in Jesus, he is baptized by Philip.

☞ A reading from Acts.

²⁶An angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a wilderness road.) ²⁷So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.” ³⁰So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³²Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.

³³In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.”

(continued)

³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” ³⁸He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Word of God, word of life.

🎵 Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 22:25-31

The assembly sings the refrain. A cantor sings the stanzas.



- ²⁵From you comes my praise in the great assembly;
I will perform my vows in the sight of those who fear the LORD.
- ²⁶The poor shall eat and be satisfied,
Let those who seek the LORD give praise! May your hearts live forever!
- ²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD;
all the families of nations shall bow before God.
- ²⁸For dominion belongs to the LORD,
who rules over the nations. **R**
- ²⁹Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow down in worship;
all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel before the LORD.
- ³⁰Their descendants shall serve the LORD,
whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.
- ³¹They shall proclaim God’s deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying to them, “The LORD has acted!” **R**

SECOND READING: 1 John 4:7-21

We love God and others because God first loved us. We cannot say we love God, whom we have not seen, while hating fellow Christians, whom we regularly see. Love toward God is to be matched by love toward others because the essence of God is love.

📖 A reading from First John.

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. ¹⁵God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. ¹⁷Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. ¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. ²¹The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

Word of God, word of life.

🙏 **Thanks be to God.**



The assembly remains seated to sing the gospel acclamation.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

AD

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the

words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

The assembly stands for the reading.

GOSPEL: John 15:1-8

On the night of his arrest, Jesus taught his disciples about the relationship they would have with him. Those who abide in his word and love bear fruit, for apart from him, they can do nothing.

P The holy gospel according to John.

AD **Glory to you, O Lord!**

P [Jesus said:] ¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. ²He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.”

After the reading:

P The gospel of the Lord.

AD **Praise to you, O Christ!**

The assembly is seated.

SERMON

Pastor Daniel Locke

*Silence for reflection follows the sermon.**The assembly remains seated, singing sotto voce.***HYMN OF THE DAY *Like the Murmur of the Dove's Song (ELW 403)***

1 Like the mur - mur of the dove's song, like the chal - lenge of her
 2 To the mem - bers of Christ's bod - y, to the branch - es of the
 3 With the heal - ing of di - vi - sion, with the cease - less voice of



flight, like the vig - or of the wind's rush, like the
 vine, to the church in faith as - sem - bled, to our
 prayer, with the pow'r to love and wit - ness, with the



new flame's ea - ger might: come, Ho - ly Spir - it, come.
 midst as gift and sign: come, Ho - ly Spir - it, come.
 peace be - yond com - pare: come, Ho - ly Spir - it, come.

Text: Carl P. Daw Jr., b. 1944

Music: BRIDEGROOM, Peter Cutts, b. 1937

Text © 1982 Hope Publishing Company.

Music © 1969 Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved. Used by permission.



CREED

A With all members of Christ's body, let us proclaim what we believe:

A We believe in one God,
 the Father, the Almighty,
 maker of heaven and earth,
 of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
 the only Son of God,
 eternally begotten of the Father,
 God from God, Light from Light,
 true God from true God,
 begotten, not made,
 of one Being with the Father;
 through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
 he came down from heaven,
 was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
 and became truly human.
 For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
 he suffered death and was buried.
 On the third day he rose again
 in accordance with the scriptures;
 he ascended into heaven
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
 He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
 and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
 who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
 who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
 who has spoken through the prophets.
 We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
 We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
 We look for the resurrection of the dead,
 and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

A Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

The assembly kneels or is seated. A brief silence is kept.

P God of all fruitfulness, you abide in your church and your church abides in you. Cleanse us by your word and give yourself to the whole church on earth so that it bears fruit and witnesses to your love. Hear us, O God.

AD **Your mercy is great.**

P You have created the heavens and the earth. As we wonder at the beauty of your creation and our place in it, may we seek vital connections among creatures who depend on the earth for life. Hear us, O God.

AD **Your mercy is great.**

P You rule the nations with justice and love. Give the leaders of the earth assurance of your abiding presence, that they lead not by fear but with love for those they are called to serve. Hear us, O God.

AD **Your mercy is great.**

P You love us so that we can love others. We pray for all in need of your love: those who are poor, lowly, outcast, weak, or fearful. Provide for the needs of all especially. . . and those we name aloud or in our hearts. <<pause>> Hear us, O God.

AD **Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A You call St. Mark's to provide a safe, Christian-based education to children in our community. Bless the students, staff, and board of St. Mark's Ark so that the children entrusted to our care may grow in wisdom and strength to follow the example of Jesus. Hear us, O God.

AD **Your mercy is great.**

P You gather us with all the saints by the power of your Spirit, especially with Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria. With them, may our hearts live forever in your keeping. Hear us, O God.

AD **Your mercy is great.**

☞ In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AD Amen.

The assembly may stand.

PEACE

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other in the peace of the risen Christ.

☞ The peace of Christ be with you always.

AD And also with you.

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace, and may say, "Peace be with you," or similar words. Please refrain from shaking hands and hugging.

The assembly is seated.

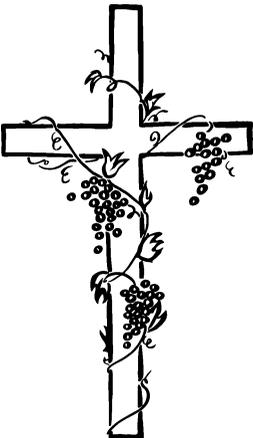
MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

OFFERING *An offering plate is located at the baptismal font. Tithes and offerings may be placed there before and after the service.*

MUSICAL OFFERING *I Am the Vine*

Allen Pote



I am the vine and you are the branches, abide in me and I will abide in you. Then you will bear much fruit for without me you can do nothing, Abide in me and I will abide in you.

I am the vine. . .

As the Father has loved me, so I love you. Go then and love one another. Keep this commandment, for no greater love have you, than to lay down your life for your friends.

I am the vine and you are the branches, abide in me and I will abide in you.

I am the vine, You are the branches, Go then and bear much fruit. Go abide in my love.

based on John 15:5-13

OFFERING HYMN**A**

Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be



fed with the bread of life. Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u -



nite them with the prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your



pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

Text: John W. Arthur, 1922-1980

Music: Richard W. Hillert, b. 1923

Text and music © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

The assembly stands at the direction of the assisting minister.

OFFERING PRAYER

A Let us pray.

God of love,

you call us beloved children and welcome us to your table.

Receive our lives and the gifts we offer.

Abide with us and send us in service to a suffering world;

for the sake of your beloved Child, Jesus Christ.

A Amen.

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

☐ It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, for the glorious resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ, the true Paschal Lamb who gave himself to take away our sin; who in dying has destroyed death, and in rising has brought us to eternal life. And so, with Mary Magdalene and Peter and all the witnesses of the resurrection, with earth and sea and all their creatures, and with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY





 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,



 heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -



 san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who

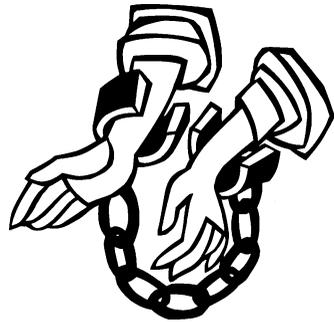


 comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

P O God most mighty,
 O God most merciful,
 O God our rock and our salvation,
 hear us as we praise,
 call us to your table,
 grant us your life.

When the earth was a formless void,
 you formed order and beauty.
 When Abraham and Sarah were barren,
 you sent them a child;
 When the Israelites were enslaved,
 you led them to freedom.
 Ruth faced starvation, David fought Goliath,
 and the psalmists cried out for healing,
 and full of compassion, you granted the people your life.



You entered our sorrows in Jesus our brother.
 He was born among the poor,
 he lived under oppression,
 he wept over the city.
 With infinite love, he granted the people your life.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
 our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
 broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
 Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup,
 gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:
 This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
 shed for you and for all people
 for the forgiveness of sin.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.



- ☐ Remembering his death, we cry out Amen. **🕯 Amen.**
- ☐ Celebrating his resurrection, we shout Amen. **🕯 Amen.**
- ☐ Trusting his presence in every time and place, we plead Amen. **🕯 Amen.**

- ☐ O God, you are Breath: send your Spirit on this meal.
- ☐ O God, you are Bread: feed us with yourself.
- ☐ O God, you are wine: warm our hearts and make us one.
- ☐ O God, you are Fire: transform us with hope.

O God most majestic, O God most motherly,
 O God our strength and our song,
 you show us a vision of a tree of life
 with fruits for all and leaves that heal the nations.
 Grant us such life,
 the life of the Father to the Son,
 the life of the Spirit of our risen Savior,
 life in you, now and forever.

🕯 Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

A Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

AD **Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those**

**who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

The assembly is seated.

An usher will direct all those seated on the choir side of the nave first, followed by those seated on the pulpit side. Please observe proper social distancing as you approach the presiding minister. Take a package of bread (do not open it until you are seated) and return to your seat by the outside aisle. We will consume the elements together.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P The risen Christ invites us to this table.
Come, eat and be satisfied.

MUSIC DURING COMMUNION

When all are seated

P The body of Christ, given for you.

AD **Amen.**

A The blood of Christ, shed for you.

AD **Amen.**

All consume the communion elements at the same time.

The assembly sings as the table is cleared.

CANTICLE AFTER COMMUNION



Thank-ful hearts and voic - es raise; tell ev-'ry-one what God has done.



Let all who seek the Lord re - joice and bear Christ's ho - ly name.



Send us with your prom - is - es and lead your peo - ple forth in joy with



shouts of thanks - giv - ing. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

Text: John W. Arthur, 1922-1980
 Music: Richard W. Hillert, b. 1923
 Text and music © 1978, 1995 Augsburg Fortress.

The assembly stands at the direction of the assisting minister.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A Let us pray.

Life-giving God, in the mystery of Christ's resurrection you send light to conquer darkness, water to give new life, and the bread of life to nourish your people. Send us forth as witnesses to your Son's resurrection, that we may show your glory to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.

A Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING

☩ May our glorious God grant you a spirit of wisdom to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus. The God of life, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **AM** Amen.

The assembly is seated for the sending hymn. After the final stanza has been sung, the assembly stands for the procession and dismissal.

SENDING HYMN *Awake, O Sleeper, Rise from Death (ELW 452)*



1. A - wake, O sleep - er, rise from death, and Christ will give you light;
 2. To us on earth he came to bring from sin and fear re - lease,
 3. There is one bod - y and one hope, one Spir - it and one call,
 4. Then walk in love as Christ has loved, who died that he might save;
 5. For us Christ lived, for us he died, and con - quered in the strife.



so learn his love, its length and breadth, its full - ness, depth, and height.
 to give the Spir - it's u - ni - ty, the ver - y bond of peace.
 one Lord, on faith, and one bap - tism, one God who made us all.
 with kind and gen - tle hearts for - give as God in Christ for - gave.
 A - wake, a - rise, go forth in faith, and Christ shall give you life.

F. Bland Tucker (1895-1984)
 William Croft (1678-1727)

ST. ANNE

DISMISSAL

☞ Alleluia! Christ is risen.

☞ **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

☞ Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!

☞ **Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

CLOSING VOLUNTARY

As you depart, please be mindful of social distancing. Greet each other with waves and gently spoken words. Take your bulletin and bread wrapper with you and dispose of them at home. (Recycling your bulletin is encouraged!) Social conversation may take place on the church's front lawn or in the courtyard, but please don't block the entrances!

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VOLUNTARIES

Joyous Spirit © 1999 AGEHR – Handbell Musicians of America

Thee We Adore, O Blessed Savior © 1956 Concordia Publishing House

Oh, That I Had a Thousand Voices ©2005 Concordia Publishing House

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HYMNS

I Know That My Redeemer Lives Text by Samuel Medley (1739-1799), Music *Duke Street* attr. John Hatton. Introduction and alternate accompaniment by Gerhard Krapf © 1979 Augsburg Publishing House.
Lord Who the Night You Were Betrayed Introduction and alternate accompaniment by Chad Baker © 2008 Augsburg Fortress.

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UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, died 373

Sunday, May 2, 2021

Best remembered for defending the teaching that Christ was fully God against those who taught otherwise, Athanasius was an influential church leader around the time of the Council of Nicea. He was banished from Alexandria five times for his forthright views.

Monica, mother of Augustine, died 387

Tuesday, May 4, 2021

Monica was married to a pagan husband who was ill-tempered and unfaithful, but whom she helped bring into the Christian faith. She repeated the influence on her son Augustine, who went on to become one of the greatest church teachers.

Julian of Norwich, renewer of the church, died around 1416

Saturday, May 8, 2021

When she was about thirty years old, Julian (or Juliana) reported visions that she later compiled into a book, *Sixteen Revelations of Divine Love*, now a classic of medieval mysticism. The visions declared that love was the meaning of religious experience, provided by Christ who is love, for the purpose of love.

Victor the Moor, martyr, died 303 (TFF)

Saturday, May 8, 2021

Also known as Victor Maurus, this native of the northwest African nation of Mauritania was a soldier in the Roman Praetorian Guard. Under the persecution of Maximian, Victor died for his faith at Milan.



GOSPEL MESSAGE**May 2, 2021****FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER****We Are the Branches**

To encourage flowering and fruit production in vines, trees, and shrubs, most of us know that pruning is necessary. This isn't the easiest of work, nor does it make the pruned plant look all that great for a while afterward. Yet often what results after pruning is a plant that is more abundant, beautiful, and healthy than it would have been otherwise.

In our reading today, Jesus makes it very clear that he is the vine, his Father is the vine grower, and we, his disciples, are the branches on which fruit grows. Without the vine and the vine grower, the branches do not exist. Yet, often in our spiritual lives it seems as though we get these roles mixed up. We are wooed by the sense of accomplishment and value that comes from producing results of one kind or another, and we fail to acknowledge the source that makes that "fruit" possible.

However, in today's gospel, Jesus reminds us that our job isn't to produce results; it's to stay connected. "Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing," Jesus says (John 15:5). Jesus is our source and strength; it is only by our connection to Jesus the vine that we the branches bear fruit that will last, such as love, compassion, forgiveness, hope, service, kindness, and patience.

To grow this kind of fruit, Jesus relates how necessary it is for us to be pruned occasionally. In other words, those things that are not of God in our lives have to be rooted out from time to time. The process of pruning isn't always the most enjoyable and can even include a good deal of pain, but it leads to lives that are whole and abundant. As we abide in Jesus, we are given the strength we need to endure the pruning process. We also experience the peace that comes from knowing that the fruit that will follow is for the glory of God.

Rev. Daniel Locke, Pastor
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