

Undoubtedly we have spent much of the past week doing things others have asked us to do. Hopefully we have spent part of the past week also doing the things God asks of us, though they may overlap quite a bit with the rest. Here and now, however, we dedicate this time to God. Let us reflect on all the gifts God has given us and lift our hearts and voices in thanksgiving and praise.

As we gather together let us begin our service by professing what we believe.

Profession of Faith: p. 108

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (bow as we say) and by the Holy Spirit he was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day 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. I 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 adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Introductory Rite:

Greeting:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God forever. **Blessed be God forever.**

Penitential Rite:

My brothers and sisters, to prepare ourselves for this celebration, let us call to mind our sins.

Lord Jesus, you sustain us with the word of life: Lord have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, your word is salvation for all who look to you in hope: Christ have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, your word is justice for all who hunger and thirst for righteousness: Lord have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Opening Prayer:

Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Liturgy of the Word:

First Reading p. 72

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

Thus says the LORD to his anointed, Cyrus, whose right hand I grasp, subduing nations before him, and making kings run in his service, opening doors before him and leaving the gates unbarred: For the sake of Jacob, my servant, of Israel, my chosen one, I have called you by your name, giving you a title, though you knew me not. I

am the LORD and there is no other, there is no God besides me. It is I who arm you, though you know me not, so that toward the rising and the setting of the sun people may know that there is none besides me. I am the LORD, there is no other.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Responsorial Psalm: p. 72

Psalm 96:1, 3, 4-5, 7-8, 9-10

R/. Give the Lord glory and honor.

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Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD all you lands. Tell his glory among the nations; among all peoples, his wondrous deeds. **R/.**

For great is the LORD and highly to be praised; awesome is he, beyond all gods. For all the gods of the nations are things of nought, but the LORD made the heavens. **R/.**

Give to the LORD, you families of nations, give to the LORD glory and praise; give to the LORD the glory due his name! Bring gifts, and enter his courts. **R/.**

Worship the LORD, in holy attire; tremble before him, all the earth; say among the nations: The LORD is king, he governs the peoples with equity. **R/.**

Second Reading p. 74

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians

Thessalonians 1:1-5b

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace. We give thanks to God always for all of you, remembering you in our prayers, unceasingly calling to mind your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father, knowing, brothers and sisters loved by God, how you were chosen. For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with much conviction.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel p. 74

Matthew 22:15-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Glory to you, Lord

The Pharisees went off and plotted how they might entrap Jesus in speech. They sent their disciples to him, with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are not concerned with anyone's opinion, for you do not regard a person's status. Tell us, then, what is your opinion: Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?" Knowing their malice, Jesus said, "Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? Show me the coin that pays the census tax." Then they handed him the Roman coin. He said to them, "Whose image is this and whose inscription?" They replied, "Caesar's." At that he said to them, "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection on the Word:

“The enemy of my enemy is my friend,” goes the well-known saying. The Jewish people would certainly agree in the case of Cyrus the Great. When the Babylonians conquered Judah, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple and drove the Jewish people into exile. When the Persian army defeated the Babylonian army in 539 BC, Cyrus was seen as a savior. Cyrus was able to build an empire because he respected the traditions and customs of the defeated peoples, including their religious practices. Therefore, he allowed the Jewish people to return to Jerusalem and worship freely. The freedom Cyrus allowed his subjects became a model for leaders and governments for millennia. The Jewish people at that time did not have the power to defeat their oppressors, so they needed the strength of their enemy’s enemy. Believing God to be behind all things, they concluded that Cyril’s power—and benevolence—must come from God.

Scripture scholars tell us that Paul’s First Letter to the Thessalonians was probably written earlier than any other book of the New Testament, just twenty years after Jesus’ death and resurrection. Today we hear its initial verses. In the very first verse Paul refers to that community as a church. It is a forerunner of what has become the Church, a Christian community of thousands of dioceses, hundreds of thousands of parishes, and over a billion people.

“Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God,” was a wise response by Jesus to the Pharisees who sought to entrap him (Matthew 22:21). It also provides a wise perspective to us today. What belongs to our Caesars? For that matter, what belongs to us? We are all just temporary caretakers of all that we have. In the entire history of humankind, we occupy a relatively infinitesimal amount of time and space. All that we own, all that we earn, all that we have, is just rented to us. We surrender it all when we die. So what belongs to God? All comes from God and all goes to God, so ultimately all things belong to God.

Question of the Week: When I am reminded that everything is a gift from God, how do I respond? Do I fudge on what belongs to God as many fudge on what they owe to Caesar?

Prayer of the Faithful:

Saint Paul reminds us that we are loved by God and chosen in Christ from before we were born, and so we have the confidence to place our needs and prayers before God, from whom we receive all that is good.

- For the Church, that we may continue to recognize God’s work in the world today and point to God as the ultimate source of all that we have, let us pray to the Lord.
- For our elected leaders, that they may be ever cognizant of the privilege they have to hold their positions of power and that they exercise that privilege for the benefit of all whom they serve, let us pray to the Lord.
- For missionaries around the world, that their efforts may yield an abundant harvest as they bear witness to God’s love and mercy, let us pray to the Lord.
- For vulnerable children and teens, especially young women, who suffer abuse, exploitation, or worse, that they may receive help and hope in the darkness, let us pray to the Lord.
- That we may grow in appreciation for all that we have as we repay to God what belongs to God, let us pray to the Lord.
- For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord.

O God of abundance, all that we have can be traced back to you and is only ours for the length of our lives. Grant us the grace to appreciate this and increase our willingness to share your blessings with those in need, through Christ our Lord.

Communion Rite

The Lord’s Prayer: Page 140

Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us.

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.

Rite of Peace:

The sign of peace outwardly expresses a deep spiritual reality; through this sign we acknowledge Christ's presence in each other and share the peace we have received from Him. Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Communion:

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

The body of Christ. **Amen.**

Prayer after Communion:

Grant, O Lord, we pray, that, benefiting from participation in heavenly things, we may be helped by what you give in this present age and prepared for the gifts eternal.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Concluding Rite:

Final Blessing:

May the Lord bless us,  protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Go in the peace of Christ! **Thanks be to God.**