



By the waters of Babylon...

A common liturgy during a time of physical separation

May 10, 2020 – Easter 5

Call to Worship

Who or what are you here to worship?
Is it the church... with its fellowship and foibles
 its choirs and those who cannot sing?
Is it the pastor who preaches,
The Deacon who pastors,
The Elders who measure what is good and right to do?
Or do you come to worship your Rock and your Redeemer –
The very stone the builders rejected?

Let us be clear. Let us worship our God.

Confession

Holy One, we gather in different places and yet together we realize we don't often act as your children should. We ignore the cries of the downtrodden and the poor. We minimize the concerns of those who ache in body and soul. We ignore your claim on our lives. Forgive us. Remind us that we are yours. Reclaim us. (silent prayer) Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Nothing. Not a virus. Not even ourselves.
Friends, believe the good news of the Gospel, in Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

Prayer for Illumination

Open our eyes that we may see and know your Word. Illumine us.

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1-10 (The Message)

2 ¹⁻³ So clean house! Make a clean sweep of malice and pretense, envy and hurtful talk. You've had a taste of God. Now, like infants at the breast, drink deep of God's pure kindness. Then you'll grow up mature and whole in God.

⁴⁻⁸ Welcome to the living Stone, the source of life. The workmen took one look and threw it out; God set it in the place of honor. Present yourselves as building stones for the construction of a sanctuary vibrant with life, in which you'll serve as holy priests offering Christ-approved lives up to God. The Scriptures provide precedent:

Look! I'm setting a stone in Zion,
a cornerstone in the place of honor.
Whoever trusts in this stone as a foundation
will never have cause to regret it.

To you who trust him, he's a Stone to be proud of, but to those who refuse to trust him,

The stone the workmen threw out
is now the chief foundation stone.
For the untrusting it's
... a stone to trip over,
a boulder blocking the way.

They trip and fall because they refuse to obey, just as predicted.

⁹⁻¹⁰ But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.

Reflection

Write in your own words what you hear the writer saying:

Welcome to the living Stone, the source of life. The workmen took one look and threw it out; God set it in the place of honor. Present yourselves as building stones for the construction of a sanctuary vibrant with life, in which you'll serve as holy priests offering Christ-approved lives up to God

What does it mean to "present yourself as building stones"? How have you done that in your life? How might you do that now?

If you are able to go outside for a walk... see if you can find a rock (or let a rock find you!). Then, with the rock in hand, read the text again. Don't worry about understanding the text, simply hold on to the rock and being that rock, play with the words and see where they take you

Illustration – from "The God Who Comes", by Carlo Carretto

How baffling you are, oh Church,
and yet how I love you!

How you have made me suffer,
and yet how much I owe you!

I would like to see you destroyed,
and yet I need your presence.

You have given me so much scandal
and yet you have made me understand what sanctity is.

I have seen nothing in the world
more devoted to obscurity, more compromised, more false,
and yet I have touched nothing
more pure, more generous, more beautiful.
How often I have wanted to shut the doors of my soul in your face,
and how often I have prayed to die in the safety of your arms.

No, I cannot free myself from you,
because I am you, though not completely.
And besides, where would I go?

Would I establish another?

I would not be able to establish it without the same faults,
for they are the same faults I carry in me.
And if I did establish another,
it would be my Church, not the Church of Christ.
And I am old enough to know
that I am no better than anyone else.

Offering

Present yourself as building stones.
What gifts do you bring that help to build a sanctuary that is vibrant with life?

Prayers of the People

This week, as you pray for those whom you know, pray too for those on the frontlines of this current crisis. Pray for communities around the world as we seek to find solutions to the virus, as well as the economic fallout.

Benediction

We walk by faith.
We walk with each other.
May we know that we also walk with our God – that same God who created us, redeemed us and sustains us.

Source material for this liturgy comes from *The Bible Workbench*, Vol 6, Issue 4 and Carlo Carretto, *The God Who Comes*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd 1981)

This resource has been developed for the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse for use by members and friends of its congregations.