

Liturgy
The Fourth Sunday in Lent
Year B

GATHERING

We arise today

**Through a mighty strength,
the invocation of the Trinity,
Though the belief in the threeness,
Through confession of the oneness
Of the Creator of Creation.***

O give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
For His steadfast love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
those He has redeemed from trouble and gathered to Himself.

**Give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
for His wonderful works to the children of men.**

Let us offer sacrifices of thanksgiving,
and tell of His deeds with songs of joy!

– from Psalm 107:1-3, 21-22

*From the *Lorica* of St. Patrick
(St. Patrick's Breast-Plate; 5th C.)

Come Thou, Almighty King (doxology)

To Thee, great One in Three,
Eternal praises be.
Hence evermore: Thy sov'reign majesty
May we in glory see;
And to eternity love and adore.

Setting: Ellen Koehler Copyright ©2013 Ellen Koehler. All Rights Reserved.
Text: Anonymous. Hymn tune: ITALIAN HYMN, Felice de Giardini, 1769.

Sing to the Lord

Eternal, Immortal God of all glory,
Fearful in wonders and worthy of praise;
The Alpha, Omega, Lord God Almighty,
Wonderful, Beautiful, Ancient of Days.

Chorus

And I sing praise, I give You my heart,
I sing praise, I give You my all, I sing praise –
Sing to the Lord.

Redeemer, Messiah, Rock of the ages,
A help in trouble, a tower of strength;
Emmanuel, Jehovah, God of Creation,
Wonderful, Beautiful, King of all kings.

Bridge

God of compassion and God of all gladness and
Your tender mercies are new every morning, and
God of compassion and God of all gladness and
You dance around me, You dance around me.

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*LECTIONARY for the fourth Sunday
in Lent, Year B:*

*Numbers 21:4-9
Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22
Ephesians 2:1-10
John 3:14-21*

The fourth Sunday in Lent traditionally is devoted to the theme of Healing and Conversion. In much the same way as the season of Advent, this mid-season Sunday brings a lighter note to our observance of the season. The color, as with the third Sunday of Advent, is changed from purple to rose, and we focus on the joy of the healing and restorative power of Christ. In Year B, the lectionary directs our focus to the narrative of God's miraculous provision for healing of His wandering people. You remember the story: the children of Israel, impatient with God's leading and bored with His daily gift of manna, grumbled at their plight in the desert. As a consequence, God sent poisonous serpents into the camp, and many died. After their repentance and Moses' prayer, the LORD instructed him to make a bronze serpent and place it on a pole in the midst of the camp. Those who looked up to it, lived. In John's gospel, Jesus refers to that incident, and the necessity of humbled faith, saying that in the same way "the Son of Man must be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son ..." The Psalm text declares God's healing and delivering power, and the Ephesians passage completes this intricate intertextual dialogue by elaborating on the saving work of Christ on the cross.

In most years B, Lent 4 falls close to Saint Patrick's day, which gives us a wonderful opportunity to build a liturgy around an ancient text that may be familiar to some, but most likely is not well-known in its entirety. Patrick was a fifth-century missionary and bishop in Ireland, known now as Ireland's patron saint, and according to legend he rid the isle of snakes.

Note: *the legend is not the reason for*

INVOCATION

Prayers of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving for God's presence

Christ Be Beside Me

Christ be beside me, Christ be before me,
Christ be behind me, King of my heart.
Christ be within me, Christ be below me,
Christ be above me, never to part.

Christ on my right hand, Christ on my left hand,
Christ all around me, shield in the strife.
Christ in my sleeping, Christ in my sitting,
Christ in my rising, light of my heart.

Christ be in all hearts, thinking about me,
Christ be on all tongues, telling of me.
Christ be the vision in eyes that see me,
In ears that hear me Christ ever be.

Text: *St. Patrick's Breastplate*; adapt. by James Quinn.
Hymn tune: BUNESSAN; Public Domain.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I bind unto myself today, forever, by the power of faith –

Through the strength of Christ's birth with His baptism,
Through the strength of His crucifixion with His burial,
Through the strength of His resurrection with His ascension,
Through the strength of His descent for the judgment of Doom.

I bind unto myself today –

The power of God to hold and lead
His eye to watch, His might to stay,
His ear to hearken to my need,
The wisdom of my God to teach,
His hand to guide, His shield to ward;
The Word of God to give me speech,
His heavenly host to be my guard.

I bind to me these holy powers –

Against the demon snares of sin,
The vice that gives temptation force,
The natural lusts that war within,
The hostile foes that mar my course.
Against all Satan's spells and wiles,
Against false words of heresy,
Against the knowledge that defiles,
Against the heart's idolatry.

I bind unto myself the name,

**The strong name of the Trinity,
By invocation of the same,
The Three in One and One in Three.**

**By whom all nature hath creation,
Eternal Father, Spirit, Word:**

**Praise to the Lord of my salvation,
Salvation is of Christ the Lord.**

– Adapted from the *Lorica* of St. Patrick,
and from the hymn, *St. Patrick's Breastplate*
metered text: Cecil F. Alexander (1889)

weaving "Saint Patrick's Breastplate" through the service (though it's an interesting coincidence, we admit). His prayer, written in the traditional Irish poem type known as a lorica, is a strong statement of faith in the triune God, a confident declaration in His power to save, and an entreaty for continued protection. It speaks naturally to the lections of this Sunday, and powerfully underscores theme of healing, deliverance and conversion.

An alternative suggestion for a Gathering or Invocation hymn is Praise to the Lord, the Almighty: "O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!" He shelters His people under His wings, prospers and defends them, and over all things wondrously reigns.

Here's a link:

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/sheetmusic/praise-lord-almighty>

The invocation hymn, a sung prayer, is adapted from the final stanza of Saint Patrick's Breastplate.

Another suggestion—a newer setting of this traditional prayer—is Christ Be With Me (St. Patrick's Prayer), (CCLI Song #7118915 ©2018 Townend Songs. Emma Townend, Joseph Townend, Stuart Townend).

The Profession of Faith is set for two readers or groups, with the whole congregation reading the bold text.

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

Call to Confession

Reading: John 3:14-21

Most merciful God, You have loved us with a love beyond our understanding.
You have set us on paths of righteousness for Your name's sake.

Yet too often we have strayed from Your way.

[Silence]

In thought, word, and deed we have hurt others and dishonored Your name.

[Silence]

We often betray Your love, yet still You extend it.

[Silence]

We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. In Your great mercy, forgive us – not because we are worthy but for the sake of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us – that we may walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your Name. Amen.

O Love That Will Not Let Me Go

O Love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee.
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

O cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee.
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

Text: George Matheson, 1882.

Hymn tune: ST. MARGARET [PEACE], Albert I Peace, 1884.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God, who is rich in mercy,
out of the great love with which He loved us
even when we were dead through our trespasses,
made us alive together with Christ –
by grace you have been saved –
and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him
in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

– Ephesians 2: 4-6

O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;
for His steadfast love endures forever!

– Psalm 107:1

Thanks be to God!

The prayer of confession is adapted from Reformed Worship, a quarterly journal of resources for planning and leading worship. CRC Publications, #34, December 1994. (Resources are declared to be in the public domain.)

URL: <http://www.reformedworship.org/article/december-1994/genuine-sorrowwholehearted-joy-why-when-and-how-confession>

The song of confession is a clear, lovely reference to the gospel text.

Ellen has written a gentle and contemplative arrangement of this hymn for piano and voice. It is available on request, Write to us at: clerestorynotes@gmail.com

TIME OF OFFERING

Words and prayers of thanksgiving and devotion

O the Deep Deep Love of Jesus

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free;
Rolling as a mighty ocean
In its fullness over me.
Underneath me, all around me,
Is the current of Thy love;
Leading onward, leading homeward
To my glorious rest above.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus –
Spread His praise from shore to shore!
How He loveth, ever loveth,
Changeth never, nevermore.
How He watches o'er His loved ones,
Died to call them all His own.
How for them He intercedeth,
Watcheth o'er them from the throne.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
Love of every love the best!
'Tis an ocean vast of blessing,
'Tis a haven sweet of rest.
O the deep, deep love of Jesus,
'Tis a heav'n of heav'ns to me;
And it lifts me up to glory,
For it lifts me up to Thee.
And it lifts me up to glory,
For it lifts me up to Thee.

Setting Ellen Koehler ©2008 Text: Samuel Trevor Francis, 1875.
Hymn tune: Thomas J. Williams, EBENEZER, 1890.

THE WORD

Numbers 21:4-9
Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22
Ephesians 2:1-10
John 3:14-21

THE TABLE

Remembering the Body of Christ

The Lord be with you!
And also with you!
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again!

An alternative, or additional (and obvious), hymn choice for this Sunday is Be Thou My Vision. The text of this much-loved hymn is customarily attributed to a sixth-century Irish poet who wrote the poem to commemorate the courage and actions of St. Patrick. See the commentary in the Music Room:

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/sheetmusic/be-thou-my-vision>

Music for this setting of O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus, a somewhat jazz-inspired arrangement of the traditional hymn, is available by request.

*You may email us at:
clerestorynotes@gmail.com.*

Our Father in Heaven (sung)

Our Father in heaven,
Your name is holy,
Your name is holy, our Father.
Your kingdom come,
And Your will be done
Here on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us, we pray,
Our bread for today,
Our debts forgive
And in turn we will live,
Forgiving of what others owe.
Keep us from trials;
Save us from our ancient foe!

As we sing the kingdom,
We sing the power,
We sing the glory be Yours –
Forever. Amen. Amen. Amen!

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My Faith Looks Up to Thee

My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine.
Now hear me while I pray;
Take all my guilt away;
O, let me from this day
Be wholly Thine.

May Thy rich grace impart
Strength to my fainting heart;
My zeal inspire.
As Thou hast died for me,
O may my love to Thee,
Pure, warm and changeless be,
A living fire.

While life's dark maze I tread,
And griefs around me spread,
Be Thou my Guide;
Be Thou my guide....
Bid darkness turn to day,
Wipe sorrow's tears away,
Nor let me ever stray
From Thee aside.

Setting: Ellen Koehler. Copyright ©2010 Ellen Koehler. All Rights Reserved.
Text: Ray Palmer, 1830. Hymn tune: OLIVET (MASON), Lowell Mason, 1830

SENDING FORTH
The Life of the Body

Music for this setting of the Lord's Prayer, Our Father in Heaven, is available in the sheet music catalog as a lead sheet, and as a solo/melody line with piano accompaniment on request.

Here's the link:

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/sheetmusic/our-father-heaven>

Music for Ellen's setting of My Faith Looks Up to Thee is available by request. The arrangement follows the faith journey reflected in the prayer through modulations of key both between and within the verses.

You may email us at:

clerestorynotes@gmail.com.

Lift High the Cross

Refrain:

Lift High the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim,
Till all the world adore His sacred Name.

O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,
As Thou hast promised, draw the world to Thee.

Refrain

So shall our song of triumph ever be;
Praise to the Crucified for victory.

Refrain

Public domain. Words: George W. Kitchin, modified by Michael R. Newbolt in 1916.
Hymn tune: CRUCIFER, Sydney H. Nicholson, 1916.

Benediction

Now as we go forth into the world, observing a holy Lent,
Let us walk in Christ's own footsteps and take on His likeness,
with this prayer on our lips:

**Christ be with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me.
Christ be within me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me.
Christ on my right hand, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit and when I arise.
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the heart of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.**

—from the *Lorica* of St. Patrick

Go forth into the world, to love and serve the Lord.
Amen. Thanks be to God!

A thought about worship from the Ancient Fathers... – “If one day we will receive comfort from afflictions, rest from labor, health after sickness, and eternal life from death, it isn't right to agonize over temporal, human pain. To be agitated by the trials we face is inappropriate. And it isn't right to fear mobs who fight against Christ and conspire against godliness. Instead, we should please God all the more through these things. We should consider such matters to be the test and exercise of a righteous life. For how can we have patience if there isn't previous labor and sorrow? Or how can our strength be tested without attacks from the enemy? ... Finally, how can we see righteousness unless the sin of very wicked people appears previously? As a result, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ reminds us how to suffer. When He was beaten, He bore it patiently. Although verbally abused, He didn't lash out in return. When He suffered, He didn't speak threats but gave His back to the torturers and His cheeks to buffetings. He didn't turn His face away from the spitting but was willingly led to His death so that we could see the image of righteousness in Him. By following these examples, we can tread on serpents, scorpions, and all of the enemy's power.”
– Athanasius

Lectionary for next week: Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm 51:1-12
Psalm 119:9-16
Hebrews 5:5-10
John 12:20-33

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URL: <https://www.clerestorynotes.com>

We close the service with two verses of Lift High the Cross, sending us on our way into the world to love and serve the Lord with a final reference to John 3 ringing in our hearts.

You will notice that our usual closing of the benediction, “Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!” is missing. That is because it's customary during Lent to refrain from saying “Alleluia!” In a sense, we fast from this exuberant expression of praise, which makes it all the more meaningful and glorious when we declare on Resurrection Sunday, “Christ is risen, Alleluia!”