

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Led by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

God of faithful promise, make your church a new creation in Christ. As you reconcile us to yourself, guide us also in your way of reconciliation, that through confession and forgiveness, repentance and reparations, your church may bear witness to your love. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

God of new beginnings, restore balance to the earth. Send rain to places of drought and sunshine to places of flooding, that the produce of the land may again support life. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

God of prodigal grace, unite the nations as fellow members of the human family. Give leaders the courage to put aside pride and ego, to cease squandering lives and time, and to work for the well-being of all. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

## Preparing for Next Week

**Monday** (commemoration of John Donne, poet, 1631) Psalm 53. **Tuesday** Revelation 19:9-10. **Wednesday** Luke 9:10-17. **Thursday** Psalm 126. **Friday** (commemoration of Benedict the African, confessor, 1589) Isaiah 43:8-15. **Saturday** Exodus 12:21-27. **Fifth Sunday in Lent** (commemoration of Albrecht Dürer, 1528; Matthias Grünewald, 1529; Lucas Cranach, 1553; artists) Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126; Philippians 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8.

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# Celebrate

Fourth Sunday in Lent  
March 30, 2025

The psalm sets the tone this day: “Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is put away!” Happy are those who have “become the righteousness of God” in the merits of Christ Jesus. Happy are those for whom the forgiveness of God has “rolled away . . . the disgrace” of former times. Happy is the father at the return of his prodigal son. Happy are we that our sins are forgiven for Jesus’ sake. Rejoice!

## Prayer of the Day

God of compassion, you welcome the wayward, and you embrace us all with your mercy. By our baptism clothe us with garments of your grace, and feed us at the table of your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## First Reading

Joshua 5:9-12

By celebrating the Passover and eating the produce of the promised land instead of the miraculous manna that had sustained them in the desert, the Israelites symbolically bring their forty years of wilderness wandering to an end at Gilgal.

The LORD said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt.” And so that place is called Gilgal to this day.

<sup>10</sup>While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal they kept the passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. <sup>11</sup>On

the day after the passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. <sup>12</sup>The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

## Second Reading

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

One way to describe the gospel is the promise that in Christ everything is transformed into newness. All mistakes, all deliberate sins, all old history is reconciled with Christ’s resurrection. This is Paul’s strong message to the congregation in the city of Corinth.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. <sup>17</sup>So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup>that

is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <sup>20</sup>So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.



Be glad, you righ-teous, and re - joice in the LORD.

Happy are they whose transgressions<sup>1</sup> are forgiven,  
and whose sin is<sup>1</sup> put away!

<sup>2</sup>**Happy are they to whom the LORD im-<sup>1</sup>putes no guilt,  
and in whose spirit there<sup>1</sup> is no guile! R**

<sup>3</sup>While I held my tongue, my bones with-<sup>1</sup>ered away,  
because of my groaning<sup>1</sup> all day long.

<sup>4</sup>**For your hand was heavy upon me<sup>1</sup> day and night;  
my moisture was dried up as in the<sup>1</sup> heat of summer.**

<sup>5</sup>Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and did not con-<sup>1</sup>ceal my guilt.  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD."  
Then you forgave me the guilt<sup>1</sup> of my sin.

<sup>6</sup>**Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers  
to you in<sup>1</sup> time of trouble;  
when the great waters overflow, they<sup>1</sup> shall not reach them. R**

<sup>7</sup>You are my hiding-place; you preserve<sup>1</sup> me from trouble;  
you surround me with shouts<sup>1</sup> of deliverance.

<sup>8</sup>**"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that<sup>1</sup> you should go;  
I will guide you<sup>1</sup> with my eye.**

<sup>9</sup>Do not be like horse or mule, which have no<sup>1</sup> understanding;  
who must be fitted with bit and bridle,  
or else they will<sup>1</sup> not stay near you."

<sup>10</sup>**Great are the tribulations<sup>1</sup> of the wicked;  
but mercy embraces those who trust<sup>1</sup> in the LORD.**

<sup>11</sup>Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice<sup>1</sup> in the LORD;  
shout for joy, all who are<sup>1</sup> true of heart. R

*Jesus tells a parable about a son who ponders his father's love only after he has spurned it. The grace he receives is beyond his hopes. That same grace is a crisis for an older brother who believes it is his obedience that has earned his place in the father's home.*

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus].<sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

<sup>3</sup>So he told them this parable:

<sup>11b</sup>"There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup>The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them.

<sup>13</sup>A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. <sup>14</sup>When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup>He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup>But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup>I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' <sup>20</sup>So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

<sup>21</sup>Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup>But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup>And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; <sup>24</sup>for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup>"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup>He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. <sup>27</sup>He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup>Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. <sup>29</sup>But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup>But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' <sup>31</sup>Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup>But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"