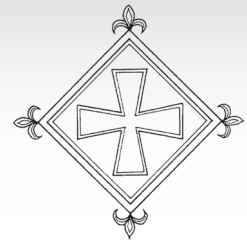


# Planning for Rites and Rituals

A Resource for Episcopal Worship, Year A, 2019–2020





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# The First Sunday of Advent

December 1, 2019

*The day will come when God's wisdom and presence will be fully revealed. It will be a time of both tremendous hope and promise, but it will also be a time of judgment. God's people must live in readiness for that great day to come.*

**Color** Violet or Blue

**Preface** Advent

## Collect

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Readings and Psalm

### *Isaiah 2:1–5*

In our lesson from the Hebrew Bible **the prophet Isaiah sets forth a majestic vision of a time when people throughout the world will worship the Lord and live in peace with one another.** The mountain of the city of Jerusalem will be raised up to become a symbol of hope and justice to every nation. Many peoples will look to Jerusalem and to its holy Mount Zion as the place from which God will issue God's word and law, bringing about an end to strife and warfare.

### *Psalm 122*

A pilgrim's song of praise and prayer for the peace of Jerusalem.

### *Romans 13:11–14*

In this reading **Paul urges a way of life in full awareness of the nearness of salvation.** Disciples must recognize that the nighttime of sinfulness is passing. The daylight, the time for new conduct and the following of Jesus, now comes.

### *Matthew 24:36–44*

In our gospel lesson **Jesus tells his disciples of the need for readiness because the Son of Man will come at a day and hour which no one knows.** People will continue to go about their usual affairs, when suddenly this time of judgment will happen. Disciples are to be ever watchful, imagining themselves like a householder whose alertness could prevent a robbery.

## Prayers of the People

Let us offer our prayers to God, who clothes us in the armor of light and offers us the gift of immortal life, responding, "*O come, O come, Emmanuel.*"

For peace throughout the world, that swords of destruction may become tools for industry, and spears of war the word that pierces every heart with the light of hope; let us pray.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel.*

For the grace to choose the path that leads to eternal life, generously giving toward the relief of poverty and despair, homelessness and fear, so that through our actions the saving love of Christ may be revealed; let us pray.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel.*

For the leaders of the nations of the world, that power be tempered by wisdom, and the quest for money be seen as a false strength; let us pray.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel.*

For Christians throughout the world, especially those who endure religious persecution and the prejudice of unfriendly governments, that our prayers may empower them in their time of need; let us pray.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel.*

That we may hunger for the teachings of the Lord, seeking opportunities for education, bible study, and fellowship with those who follow the way of Jesus; let us pray.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel.*

In thanksgiving for those who stay awake in the dark corners of human experience, abiding faithfully with those whose faith is shallow and whose fears are great; let us pray.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel.*

In thanksgiving for the life-giving gifts of those who have died, leaving us a harvest of love from which to eat for years to come; let us pray.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel.*

In anticipation of Jesus' dwelling amongst us, let us continue the offering of our prayers.  
(*Special intentions of the congregation, the diocese, and the Anglican Communion may be added here or before the formal intercessions.*)

*The Celebrant adds a concluding Collect.*

## Images in the Readings

The apocalyptic imagery of **the end of the world**, like the flood sweeping all things away, echoes from the Old Testament into the preaching of Jesus, and continues in contemporary disaster movies and terrorist activity. For Christians, fear about the end always comes to rest in trust in the presence of God. When all is over, at our end, is God.

Today's readings expand and challenge our society's welcome of God arriving as only baby Jesus, for God comes as **judge** and calls us into a life of justice for all, evoking in us both anticipation and

fear. Often in classical art, Justice is a towering robed woman who judges right from wrong.

Often in the Bible God meets with humankind on a **mountain**. In our language a "mountaintop experience" is one so overwhelming that it changes one's future. Sinai, Horeb, Jerusalem, the mount of Jesus' sermon, the Mount of Transfiguration, the Mount of Olives, Golgotha, Zion: all are superimposed on our church buildings, for the Christian mountain is wherever we receive the word and sacraments.

In English, the phrase "**swords into plowshares**" indicates the hope for world peace, a hope for which Christians pray to God.

## Ideas for the Day

- ◆ Advent is a baffling season: beginning with an end, ending with a beginning; remembering a birth that was millennia past while looking forward to a final coming sometime in the future. It is fitting then, that we begin the season with one of the prophets—quite mystifying figures themselves—who declares "The word that Isaiah saw." That particular Hebrew verb describes a special way of seeing: a vision-of-the-future-replete-with-improbable-hope. Advent is an interrupter: it begins with a word that is seen, with visions of hope for a better future. Advent will end with a mother nurturing a child whose name is a promise: God-with-us.
- ◆ In this season of preparation and expectation, let us find active ways to express our faith, through areas of personal development, family development, and church community development. At the personal level, plant herbs, learn to notate music, write in a diary, create a Spotify playlist of twenty uplifting songs by various artists. At the family level, find ways to prepare meals together. At the church level, assist in planning an event for the community. These active ways of engaging our faith will allow us to ". . . cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."
- ◆ We are offered a glimpse of God's ultimate vision for creation and humanity. We are challenged to set life goals around that vision. Advent invites the church to dream of what God's will being done fully "on earth as in heaven" might mean in light of Jesus' words and acts.

## Making Connections

Advent is a time of preparation, and not just for Christmas. It is a time to prepare for the return of Jesus. Advent marks the beginning of a new year in the life of the Church, and the readings today are a collective invitation to turn over a new leaf, to live life in a new way. We can do that in two ways: by having joyful expectations and actively preparing, perhaps through prayer or other spiritual practices. Each of us can do something to prepare for Jesus, and our thing is likely different from others.

## Engaging All Ages

“Swords into plowshares” is a theme often cited by groups working for peaceful solutions to the world’s problems, including the Episcopal Peace Fellowship: <http://www.epfnational.org/>. How might their efforts and resources be used to engage children, youth, and adults in worship? How might your formation programming on this day speak about becoming voices of non-violence in daily life?

## Hymns for the Day

*The Hymnal 1982*

Blest be the King whose coming 74  
 Once he came in blessing 53  
 The King shall come when morning dawns 73  
 Christ is the world’s true Light 542  
 Glorious things of thee are spoken 522, 523  
 Judge eternal, throned in splendor 596  
 O day of God, draw nigh 600, 601  
 Thy kingdom come, O God 613  
 “Thy kingdom come!” on bended knee 615  
 Awake, my soul, and with the sun 11  
 Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve 546  
 Awake, thou Spirit of the watchmen 540  
 Eternal Ruler of the ceaseless round 617  
 Hark! a thrilling voice is sounding 59  
 Jesus came, adored by angels 454  
 Lo! he comes, with clouds descending 57, 58  
 Rejoice! rejoice, believers 68  
 “Sleepers, wake!” A voice astounds us 61, 62

*Lift Every Voice and Sing II*

We’re Marching to Zion 12  
 Down by the riverside 210  
 Great day 5  
 Rockin’ Jerusalem 17  
 Better be ready 4

*Wonder, Love, and Praise*

## Weekday Commemorations

*Monday, December 2*

*Channing Moore Williams,  
 Bishop and Missionary, 1910*

Bishop Williams was born in Richmond, Virginia, on July 18, 1829, and brought up in straitened circumstances by his widowed mother. He attended the College of William and Mary and the Virginia Theological Seminary. Ordained deacon in 1855, he offered himself for work in China; two years later he was sent to Japan and opened work in Nagasaki. Williams translated parts of the Prayer Book into Japanese; he was a close friend and warm supporter of Bishop Schereschewsky, his successor in China.

*Tuesday, December 3*

*Francis Xavier, Priest and Missionary, 1552*

The Spaniard Francis Xavier (b. 1506) met Ignatius Loyola while studying in Paris. Francis and his companions bound themselves to serve God in 1534 — thus, began the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). Xavier and Loyola were ordained together in 1537. Francis traveled to India, then on to Sri Lanka and Indonesia. In 1549, he moved to Japan and learned the language to prepare a catechism for his mission among peoples he came to respect. In 1551, he traveled to China, hoping to launch a new mission, but he died before he secured passage into China. Francis is buried in Goa, India.

*Wednesday, December 4**John of Damascus, Priest and Theologian, c. 760*

John succeeded his father as tax collector for the Mohammedan Caliph of Damascus. About 715, John entered St. Sabas monastery near Jerusalem, where he lived ascetically, studying the fathers. He was ordained a priest in 726, the year the Byzantine Emperor Leo the Isaurian banned Holy Images, beginning the iconoclastic controversy. About 730, John wrote three treatises against the Iconoclasts, arguing that images were not idols, representations of saints, and distinguishing between veneration and worship. True worship, he wrote, was due to God alone. John also synthesized theology in *The Fount of Knowledge*. To Anglicans, he is known for his Easter hymns, including “Come, ye faithful, raise the strain.”

*Thursday, December 5**Clement of Alexandria, Priest and Theologian, c. 210*

Clement’s liberal approach to secular knowledge laid the foundations of Christian humanism. Born mid-second century, Clement was a cultured Greek philosopher. He sought truth widely until he met Pantaenus, founder of the Christian Catechetical School at Alexandria. In 190, Clement succeeded Pantaenus as headmaster; Origen was Clement’s most eminent pupil. Clement’s learning and allegorical exegeses helped commend Christianity to intellectual circles of Alexandria during an age of Gnosticism. Clement dissented from the negative Gnostic view of the world, which denied free will. In *What Rich Man Will Be Saved?*, Clement sanctioned the “right use” of wealth and goods. Among his writings is the hymn “Master of eager youth.” The time and place of his death are unknown.

*Friday, December 6**Nicholas of Myra, Bishop, c. 342*

Nicholas is the traditional patron saint of seafarers and sailors, archers, repentant thieves, brewers, pawn brokers, and, most important, children. He bore gifts to children. His name, Sinterklaas, was brought to America by Dutch colonists in New York, and from there, Saint Nicholas became known as Santa Claus. Because of many miracles attributed to his intercessions, Nicholas is also called the Wonderworker. Born in Patara, Lycia in Asia Minor (now Turkey) in 270, he traveled to Egypt and around Palestine, and became the bishop of Myra. He was tortured and imprisoned during the persecution of Diocletian. After his release, he was possibly present at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea in 325.

*Saturday, December 7**Ambrose of Milan, Bishop and Theologian, 397*

Ambrose was hastily baptized so he could become a bishop on December 7, 373, after the Milanese people demanded his election. He had been brought up in a Christian family; in 373, he succeeded his father as governor in Upper Italy. As bishop and a statesman of the Church, he soon won renown defending orthodoxy against Arianism. He was a skilled hymnodist, introducing antiphonal chanting to enrich liturgical texture; among hymns attributed to him is a series for the Little Hours. Ambrose, who was a fine educator in matters of doctrine, persuaded Augustine of Hippo to convert. He feared not to rebuke emperors, including the rageful Theodosius, made to perform public penance for slaughtering thousands of citizens.





# The Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 22, 2020

*The Christian is given the gift of enlightenment through the Holy Spirit.*

**Color** Violet / Lenten Array

**Preface** Of Lent

## Collect

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

## Readings and Psalm

### *1 Samuel 16:1–13*

In this Hebrew scripture story **the Lord sends Samuel to anoint David to be the new king over Israel.** God has rejected Saul as king but he remains in power and Samuel must go secretly on his mission. As so often happens in the Bible, one who seems least likely in the eyes of others is chosen by God to carry out the divine will.

### *Psalm 23*

The Lord is shepherd and guide. God is present in the time of danger and is generous and merciful.

### *Ephesians 5:8–14*

In this New Testament lesson **disciples are called to be a people of the light, forsaking all the works of darkness.** Their present life is to be in sharp contrast with their actions before they became Christians. All that is done is to be exposed to the light. The passage closes with what was probably part of an ancient hymn used at baptisms.

### *John 9:1–41*

Our gospel is the story of Jesus' healing of a man born blind. Jesus brings light into a dark world. Many people of the time regarded the man's blindness to be a result of sin, but Jesus helps him to see, at first physically, and then spiritually as well. The man withstands the criticism of the religious officials and worships Jesus as the Son of Man and his Lord.

## Prayers of the People

As a sign of our obedience, let us bend the knee of our hearts, and make an offering of prayer and thanksgiving to God, as we respond, "Kyrie eleison."

For those preparing for baptism and other rites of initiation, and those who will renew their baptismal vows at the Great Vigil of Easter, that they may find in the Church a place of spiritual integrity, renewal and hope, forgiveness and restoration; let us pray.

*Kyrie eleison.*

That Christians throughout the world who are being persecuted for being followers of Christ may be protected by the strong armor of faith, and sustained by the fervent prayers of all the baptized; let us pray.

*Kyrie eleison.*

That the work of God may be made visible through our weaknesses and shortcomings, bearing witness to others of the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome the heartache and despair that visits every human heart; let us pray.

*Kyrie eleison.*

That we who celebrate this Eucharistic Meal may receive the mercy of the Lamb, who shares our burdens, removes our sin, and restores us to the company of the faithful; let us pray.

*Kyrie eleison.*

For all who are preparing for Holy Week and the Great Paschal Feast of Easter, especially choirs, altar guilds, church staff, and clergy, that their efforts may inspire our participation; let us pray.

*Kyrie eleison.*

That those who have died may rest in peace, and we who hear of war and famine remain restless until the day of peace has come; let us pray.

*Kyrie eleison.*

Knowing that Jesus opens the eyes of the blind, gives voice to the voiceless, and frees those who are imprisoned by fear, let us with confidence continue our prayers.

*(Special intentions of the congregation, the diocese, and the Anglican Communion may be added here or before the formal intercessions.)*

*The Celebrant adds a concluding Collect.*

## Images in the Readings

The primary image for the day is **light**. According to Genesis 1, light is the first creation of God. In John, Christ not only brings light, he is the very light of God. And so the synoptics describe the crucifixion as effecting an eclipse, and when Judas leaves the company for the betrayal, the author of John writes, “And it was night” (13:30). The Ephesians reading emphasizes that the light that is Christ is now the light within each believer.

Another image for the day is the **anointing**. In ancient times, and still today in the British monarchy, consecrated oil is poured on the head of the one chosen to lead. In some Christian churches, an anointing is a necessary part of the baptismal ritual. What was dry and brittle is now limber with life.

David was a **shepherd**. According to Israelite memory, the people were nomadic herders before becoming urban dwellers. So David embodies the good old tradition, a more innocent time. Other ancient Near Eastern cultures also used the metaphor of the shepherd to describe their king. The sheep are the source of the people’s life, and the shepherd ensures that livelihood.

## Ideas of the Day

- ♦ So many questions! What happened? Whose fault is it? How is that possible? The man who was born blind can now see. Those who hold societal position cannot see. (Or can they?) Many of us have been taught, “There are no bad questions.” Even if there are no bad questions, we sometimes do not hear the answers to the questions we are asking because they are not the answers we want to hear. We want answers that fit neatly within the way we know the world. Jesus and the formerly blind man answer each question in ways that point to God’s action in the world.
- ♦ Through the anointing of the Holy Spirit at baptism the Christian can see to follow Jesus. The early church saw the healing of the man born blind as a metaphor of enlightenment: the Christian is called to see things differently.
- ♦ How do our goals for life stack up against the strange words of Jesus in today’s gospel that were acted out in his own life and in the lives of the apostles? This is not a time for answering questions or resolving doubts. Rather, it is a time to raise questions. Everyone must find their own understanding of what the gospel proclaims, but we can do so only as our own views of life area challenged and confronted.

## Making Connections

In a beautiful reflection on the reading from 1 Samuel to his confirmands, Harvard Wilbur (Episcopal priest, 1924–2008) wrote about grief and moving forward after loss. “How long will you grieve over Saul?” is the question. So many people lose hope and become discouraged when “the persons and things to which you gave your energies and hopes have failed you.” Wilbur reminds us that God will break-in to the narratives playing in our heads and hearts, as he did with Samuel when he told him “Fill your horn with oil and go.” It is essential, but rarely easy, that we accept disappointment and loss, because it is a part of life. “The same can be said to those of us who find ourselves walking through the rubble of once glorious dreams. Stop your grieving. Gather your resources. Do what needs to be done.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From a confirmation church bulletin circa 1986 from St. James Episcopal Church in Wichita Kansas.

## Engaging All Ages

Lent is season of simplicity—a season when we remind each other to depend on God and not on our “stuff” or accomplishments to bring us love or joy. In our churches we mark this season with a particular color and by changes around our altars and our buildings. What changes have you noticed? Is there anything different about the cross(es), the altar, or the robes that people wear? What could you change in your home to reflect the simplicity of Lent? Are there material items that you are ready to part with?

## Hymns for the Day

### *The Hymnal 1982*

My Shepherd will supply my need 664  
 The King of love my shepherd is 645, 646  
 The Lord my God my shepherd is 663  
 God moves in a mysterious way 677  
 Seek the Lord while he wills to be found S217ff  
 Awake, O sleeper, rise from death 547  
 I want to walk as a child of the light 490  
 Lord Jesus, Sun of Righteousness 144  
 O splendor of God’s glory bright 5  
 Christ, whose glory fills the skies 6, 7  
 Deck thyself, my soul, with gladness 339  
 Eternal light, shine in my heart 465, 466  
 God of mercy, God of grace 538  
 How wondrous and great thy works,  
     God of praise! 532, 533  
 I’ll praise my Maker while I’ve breath 429  
 I heard the voice of Jesus say 692  
 Lord God, you now have set your servant free 499  
 O for a thousand tongues to sing 493

### *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*

The Lord is my shepherd 104  
 The Lord is my light 58

### *Wonder, Love, and Praise*

So the day dawn for me 750  
 When from bondage we are summoned 753, 754  
 Lord, you have fulfilled your word 891

## Weekday Commemorations

### *Monday, March 23*

#### *Gregory the Illuminator, Bishop and Missionary, c.332*

Gregory, Apostle of the Armenians, was born about 257. Following his father’s assassination of the Persian king, baby Gregory was removed to Caesarea in Cappadocia and raised as a Christian. He married and fathered two sons. About 280, he returned to Armenia and, after much effort, converted the king to Christianity, thereby ending paganism in his native land. About 300, Gregory was ordained a bishop at Caesarea; his cathedral at Valarshapat remains the center of Armenian Christianity. As the first nation-state to become officially Christian, Armenia set a precedent for adoption of Christianity by Emperor Constantine; as a buffer between empires in Rome and Persia, Armenia suffered through the vicissitudes of power and protection.

### *Tuesday, March 24*

#### *Óscar Romero, Archbishop and Martyr, 1980 and the Martyrs of El Salvador*

In and out of seminaries due to poverty, Romero (born in 1917 in San Salvador) was eventually sent to Rome to study theology. After ordination, he returned home to work among the poor. Appointed archbishop in 1977, Romero contended with radicals, who distrusted his conservative sympathies. He protested—even unto Pope John Paul II—the government’s torturous injustice to the poor; he pled with America to stop military aid. Assassinated while celebrating Mass in 1980, Romero was canonized by the Roman Catholic Church in 2018. His fellow martyrs include Maryknoll and Ursuline sisters, Jesuit priests, and lay missionaries and staff.

*Wednesday, March 25**The Annunciation of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the Blessed Virgin Mary*

Mary's willingness to assent to God's call paved the path for God to accomplish the salvation of the world. March 25 is the day to commemorate the story of how God made known to a young Jew that she was to be the mother of his son. Her acceptance is the reason generations have called her "blesséd." The Annunciation serves as a significant theme in the arts of the East and the West, a theme running through countless sermons and poems. The General Council of Ephesus in 451 affirmed the term, coined by Cyril of Jerusalem, for the Blessed Virgin: Theotokos ("the God-bearer"). Mary serves as God's human agent within the mystery of the Incarnation.

*Thursday, March 26**Harriet Monsell, Monastic, 1883*

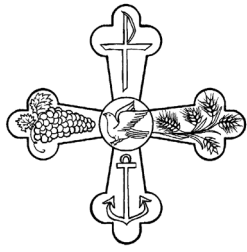
Monsell, recently widowed, was fired up by the work of the Community of Saint John Baptist, which sheltered and rehabbed women caught by poverty and/or human trafficking. She was installed as superior in 1852 and served until ill health forced retirement in 1875. The Community focused on life contemplative and active with devotions plus worship with the Daily Office. The Community also tried to produce a Breviary in English. Mother Harriet prayed fervently for her sisterhood to reveal the mind of Christ to "ardent seekers." Mother Harriet's Community continues its prayerful ministry in the Episcopal Church and the Church of England.

*Friday, March 27**Charles Henry Brent, Bishop, 1929*

Brent served as a senior chaplain to the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I; at war's end, he accepted election as Bishop of Western New York. He had turned down three prior elections so he could remain in the Philippines. Elected Missionary Bishop, Brent had been posted there in 1901. He crusaded against the opium trade in the islands as well as Asia. For 20 years, Brent stood tall in the Episcopal Church, focusing on Christian unity. In 1927, he led the church in the movement that resulted in the first World Conference on Faith and Order, over which he presided. One of his prayers is included in the Book of Common Prayer.

*Saturday, March 28**James Solomon Russell, Priest, 1935*

Russell, born a slave in 1857 in Virginia, was the first student in what became Bishop Payne Divinity School, also in Virginia. In 1888, a year after his ordination in the Episcopal Church, he and his wife opened a school for academic and industrial education; religion was a mandatory subject. During his 52 years of ordained ministry, Russell worked tirelessly to encourage black candidates to stand for ordination in order to care for the growing number of black Episcopalians. Russell, elected the first African-American bishop in the Episcopal Church (1927), fought adamantly against the idea of subordinate racial bishops.



# The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 19

September 13, 2020

*Living in community under God's dominion over evil and sin.*

**Color** Green

**Preface** Of the Lord's Day

## Collect

O God, because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

## Readings and Psalm

### *Proverbs 1:20–33*

Our opening lesson is an instructional poem in which Wisdom is personified as an attribute of God's character and a virtue to be sought and possessed. Lady Wisdom actively seeks out those as yet unformed in character and strives to gain their attention, for she offers to lead them into the way of life and goodness. Those who scoff or refuse her instruction court calamity, but those who listen will dwell secure.

### *Psalm 19*

A hymn which glorifies the Creator God, with special praise for God's law and a prayer for avoidance of sin.

or

### *Wisdom of Solomon 7:26–8:1*

Wisdom is extolled as an attribute of God of unsurpassed value.

or

### *Isaiah 50:4–9a*

Our first reading tells of the servant who speaks for the Lord and suffers persecution, but still trusts in God's help and vindication. This is the third of the "servant songs" which come from a period late in Israel's exile. The servant might be thought to be the faithful of Israel, the prophet himself, or another historical or idealized figure. The people are weary and tired of the Lord's calling, but the servant steadfastly continues. Christians have long perceived in these words a foretelling of Jesus' mission.

### *Psalm 116:1–9*

An offering of thanksgiving and praise by one who has been rescued from death.

### *James 3:1–12*

In this New Testament lesson the community is reminded that one who instructs others will be held to a high standard, and such a position should only be aspired to by those well-formed in faith. Of particular concern are habits of speech. The tongue is compared to a small rudder able to control a large ship at sea. There is great danger in an uncontrolled tongue, and many forms of careless speech are enumerated. The Christian must learn self-discipline in order that God may be glorified.

### *Mark 8:27–38*

In the gospel Peter recognizes that Jesus is the Christ, and Jesus then describes the true nature of the ministry of the Son of Man and what it means to follow in his way. The passage reminds us that during Jesus' lifetime and afterward there was speculation about his role. Some saw him as a kind of reembodyment of John the Baptist or another prophet. Peter is called "Satan" because his words are a temptation to turn away from the suffering and death which come before resurrection. Disciples must also learn that the true self and true life are found by those who will let themselves be lost for the sake of Jesus and the gospel.

## Prayers of the People

Rejoice in the waters of life, those who honor God in all things, and raise your voices in prayer, responding, “Lord, hear our prayer.”

In thanksgiving for this holy day where we gather as a household of faith to hear the word of God with open minds and grateful hearts; let us pray.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

In thanksgiving for the arms of forgiveness that embrace us in the midst of our sin, leading us to repentance, and filling us with the waters of mercy through which we will forgive others; let us pray.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

For honesty in government, and integrity in our dealings with one another, that trust may be restored between people and throughout the institutions of our society; let us pray.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

That we may commit ourselves to a life of simplicity, so that we may provide for the needs of the poor and hungry, as Jesus provided nourishment and hope to his followers; let us pray.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

That we may share our spiritual doubts with one another, convinced that in our mutual self-disclosure we will be strengthened in faith and grow in the conviction that God’s love can forgive all things and transforms all life; let us pray.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

In thanksgiving for those who are teachers and catechists in our Church; may they be given the blessing of knowledge and wisdom, as they bear the Christian message to those in their charge; let us pray.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

That the dead may be redeemed from the grave, and wear the crown of eternal life; let us pray.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

Miriam sang to the Lord for all the glorious gifts her people had received, and so we join with her in continuing our prayers.  
(*Special intentions of the congregation, the diocese, and the Anglican Communion may be added here or before the formal intercessions.*)

*The Celebrant adds a concluding Collect.*

## Images in the Readings

Seventy-seven plays with the ancient idea that seven is the number of fullness and perfection, because seven combines three, a number that suggests divinity, and four, recalling the corners of the flat earth. So with seventy-seven, Jesus multiplies the number of total perfection.

Matthew’s allegory utilizes imagery from the economic system of the first century: a **lord** was the owner of land and of all those who work the land, and a **slave** was one perpetually in the service of another. In our English-language Bibles, Hebrew and the Greek words that denote such a masculine societal authority figure are translated as “lord.” Christian faith in Christ’s resurrection occasions the claim that “Jesus is Lord.” “LORD” is the usual circumlocution used in our Bibles to render YHWH, God’s first name. That we are slaves of God is New Testament imagery, albeit not a currently popular metaphor.

By the mysterious design of God, **Joseph** brought life to his people. Early Christian preachers saw in the Joseph story a parallel to Jesus, who was first brought low but was then raised to power and authority so as to forgive everyone and to feed the world.

## Ideas for the Day

- ♦ The Exodus narrative is a central image of salvation history in the Old Testament. It is used to underscore the witness of real rescue from terrible forces of evil, and it is also a metaphor for liberty from more obscure oppressions. Yet perhaps the words bring you pause, because you or someone near to you has served in the military. Hearing that warriors are being extinguished can be alarming. It is possible to feel both united to the liberation and sympathy for the soldiers who are thrown down. Learning how to be creative and compelling witnesses to the love of God when our feelings are complex is part of the lifelong journey of life together.

- ◆ We all seem to like winning. We all seem to enjoy the party that often follows. Sometimes there is music, dancing, and cheers. So here is a challenge to us all: We know that God was with the people of Israel on the other side of the Red Sea. But if we believe that God is everywhere, then wouldn't it be true that God might also have been consoling the hearts of the widows, mothers, and daughters of Egypt? Can we imagine that God's love might ever extend beyond the winners? Can we imagine that God's mercy can override the political breaks in our world and in our society? It might be interesting for us to take a look and see what God is doing on the "other" side.
- ◆ The passing of the Peace is an acting out of a forgiveness principle. God's forgiveness must be passed on to others if it is to be realized in our own lives. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23–24).

## Making Connections

Confession and absolution: we are forgiven over and over. Our liturgy acknowledges that we continually need to seek forgiveness. Each time we come before God and one another with genuine contrition, we receive the healing forgiveness of God made known through the act of the Eucharist. The confession and absolution do not stand on their own, however. They must be preceded or followed by an act of reconciliation to persons hurt by our acts and omissions. It is a model for Christian life—we too, need to forgive each other (our neighbor) week after week as genuine "confession is offered. In the Lord's Prayer were ask to be forgiven only to the extent that we forgive others.

## Engaging All Ages

"How often should I forgive?" Peter questions. Jesus says "Seventy-seven times." Seventy-seven does not seem like an excessively large number. But in the culture of the United States, forgiveness can seem for some hard to do and for others in short supply. When you have been hurt again and again, it is difficult to forgive again. Difficult to forgive others. Difficult to forgive yourself. Perhaps it is seventy-seven times because forgiveness takes practice. Today in worship, will you do the practice of Confession? This practice will not make you perfect but it can make you more forgiven and more forgiving.

## Hymns for the Day

### *The Hymnal 1982*

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah 690 [SC]  
 Praise our great and gracious Lord 393 [SC]  
 Sing now with joy unto the Lord 425 [SC]  
 When Israel was in Egypt's land 648 [SC]  
 All my hope on God is founded 665 [GR]  
 God moves in a mysterious way 677 [GR]  
 O bless the Lord, my soul 411 [GR]  
 Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven 410 [GR]  
 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of  
 creation 390 [GR]  
 Creator of the stars of night 60  
 Crown him with many crowns 494  
 Jesus, our mighty Lord, our strength in sadness 478  
 All creatures of our God and King 400  
 "Forgive our sins as we forgive" 674  
 Go forth for God, go to the world in peace 347  
 God is Love, and where true love is 576, 577  
 Joyful, joyful, we adore thee 376  
 Lord, make us servants of your peace 593  
 Most High, omnipotent, good Lord 406, 407  
 Praise the Lord, rise up rejoicing 334  
 Where charity and love prevail 581  
 Where true charity and love dwell 606

### *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*

Go down, Moses 228 [SC]

### *Wonder, Love, and Praise*

Wisdom freed a holy people 905 [SC]  
 Bless the Lord my soul 825 [GR]  
 No saint on earth lives life to self alone 776  
 Come now, O Prince of Peace 795

## Weekday Commemorations

*Monday, September 14*

*Holy Cross Day*

Supervision over the work of erecting a building complex in Jerusalem to mark the site of Christ's resurrection was entrusted to the empress Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine. Under Helena's direction, the excavation discovered a relic, believed to be of the "true cross." Calvary stood outside the city in Jesus' time; when *Aelia Capitolina* succeeded Jerusalem, the hill was buried under construction fill. Constantine's magnificent shrine included two main buildings: a basilica and a round church known as "The Resurrection." The buildings were dedicated on September 14, 335, the seventh month of the Roman calendar; the date was suggested by the account in 2 Corinthians of the dedication of Solomon's temple hundreds of years before.

*Tuesday, September 15*

*Catherine of Genoa, Mystic and Nurse, 1510*

Catherine (b. 1447) married at 16 to ward off family feuds. Husband and wife were miserable: he was profligate with sex and money, which depressed her. On March 22, 1473, Catherine had a mystical, life-changing experience of God's overwhelming love. Afterwards, she combined an intense, contemplative life with an active dedication to caring for the sick. Amazingly, her husband joined her in this good work, and the two became close, eventually moving into a large hospital in Genoa to devote themselves as caregivers. There, Catherine dictated works of mystical theology, which were published 40 years after her death.

*Wednesday, September 16*

*Ninian, Bishop, c. 430*

The Venerable Bede wrote about Ninian in *Ecclesiastical History*; otherwise, little verifiable information is available. Ninian, a Romanized Briton, was born late in the fourth century in Scotland, and may have been educated and ordained in Rome. He spent much time with and was heavily influenced by Martin of Tours in forming ideals of an episcopal monastic structure for missionary work. Candida Casa, Ninian's base, which is dedicated to Martin, sits in Galloway. Ninian's work may have covered the Solway Plains and the Lake District of England. He serves, with Patrick, as a link between the ancient Roman/British Church and the developing Celtic churches of Scotland and Ireland.

*Thursday, September 17*

*Hildegard of Bingen, Mystic and Scholar, 1179*

Hildegard of Bingen, born in 1098, was a mystic, poet, composer, dramatist, doctor, scientist. Her parents' tenth child, she was tithed to the Church and raised by the anchoress Jutta in a cottage near the Benedictine monastery of Disibodenberg. Hildegard lived in a world accustomed to male governance. Yet, within her convents, and to a surprising extent outside them, she exercised a commanding spiritual authority based on confidence in her visions and considerable political astuteness.

*Friday, September 18*

*Edward Bouverie Pusey, Priest, 1882*

Pusey led the Oxford Movement, which revived High Church teachings and practices in the Anglican Communion. Pusey, born August 22, 1800, spent his scholarly life at Oxford as professor and as canon of Christ Church. With John Keble and John Henry Newman, he produced Tracts for the Times in 1833 (thus, the movement is also known as Tractarianism). He proved most influential through sermons catholic in content and evangelical in zeal, but dangerously innovative to some (Pusey was suspended from preaching for two years). Pusey influenced many to remain in the Anglican Church after Newman defected to the Church of Rome in 1845. With his money, he built churches for the poor; with his time, he established the first Anglican sisterhood since the Reformation.

*Saturday, September 19*

*Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury, 690*

Although Theodore was 66 when ordained Archbishop of Canterbury in 668, he provided strong leadership for a generation. He was a learned monk from the East who had been residing in Rome when he began his episcopate. The Church was split between Celtic and Roman customs. When Theodore arrived in England, he set up a school excellent in all disciplines, and he unified Anglo-Saxon Christians, including regularizing Chad's episcopal ordination. He defined boundaries of English dioceses, presided over reforming synods, and laid foundations of parochial organizations. According to Bede, Theodore was the first archbishop whom all English obeyed. He was buried in the monastic Church of Saints Peter and Paul at Canterbury.