

Celebration of the Word of God

Entrance Procession *(The Book of the Gospels is placed on the Altar and honoured with incense.)*

Opening Prayer

Lord God, nothing can chain your healing word.
Release our world from the bonds of fear
and heal us from the things that make us blind to your saving power.
In your mercy, make us a people faithful to your word
so that those who live in our community
might find healing, peace, and welcome in this place.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

A Reading from the prophet Isaiah

Thus says the Lord: As the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed for the sower and bread for the eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.

The Word of the Lord

Psalm

Gospel

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke

Narrator

Two of the disciples of Jesus were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. He said to them,

Jesus

'What matters are you discussing as you walk along?'

Narrator

They stopped short, their faces downcast. Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him,

Reader

'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days.'

Jesus

'What things?'

Reader

'All about Jesus of Nazareth who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they did not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing.'

Jesus

'You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?'

Narrator

Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself. When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them.

Reader

'It is nearly evening and the day is almost over.'

Narrator

So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other,

Reader

'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?'

Narrator

They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them,

Reader

'Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.'

Narrator

' Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

The Gospel of the Lord

Homily

(The Book of the Gospels is carried through the Church and the people are blessed. Instrumental Music is played and some or all of the following reflection is read)

When the Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself is speaking to his people and Christ, present in his own word, is proclaiming the Gospel. Just when life seems cosy and comfortably predictable God speaks unexpectedly and points us in directions we would not have chosen. Just when we have reached the point of comforting assurance in our respectability God speaks unexpectedly and poses uncomfortable questions we would not have chosen to face! And when we have followed the pointings of God's word and answered the disquieting questions we are reminded that all shall be well and all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well. For the God of love works to good in all who hear the sound of his voice. The God of love works to good in all who dare to listen for his voice.

At the dawn of creation your voice was heard saying, "Let there be light" Shine the light of your word into the dark and dusty corners of our lives. In the darkness of our sin speak the light of your forgiveness, in the darkness of our sufferings speak the light of your healing, in the darkness of our grief speak the light of your consolation, in the darkness of our despair speak the light of your hope.

When your people were slaves in Egypt, you spoke to Pharaoh saying, "Let my people go." In the slavery of our selfishness speak the freedom of generosity, in the slavery of our addictions speak the freedom of recovery, in the slavery of our pride speak the freedom of humility, in the slavery of our anger speak the freedom of peace.

You have spoken to us through the prophets saying, "Console my people, console them." In our loneliness speak the consolation of companionship, in our sadness speak the consolation of joy, in our fear speak the consolation of courage.

Your word became flesh and lived among us. You speak to us most clearly in the life and words of your son Jesus Christ. Open our ears to hear his words which bring light, freedom, consolation and hope to all who are in darkness, slavery, sorrow or despair. Speak O Lord, your servants are listening. You have the message of eternal life.

Humanity does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you

Do not worry about tomorrow, tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

I desire mercy, not sacrifice. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

Come to me all you who are wearied and overburdened and I will give you rest.

Learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart.

Nothing is impossible for God

My child, your sins are forgiven

Come along to some quiet place by yourselves and rest for a while.

If anyone wants to be a follower of mine he must renounce himself, take up his cross every day and follow me.

Put out into deep water.

I am the bread of life, you who come to me will never be hungry, you who believe in me will never thirst.

I am the light of the world. You who follow me will have the light of life.

Unbind him and let him go free.

Trust in God still and trust in me.

Love one another as I have loved you.

Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.

Be not afraid, I am with you always, even to the end of time.

Heavenly Father you speak to your people through your holy scriptures. Keep our ears and hearts open to the whispers of your voice. Teach us to recognise you in all your disguises. You speak to us each and every day. Make us sensitive to your presence feeling your hands guiding us to the future, guiding us to heaven where we will see and hear clearly what we have glimpsed in shadow and heard in whispers.

Prayers of Intercession

Priest

Let us turn to God who is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Reader

Our response to the intercessions is; Lord Hear Our Prayer

For the church: [pause]

for all God's children, known and loved before their birth;
for prophets reviled and ignored by their own people;
for all Christians who stand up for the Gospel.
We pray to the Lord.

For a world in need of good news: [pause]

for nations at war where violence reigns;
For those who have been hurt by people of faith
for merciful wisdom and the cultivation of peace.
We pray to the Lord.

For those in love: [pause]

for long-time married couples and the newly engaged;
for those who strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts;
for those with broken hearts and broken promises.
We pray to the Lord.

For the dead: [pause]

for faith in the resurrection of Christ;
for comfort to those who weep;
We pray to the Lord.

Priest

Your words, Lord, are spirit and life.
God of life, your perfect love bears all things,
believes all things, hopes all things,
and endures all things.
Hear our prayers and strengthen our faith in you,
that through our words and deeds,
we may learn to love as you love.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Presentation of the Gospel

The Presider invites the people to come forward to receive the Word of God with these words.

This evening we have reflected on the hope that comes from the Word of God but that word will never penetrate our minds, our hearts or our lives unless we open the book and read there the hope that God's promise holds for us. I invite you now to come forward to receive that word. Please come to the sanctuary in the context in which you live out God's word whether as a single person, as a couple or as a family.

The assisting ministers present a copy of the Gospel to each individual/couple/family group with the words;

P. **The Word of the Lord**

C. **Thanks be to God**

Concluding Prayer

Your words, Lord, are spirit and life.

On this day which you have made holy,
shower your favor upon us,

and proclaim this year acceptable to you.

Hear our prayers and grant them according to your will,

for we trust in your promise that today your word shall be fulfilled.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.