

Holy Eucharist, Rite II,

6th Sunday of Easter, May 9, 2021

The Celebrant and LEM stand, maintaining physical distance. There is no procession.

Opening Rites and the Collect of the Day

Celebrant: Alleluia! Christ is risen.

LEM: *The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

Celebrant: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

LEM: *Rejoice in the Lord, always; let all that lives, rejoice.*

Celebrant: Let the heavens and the earth ring with God's blessings.

LEM: *For Christ is risen, risen indeed. Alleluia!*

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

LEM: *And also with you.*

Celebrant: Let us pray.

The Celebrant says the Collect.

God of abiding love, you choose us as your servants
and dare to call us friends: take our fragmented hearts,
commanding them to love, making whole our joy,
our life reborn in you; through Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for us. Amen.

**Opening Hymn: All people that on earth do dwell, vv.1-3 The Hymnal 1982,
#377**

All people that on earth do dwell,

sing to the Lord with cheerful voice:
him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell,
come ye before him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed;
without our aid he did us make:
we are his folk, he doth us feed,
and for his sheep he doth us take.

O enter then his gates with praise,
approach with joy his courts unto;
praise, laud, and bless his Name always,
for it is seemly so to do.

The First Lesson

Acts 10:44-48

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, ⁴⁶for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? ⁴⁸So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

Reader: *The Word of the Lord.*
Celebrant: Thanks be to God.

Psalm of the Day

Psalm 98

¹O sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things.
His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory.

²The LORD has made known his victory; he has revealed it in the sight of the nations.

³He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

⁴Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth in song and sing praises.

⁵Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the LORD.

⁷Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it.

⁸Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy before the LORD

⁹ for he comes to judge the earth with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Second Lesson

I John 5:1-6

¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, ⁴for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. ⁵Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

⁶This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

LEM: The Word of the Lord.

Celebrant: Thanks be to God.

**Gradual Hymn: God is love, let heaven adore him, vv.1-2 The Hymnal 1982,
#379**

God is Love, let heaven adore him;

God is Love, let earth rejoice;

let creation sing before him

and exalt him with one voice.

God who laid the earth's foundation,
God who spread the heaven above,
God who breathes through all creation:
God is Love, eternal Love.

God is Love; and Love enfolds us,
all the world in one embrace:
with unfailing grasp God holds us,
every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking
under sorrow's iron rod,
then we find that selfsame aching
deep within the heart of God.

The Gospel

John 15:9-17

Then, all standing, the Deacon or a Priest reads the Gospel, first saying

Celebrant: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

LEM: *Glory to you, Lord Christ.*

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. ¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷ I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Celebrant: The Gospel of the Lord.

LEM: *Praise to you, Lord Christ.*

The Sermon: I Chose You¹

Do you remember that kid in elementary school, or grammar school, whatever they called it where you grew up? I mean *that kid*, the one who was always picked last for the baseball team, the soccer team, the football team, the cricket team, the dodgeball team, the volleyball team, the softball team, the tag-team team, the what-new-ball-have-they-brought-out-today-to-torture-us-with team? The kid who the one captain would take if he could take Danny or Holly, or Jawan or Suzie, whoever it was other than *that kid* who had a good arm or a quick juke, the one who could whip that ball around, whip it good? Yeah, if I can have them, I'll take him. He'll be out soon enough anyway, doesn't matter. Yeah, that kid. The one who was always chosen last? You might, or you might not – but you'd sure remember if you had been that kid, as I was.

Aww, you knew that was coming.

When it was time to pick sides for the spelling bee or the math team, the debate team, even the chess team, it was a different story, but where I grew up, glory came on the ballfield, not in the classroom, and so a starring role on one of these inside, brainiac teams didn't exactly provide social capital. *That kid* had to figure out how to respond to this sort of thing, in which the things he was good at pleased only himself and the adults, and those of his peers who needed help with this or that project or piece of homework. *That kid* learned to look for validation elsewhere than among one's peers, at least until he made friends, as that kid so often does, from among those who are otherwise on the periphery of the popular crowd, or who find themselves leaving it, having tired of its cliques and squabbles. By the strange alchemy of adolescence, *that kid* who was cast aside at team-picking time became that guy whom you could turn

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to in times of need, that fellow who could be a good friend, if a little too much in his own head too much of the time. Going from being that kid to that guy teaches one how to value good friends, too, even if not even how to make them – and that one might cling to them imperfectly and sometimes greedily, the times being what they were, and because none of us had enough love in our childhood, no matter how popular or unpopular we were. But I guess that kid made it out okay, though I'm still surprised when my peers and colleagues really do want me to be part of the team. It's nice – and it is a pleasing thing to find, late in life, what was lacking in one's earlier years.

One thing's for sure, though: I wouldn't repeat those *that kid* years, or even those that guy years, for all the gold in Erebor.

But it wasn't all bad. When you're that kid and you go to church a lot and it's a good church, or at least ours was until I was twelve, maybe some of what you hear actually sticks. One thing that stuck with me was John's gospel, mostly because it sounds so beautiful and because the Jesus in it has no anxiety whatsoever about his place in his world or what he's to do here. I remember being a young person and specifically moved, however, by the passage we read this morning, especially the bit about "You did not choose me, but I chose you." Something about that made a great deal of sense to *that kid* and that guy that I was. It was easy enough to swallow the rest of it – 'If you love me, you will obey my commandments and love one another,' and 'No-one has greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends' – before one knew what that could mean, because you were – I was – *on the team*, finally, chosen on purpose, wanted and welcomed. Even if it's not quite clear what game we were playing, or what fruit all of us team members were now to bear for the Father, and even when it is quite clear that not everything we ask for "in my name" comes to pass, the essence of the faith remains clear: love one another as I have loved you.

If every team did that, if every group worked that way, if every grouping of human beings had that kind of hyper-impacted love for one another, it would change the world. For the better. Forever, and for everyone. The passage takes the two great commandments: love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself, and compacts them to one, as the forces of the earth compact carbon to diamond: love as I have loved.

As the poet G.M. Hopkins says in a similar realization: immortal diamond.

In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, | since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, | patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond.²

That's the power of the resurrection – it makes us what Christ is, since Christ was what we were and are now – in this metaphor, diamond: hard, dense, cutting, shining, difficult to alter and unable to die.

All the rest, it is our bounden duty to say, is commentary. The truth of the biblical texts, the purity of the faith once given to the saints, or questions regarding the historicity of Exodus or Sinai, let alone of Genesis, Daniel, and Ezekiel, find their valence in how they reflect or refract that command and its consequent demands. Any reading of biblical material that does not help us love one another is, I would submit, a misreading – and, one might add, an idolatrous one, making a fetish out of words that hurt, instead of using them to help us better see the God who is love and who told us so. The sacrificial atonement of Christ, making of himself the one oblation once offered that maketh us at-one with God, who for our sins has been with us most justly displeased, is tolerable only insofar as it is an elaboration and

² These are the final lines of G.M. Hopkins's poem, "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection," as found here: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44397/that-nature-is-a-heraclitean-fire-and-of-the-comfort-of-the-resurrection>.

specification of that love that lays its life down so that others don't have to. Otherwise, it's as monstrous as the myth of the Greek god Kronos, or Cronus, who devoured his own children after hearing a prophecy that they would one day supplant him. What we are told specifically to do or not to do in scripture only makes sense insofar as this or that command fits in with this overarching command to love one another as I have loved you. This, as rabbis and priests have known for years, renders a good many of them moot, the times changing as they do. Yet some things do not change, and the wisest scriptures reflect them. After all, it was Paul himself who wrote, at the end of his long disquisition on love in 1st Corinthians 13, "now these three remain: faith, hope, and love – and the greatest of these is love."

As in our metaphor: immortal diamond. You might sum up the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this way: I chose you so that you might choose love – and did so in order that you would know what it means to do so, because of how I treated you. I came that you and everyone else might have life, and have it to the full – and you can only have life to the full when it is full of love. This love is not like pie, any more than justice, compassion, mercy, or peace are like pie: you get more of them the more you give of them, life being what it is and justified, if it can be justified, only insofar as it creates, sustains, furthers, and deepens all that it can mean to love, to show compassion, and to be kind.

I am not sure that love like this will create a group that will conquer the world, as today's passage from 1st John suggests. I am sure than anyone that conquers the world but does not do it out of love will lose it, and almost always lose themselves in the process. Evil people and systems rot from within, always, and misrule consumes itself with the regularity and fury by which the snake does so in the story of the snake that eats its own tale. Love does not win by force; it wins because nothing else can, not without force at levels people are getting less and less willing to abide. Despite all the

horrors that people have chosen to visit on themselves and others since Jesus spoke these words, and despite all the wrongs committed in his name and by institutions founded in his name, his command to his friends to “Love one another, as I have loved you” has become and remains one of the most prominent and powerful challenges to people everywhere about how to act, how to live, and why we’re here in the first place. For all its faults and foibles, the church, in making these words ring out the world over and in all the ways that people use words, has done good – possibly inimitable good. For that, we give thanks.

Call it the Spirit, if you will. The writer of Acts does, in the passage we heard this morning. All kinds of people were receiving the same gifts the disciples had in Jerusalem, and were just as fired up for the living God as those disciples had been. It took those disciples a moment to recognize it, but recognize it they did, baptizing them as fast as they could get them down to the river, and gave thanks to God for all the good he was letting them do and see done. Call it the Spirit. After all, Jesus did – and chose us to hear it and receive it. Yes, indeed, call it the Spirit – the Spirit of love, the Spirit of ‘I chose you’, even if you were *that kid*. He chose us anyway, in order that we might love one another and know why. So let’s do that. *Amen*.

There is no passing of plates or reception of gifts.

The Deacon or Priest prepares the altar and sanctuary for the Eucharist.

The People make ready their gifts of bread and wine. The LEM continues

The Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Prayers of the People

The LEM prays. In the silence after each bidding, the People offer their prayers without speaking.

I ask your prayers for all God's people; for our bishops, our clergy, and this gathering,
and for all ministers and people. Pray for the Church.

Silence

I ask your prayers for peace; for goodwill among nations; and for the well-being of all.
Pray for justice and peace.

Silence

I ask your prayers for the poor, the sick, the hungry, the oppressed, and those in prison.
Pray for those in any need or trouble.

Silence

I ask your prayers for all who seek God, or a deeper knowledge of God.
Pray that they may seek, and pray that they might find.

Silence

I ask your prayers for the departed [*especially N.N.*]. Pray for those who have died.

Silence

I ask your prayers for those on the prayer list of this parish, and those whose needs are known to you alone.

Silence

The Celebrant adds a concluding collect.

The Peace

The People stand.

Celebrant: The peace of the Lord be always with you,

LEM: *And also with you.*

The Ministers and People greet one another in silence while keeping physical distance.

The Holy Eucharist: The Great Thanksgiving

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

LEM: *And also with you.*

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

LEM: *We lift them to the Lord.*

Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

LEM: *It is right to give God thanks and praise.*

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, holy Lord, giver of life and light. You fill us with your blessings and feed us with your constant

love; you have redeemed us in Christ Jesus, renewed us in your Spirit, and brought us into everlasting life.

Therefore we praise you, joining with Angels and Archangels and with all the host of heaven, who forever sing this hymn, to the glory of your Name,

The LEM says or sings:

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.*

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

The Celebrant continues

Blessed are you, gracious God, maker of all things, judge of all who live. You made us in your image and to live in your infinite love. You gave the world into our care and bade us be faithful stewards of its bounty. But we honored not your gifts, misused your creation, abused one another, and rejected your love.

Yet you never ceased to care for us. You called us into your promise, delivered us from bondage, sustained us in the wild, and sent prophets to bid us repent and return.

Then, in the fullness of time, you sent your eternal Word, made human in Christ Jesus, to live as one of us, and to reveal your glory. Giving himself up to death on the cross, he triumphed over evil and opened for us the way of everlasting life.

On the night before he died, as he sat at table with his friends, Our Lord Jesus Christ took bread. Giving thanks to you, he broke it, and shared it with them, saying:

“Take, eat: This is my Body which is given for you. Do this in memory of me.”

As supper was ending, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks, and shared it with them, saying:

“Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in memory of me.”

Therefore, we proclaim the mystery of faith:

The LEM says

Christ has died.

*Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.*

The Celebrant continues

In that mystery we offer to you this bread and this wine, fruit of the vine and the work of human hands. May they become for us the Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. May we who share them be filled with that Holy Spirit to live as Christ's Body in the world. May we come to the everlasting heritage of your children, and with the apostles and martyrs and all your saints, enter into the joys of your salvation.

Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to you be honor, glory, and praise, now and forever. *AMEN.*

Now, as Christ taught us, we are bold to say,

The LEM prays

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.*

The Breaking of the Bread

The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread, and then keeps a period of silence. The Celebrant continues

Celebrant: Alleluia! Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

LEM: Therefore, let us keep the feast. Alleluia!

Celebrant: The Gifts of God for the People of God.

The People consume their gifts. After Communion, the Celebrant says

Let us pray. *The Celebrant prays*

Eternal God, holy Lord, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us forth now in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart, through Christ our Lord. *Amen*

Blessing and Dismissal

The Celebrant says

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you.

The Lord guide your feet in the way of love and the way of peace.

The LEM says

Let us go forth, in peace, to love and serve the Lord.

Withdrawal Hymn: Christ for the world we sing, vv.1-3
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The Hymnal 1982, #

Christ for the world we sing!
The world to Christ we bring with loving zeal;
the poor, and them that mourn,
the faint and overborne, sin-sick and sorrow-worn,
whom Christ doth heal.

Christ for the world we sing!
The world to Christ we bring with fervent prayer;
the wayward and the lost,
by restless passions tossed, redeemed at countless cost
from dark despair.

Christ for the world we sing!
The world to Christ we bring with one accord;
with us the work to share,
with us reproach to dare, with us the cross to bear,
for Christ our Lord.

The Celebrant, the LEM, and the People depart, maintaining physical distance.

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For information about St. Mark's, please visit our website:

www.stmarksfairland.org

www.stmarks-silverspring.org

We hope that today's service has been a blessing to you.

We are here to serve you, and hope to see you again.

Please feel free to call us, email us, or visit us online.