

Possible Prayer of Church [Paschal Feast] *Easter Sunday* ✱ April 20th, 2025

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Holy LORD, mighty God, You have borne the sin of the world and given to us the promise of new and everlasting life. Receive our thanks for the glorious Resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. Bring us with Him to our own joyful resurrection and the reunion of all Your saints. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Heavenly Father, You have established the Church as the instrument of Your saving purpose and endowed us with the gift of Your Word and Sacrament. Embolden us with the Holy Spirit, that we may be renewed in witness, sustained in trial and refreshed through the Means of Grace. Bless those who bring Your gifts and preach Your Word. Give us willing ears to hear and willing hearts to keep this Easter faith. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Give peace, LORD, to our homes and enliven them by Christ's resurrected life. Let the forgiveness of sins reign among husbands and wives, parents and children. Assure those who live alone that they, too, are Your children, upheld by Your right hand. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Bless our President, and all who make and administer our laws. Frustrate the forces of evil, and do not let our leaders cooperate with them or further their goals. Guard our armed forces as they stand watch for us at home and abroad. Let them serve with honor and integrity. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Gracious LORD, Your healing and strength are the hope of all the weary and afflicted. According to Your gracious will, give to all the sick and those who suffer healing and relief [*especially Our Savior & Faith Prayers and all those we keep in our hearts in personal prayer.* Grant them patience and hope until that day when they put on new and glorious bodies raised by Christ and receive the end of all afflictions. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Most Holy Father, this is the Feast of Victory, for the Lamb who was slain has begun His reign. By Your Spirit LORD, each time we celebrate the LORD prepare us to receive His body and blood for the strengthening of our faith in this mortal life. Build in us anticipation for the marriage supper of the Lamb, which we and all the people of God shall feast upon in His kingdom without end. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

O LORD, Heavenly Father, You have not let Your Holy One see corruption, but have raised Him in triumph from the dead, never to die again. Therefore, our hearts are glad and we rejoice, for our flesh also dwells secure. Since You have set Him at Your right hand, lead us to set His Resurrection before us at all times, that His Path of Life and the fullness of joy in His presence may be known to us, until we come also to the eternal pleasures at His right hand, forevermore; for You, O Father, with the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

PASCHA EASTER Mark 16:1-8 & Psalm 16 *THE PATH OF LIFE* 4.20.25 F.OS.L

Psalm 16: [A Michtam of David.] Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust. ² O my soul, you have said to the LORD, "You are my LORD, My goodness is nothing apart from You." ³ As for the saints who are on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight." ⁴ Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god; Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer, Nor take up their names on my lips. ⁵ O LORD, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot. ⁶ The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Yes, I have a good inheritance. ⁷ I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel; My heart also instructs me in the night seasons. ⁸ I have set the LORD always before me; Because He is at my Right Hand I shall not be moved. ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. ¹⁰ For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. ¹¹ You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

GREETING Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the LORD Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for today is from [Gospel] **Mark 16**, and [above] from **Psalm 16**:

*The LORD is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!***

DILEMMA "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" [**Mark 16:3**]. This was the question that the women asked one another that first Easter morning. Their LORD was gone forever. That's what they thought. Their journey to the grave must have been long and lonely. All of the talk about Jesus as the Messiah seemed cold and dead on their lips. But they wanted to do what was right. They wanted to bring the spices and anoint His body. If He could not live, at least He should die with honor and respect as a great teacher.

IT'S A BATTLE **We all fight this battle. This battle is with sin and death.** Sometimes the battle seems to be going well. We're healthy, the kids are doing okay, and tax season is almost over. God is gracious, and there is much to rejoice about. Other times, though, it seems as though death and Satan are winning. A loved one dies. There's a sickness that just won't go away. The economy. Jobs. School. Divorce. Fighting at home. Sometimes the fight is long and the battle hard. Sometimes this earthly strife that we all undergo never seems to end. It can feel as though there is no future, no hope for things to ever get better.

WILL THE DEAD RISE? We, of course, are not the first Christians to ever have this battle with Satan and sin and death. **St. Paul** writes in **1 Cor. 15** about those who weren't certain of the resurrection of the dead. They didn't know whether the dead would rise. They thought you lived and you died, and that was the end. To that fear and concern he wrote: *"If in Christ we have hope in life only, we are of all people most to be pitied."* [**1 Corinthians 15:19**]

CHEERFUL FAITH **How often have you been miserable because you have forgotten the most basic, fundamental core of the Christian faith?** How often have you lived as if Jesus' dead Body were still decaying outside of Jerusalem somewhere? When we allow the trials and crosses of this life to define us, **it is as if we are asking that question with the women at the tomb.** I don't mean that we should always be happy, or that if we simply have a more positive attitude, things will automatically get better. Heaven knows that there are times when things are hard. We do suffer in this life. And that suffering is real, it is painful, and it may feel as though it will never end.

CHRIST HAS RISEN **But Jesus Christ HAS risen from the dead.** And for poor, weak sinners like you and me that is good news indeed. No, it is the very best of news. **David** exclaimed this in **Psalms 16** when he prayed,

For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let Your Holy One see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your Right Hand are pleasures forevermore. [**Psalms 16:10–11**].

FROM DEATH TO LIFE The path that we walk this day is the **path of life through death.** There is no such thing as life for us apart from Jesus' death and Resurrection. But with Christ, there is hope. This hope is not a pie-in-the-sky sort of everything-will-get-better hope. No, God founds this hope on Jesus' death and resurrection for us. David prayed again in **Psalms 16:2**, *"I say to the LORD, 'You are my LORD; I have no good apart from You.'"*

ARE YOU/WE UN/WORTHY? But what if you believe this path is **not for you?** What if you believe that Jesus' death and Resurrection are **not enough**, or that **you are not worthy of God?** To you I say, remember **St. Paul**. Untimely born, "out of step" with the other Apostles, if anyone would have a claim on being **UNworthy of God's mercy**, it would be Paul. He was a persecutor, a murderer by nearly anyone's standards, or the least of the apostles, as he would call himself [**1 Corinthians 15:9**]. Yet **God had mercy on him, baptized him, and made him as His own child.**

YOU [& PAUL] ARE WORTHY This is true for St. Paul, **and it is true for you**, dearly beloved. Everything you have and are, all of your good you have, is from God Himself, who gave Himself to you so that you might have hope. He gives Himself to you so that **you can actually LIVE, not just survive to suffer another day.** This is what we pray in the **Catechism**:

That I may be His own and live under Him in His Kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. **This is most certainly true.** [**Small Catechism, Second Article**]

FORGIVENESS FORETASTE We have talked a lot **about [Jesus' Blood of] Forgiveness in this year's Lenten journey.** We've talked about our **need for forgiveness**, the destructive effect sin has on our lives, and we have talked about how **sin produces more sin all the time.** But more important than that, we have heard how **God forgives**, that He **LONGS to forgive**, that His **forgiveness covers you**, and that His gracious presence in your life is just **a foretaste of what is to come** of an eternity of fellowship in Him.

EVERYDAY'S EASTER **So rejoice this day and be glad.** In fact, rejoice **every** day and be glad. The things of this life that weigh you down **will pass.** God is at peace with you, and you do not need to be afraid of anything that comes your way. **Jesus is risen**, and that is **all that really matters in this life.** Believe it for the sake of our risen Savior, Jesus Christ our LORD.

HYMN VERSE ELH #346 [to TUNE of "Angels from the Realms"]

**1. Death is dead, the true Life liveth! O'er the portals of the grave
Life's great Sun bright-shining giveth Light our darkened souls to save:
Christ arisen bursts our prison; See His triumph-banners wave.**

**2. Life's own King on Calv'ry dying, Wins a crown of life for me;
E'en the grave to Him complying Flow'rs in life abundant free;
Death's chill sadness changed to gladness- This the Easter victory!**

**3. He who rose from death all-glorious Soon will gather to His side
Those who sleep in Him, victorious By the blood His wounds supplied;
Flesh and spirit, through His merit, Reunited, glorified.**

**4. Jesus, death's Destroyer, make me Day by day to die with Thee;
Thus, with Thee arising, take me Thine through all the days to be-
Thine for ever, faithless never- This my prayer unceasingly.**

IJ'N, Amen. SDG