



## **SUNDAY PRAYER**


**THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER  
"ROGATION SUNDAY"**

**MAY 17, 2020  
GRACE CHURCH, TRUMBULL**

# THE WORD OF GOD

## Hymn: All things bright and beautiful (Hymnal #405)

*Descant*



All things bright and beau - ti - ful, crea-tures great and small,

*Refrain*



All things bright and beau - ti - ful, all crea-tures great and small,



all things wise and won - der - ful, God made them all.



all things wise and won - der - ful, the Lord God made them all.



- 1 Each lit - tle flower that o - pens, each lit - tle bird that sings,
- 2 The pur - ple - head - ed moun-tain, the riv - er run - ning by,
- 3 The cold wind in the win - ter, the pleas - ant sum - mer sun,
- 4 He gave us eyes to see them, and lips that we might tell



he made their glow-ing col - ors, he made their ti - ny wings.  
 the sun - set, and the morn - ing that bright-ens up the sky,  
 the ripe fruits in the gar - den, he made them ev - ery one.  
 how great is God Al - might - y, who has made all things well.

Words: Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895) Music: *Royal Oak*, melody from *The Dancing Master*; 1686; adapt. and harm. Martin Fallas Shaw (1875-1958)  
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Leader Alleluia. Christ is risen.  
People The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

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.

### **The Hymn of Praise *Pascha Nostrum***

Alleluia.  
Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us; \*  
therefore let us keep the feast,  
Not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, \*  
but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Alleluia.  
Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; \*  
death no longer has dominion over him.  
The death that he dies, he dies to sin, once for all; \*  
but the life he lives, he lives to God.  
So also consider yourselves dead to sin, \*  
and alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Alleluia.  
Christ has been raised from the dead, \*  
the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.  
For since by a man came death, \*  
by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.  
For as in Adam all die, \*  
so also in Christ shall all be made alive. Alleluia.

*1 Corinthians 5:7-8; Romans 6:9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22*

### **The Collect of the Day**

Leader The Lord be with you.  
People And also with you.  
Leader Let us pray.

O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as  
surpass our understanding: Pour into our hearts such love towards you,  
that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your  
promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our  
Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for  
ever and ever. **Amen.**

## The Collect for stewardship of creation

O merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## The First Reading

Acts 17:22-31

Reader A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said,

'For we too are his offspring.'

Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.



- 7 Bless our God, you peoples; \*  
    make the voice of his praise to be heard;
- 8 Who holds our souls in life, \*  
    and will not allow our feet to slip.
- 9 For you, O God, have proved us; \*  
    you have tried us just as silver is tried.
- 10 You brought us into the snare; \*  
    you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.
- 11 You let enemies ride over our heads;  
    we went through fire and water; \*  
    but you brought us out into a place of refreshment.
- 12 I will enter your house with burnt-offerings  
    and will pay you my vows, \*  
    which I promised with my lips  
    and spoke with my mouth when I was in trouble.
- 13 I will offer you sacrifices of fat beasts  
    with the smoke of rams; \*  
    I will give you oxen and goats.
- 14 Come and listen, all you who fear God, \*  
    and I will tell you what he has done for me.
- 15 I called out to him with my mouth, \*  
    and his praise was on my tongue.
- 16 If I had found evil in my heart, \*  
    the Lord would not have heard me;
- 17 But in truth God has heard me; \*  
    he has attended to the voice of my prayer.
- 18 Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer, \*  
    nor withheld his love from me.

**The Epistle**

**1 Peter 3:13-22**

Reader      A reading from the First Letter of Peter.

Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for

doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you-- not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Reader        The Word of the Lord.

People        Thanks be to God.

### **The Gospel**

**John 14:15-21**

Reader        A reading from the Gospel of John.

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

Reader        The Word of the Lord.

People        Thanks be to God.



## A Reflection

The Rev. Dr. Paul Jacobson

Alleluia. Christ is risen.  
*The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.*

In today's reflection I want to take a slightly different path. On most Sundays, we think together about how God is revealed in holy scripture, most especially in the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ. But our tradition tells us that God has also spoken to us through the prophets and the law. In addition, God was revealed through a series of covenants, or promises, made to David, to Abraham and to Noah.

But prior to, and underlying, all the rest, God's first revelation, God's first gift to us was Creation. The first line of today's Collect reminds us: *O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding.*

Today, the Sixth Sunday of Easter, is also known as Rogation Sunday. The name comes from the Latin *rogare* – to ask. Traditionally, rogation days were the three days before Ascension Thursday, where prayers were sung in procession. They originated in Vienne, France in the fifth century when the bishop introduced days of prayer and fasting to ward off earthquakes and, according to legend, packs of wolves.

In England, rogation days were associated with the blessing of the fields at planting. The vicar would "beat the bounds" of the parish, processing around the fields reciting psalms and the litany. In the United States they have been associated with rural life and with agriculture and fishing. *Rogationtide* in the spring is the foundation for what we celebrate in the fall as Thanksgiving for the gifts of the earth.

So, why do I want us to think about Rogationtide today? For many if not most of us, what used to be our "normal" daily routine has changed radically in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. We simply can't, or shouldn't, do many of the things that seemed ordinary just months ago.

Several weeks ago, I talked about how fasting from the Eucharist has invited me to have a more thoughtful relationship to the food I prepare in my actual kitchen. Last week we looked at our desire to find security and control in knowing the answers. Today, I want to suggest that the while our physical comings and goings are restricted, we have an opportunity to develop (or renew) a more intentional relationship with God's first gift – Creation.

At first glance, this may sound frivolous. Here we are, facing a pandemic and economic crisis the likes of which we've never seen, and here I am, wanting to talk about plants. But in the hardest of times, we might do well to remember God's first gift. And this is not the first time God's people have been faced with choices in the midst of calamity.

We sometimes tend to view the past, particularly in the Church, as the "good old days." Our rose-colored glasses allow us to think that people in olden times were closer to God, and that you and I live in the absolute worst time possible. I don't think that this is true.

By way of comparison, let me introduce you to a 17<sup>th</sup> century priest and poet named Thomas Traherne. His writings explore the glory of Creation and creation's role in his intimate relationship with God. But his ornate, even flowery, writings didn't spring from some perfect past.

In his brief lifetime of 37 years (1637-1674), Traherne's native England suffered through three Civil Wars, the trial and execution of a King, decades of religious and political uncertainty, the restoration of the monarchy, the Great Plague of London (which killed a quarter of London's population in 18 months) and, a just a year later, the Great Fire of London which, in addition to 87 London parish churches and St. Paul's Cathedral, destroyed the homes of 7 out of 8 Londoners. Hardly the good old days.

Yet, in the midst of this profound chaos and death, Traherne sought God's presence as it was revealed in Creation, as Psalm 19 says, *the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork*. For Traherne, the created order is the "beautiful frontispiece (illustration) of Eternity" (*Cent. I:20*). "It is a glorious mirror wherein you may see the verity (truth) of all religion" (*Cent. II:17*).

Reading Traherne is like walking through the jungle; you need a machete. But, in my most favorite passage, Traherne suggests how we might enjoy Creation:

*You never enjoy the world aright, till the Sea itself flows in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens, and crowned with the stars: and perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the whole world, and more than so, because other people are in it who are every one sole heirs as well as you. Till you can sing and rejoice and delight in God, as misers do in gold, and Kings in sceptres, you never enjoy the world.*<sup>1</sup>

Enjoying the world is essential to knowing God. That seems clear, but there's more, and what I want you to notice is this. Traherne says that I must understand that God's entire creation was made for me, the sole heir. But, and this is key, Creation is not for my needs and desires alone, to exploit however I want. I am not the only sole heir. Every other child of God is also a sole heir.

God's first gift of Creation is never a zero-sum game where anything that you have means that you took it from me. There's not a sole heir and a beggar. There's no us and them. To appreciate Traherne's wisdom that God's creation is *only* for *all* of us is to begin to love God, and our neighbors as ourselves.

At last, spring seems to be here for real. As green and growing things sprout from the earth, Rogationtide gives us the sense that all creation participates in Christ's resurrection. This is why it is so important to examine our relationship to Creation, and each other, especially in these difficult and uncertain times.

So, in these lovely, warm and green days, I invite you to spend time outside (safely still, of course). If you have a yard or garden, bring fresh eyes to their care. Make a prayer of every lawn mowed, of every tree pruned. For the young ones among us, plant (or help your parents

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Traherne, *Centuries of Meditation*, I:29.



plant) something new this year. Try a different variety of flower or vegetable and rejoice in watching what the earth brings forth. If you want or need to stay indoors, try a window box.

If you have to go somewhere to be in the open air, find a favorite spot, new or old. And, over the course of your walks, pay attention to the patterns of growth. How do the greens change color over time? What variations happen in the shady undergrowth? What are the creatures, especially the birds, up to? What do you see that you've never seen before? In every case, pay attention, and give God thanks!

As you care for your own corner of Creation, leaving as small a footprint as possible, remember also to care for your neighbors who are struggling to feed themselves. Call your local food bank and ask what they need. Then do what you can. To paraphrase Traherne, Creation is never about "God and me." It's always about "God and me and thee."

At the end of today's service there is a Rite for the Blessing of a Garden. I encourage you to adapt it to your own setting, and to continue to use the prayers through the growing season. May God bless your discoveries!

I can think of no better way to conclude than with the prayer that the Church offers to celebrate Thomas Traherne, the poet of Creation. Let us pray...

*Creator of wonder and majesty, you inspired your poet Thomas Traherne with mystical insight to see your glory in the natural world and in the faces of men and women around us: Help us to know you in your creation and in our neighbors, and to understand our obligations to both, that we may ever grow into the people you have created us to be; through our Savior Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in everlasting light. Amen.<sup>2</sup>*

## **The Nicene 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

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<sup>2</sup> *Holy Women, Holy Men: Celebrating the Saints*. New York: Church Publishing. 2010. p. 621.

he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.  
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**

As we enter into prayer today, let us remember those in:

#### **Grace's Parish Prayer Cycle**

Bill Feige.

#### **Diocesan Cycle of Prayer**

St. James', New Haven; St. John's, New Haven; St. Luke's, New Haven.

Companions in Mission for Publishing & Communication, Education for Ministry  
leaders and students.

#### **Anglican Cycle of Prayer**

The Anglican Church of Korea.

### **A Litany for Rogation Sunday** (*from the Anglican Church of New Zealand*)

Caring God, we thank you for your gifts in creation:

**for our world and the heavens that tell of your glory;**

for our land, its beauty and its resources,

**for the rich heritage we enjoy.**

We pray: for those who make decisions about the resources of the earth,  
**that we may use your gifts responsibly.**

for those who work on land and sea, in cities and in industry,  
**that we may enjoy the fruits of their labors and marvel at your creation;**

for artists, scientists and visionaries,  
**that through their work we may see creation afresh.**

We thank you for giving us life;  
**for all who enrich our experience.**

We pray: for all who are deprived of fullness of life,  
**for prisoners, refugees, and those who are sick;**

for those in politics, medical science, social and relief work, and for your Church,  
**for all who seek to bring life to others.**

We thank you that you have called us to celebrate your creation.  
**Give us reverence for life in your world.**

We thank you for your redeeming love;  
**may your word and sacrament strengthen us to love as you love us.**

God, Creator, bring us new life.  
**Jesus, Redeemer, renew us.**

Holy Spirit, strengthen and guide us.

*Silence*

O heavenly Father, you have filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in all your works; that, rejoicing in your whole creation, we may learn to serve you with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**The Lord's Prayer** *feel free to use whatever version you prefer*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those

who sin against us.  
 Save us from the time of trial,  
 and deliver us from evil.  
 For the kingdom, the power,  
 and the glory are yours,  
 now and for ever. Amen.

Leader Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia, Alleluia!  
 People Thanks be to God. Alleluia, Alleluia!  
 Leader May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the  
 power of the Holy Spirit. *Romans 15:13*  
 People Amen.

**Hymn: Alleluia, alleluia! Give thanks to the risen Lord (Hymnal #178)**

Al-le - lu - ia, al-le - lu - ia! Give thanks to the ris-en Lord. Al-le - lu - ia, al-le-  
 lu - ia! Give praise to his Name.

1. Je - sus is Lord of all the earth,
2. Spread the good news o'er all the earth:
3. We have been cru - ci - fied with Christ.
4. Come, let us praise the liv - ing God,

He is the King of cre - a - tion. Al - le  
 Je - sus has died and has ris - en.  
 Now we shall live for ev - er.  
 joy - ful - ly sing to our Sa - vior.

**MISCELLANEOUS PRAYERS**

**A Collect for Sundays**

O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

**For Peace**

O God, the author of peace and lover of concord, to know you is eternal life and to serve you is perfect freedom: Defend us, your humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in your defense, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**For Mission**

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

**For those who face great uncertainty**

God of the present moment,  
God who in Jesus stills the storm  
and soothes the frantic heart;  
bring hope and courage to all  
who wait or work in uncertainty.  
Bring hope that you will make them the equal  
of whatever lies ahead.  
Bring them courage to endure what cannot be avoided,  
for your will is health and wholeness;  
you are God, and we need you.

*Adapted from A New Zealand Prayer Book, p. 765*

**A Collect in Times of Pandemic**

Grant we beseech thee, merciful Lord, help and deliverance unto us, who are visited with grievous sickness and mortality. Sanctify to us this our sore distress, and prosper with thy continual blessing those who labor to devise for mankind protection against disease and pain; through him who both healed and hallowed pain, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

*Proposed Prayer Book 1928 (Church of England)*

**For the Victims of Addiction**

O blessed Lord, you ministered to all who came to you: Look with compassion upon all who through addiction have lost their health and freedom. Restore to them the assurance of your unfailing mercy; remove from them the fears that beset them; strengthen them in the work of their recovery; and to those who care for them, give patient understanding and persevering love. Amen.

### **A Prayer Attributed to St. Francis**

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is discord, union;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;

to be understood as to understand;

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

### **The General Thanksgiving**

Almighty God, Father of all mercies,

we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks

for all your goodness and loving-kindness

to us and to all whom you have made.

We bless you for our creation, preservation,

and all the blessings of this life;

but above all for your immeasurable love

in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ;

for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies,

that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise,

not only with our lips, but in our lives,

by giving up our selves to your service,

and by walking before you

in holiness and righteousness all our days;

through Jesus Christ our Lord,

to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,

be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

# Prayers for Rogation Days: A Rite for the Blessing of a Garden

*(Book of Occasional Services 98-99)*

*Leader* Blessed be the God of all creation:

*People* For in your goodness you make all things new.

*Leader* The Lord be with you.

*People* And also with you.

*Leader* Let us pray.

Gracious God, you open wide your hand and give of your goodness to all things living: Renew the face of the earth and increase the sustainable harvests of the world, that the land may bring forth enough for all, and your people may share justly and give honor to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*One or more of the following collects may be said*

Lover of all you have made: Protect and sustain the creatures of our local habitat. Increase their well-being, watch over them with love, and give us wisdom to honor our kinship with them; through Jesus Christ, the first-born of all creation. *Amen.*

God, whose Spirit moved over the deep: We thank you for the gift of water. Bless the waters on the ground and under the ground, and the waters that fall from the sky, that this garden may flourish and bear good fruit; through Jesus Christ our Savior. *Amen.*

God, who alone provides seed for the sower and bread for the eater, you have taught us to ask of you our daily bread: Bless the sowing of the seed this year, grant fertility to the soil, and strengthen the hands of the gardeners who till it, that through their labor your people may be nourished; through Jesus Christ, the bread of life. *Amen.*

Holy God, you have blessed our plowing and preparing of the ground: Protect what we plant in your name, and grant that working late and early, we and others may enjoy a fruitful harvest; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Holy God, you have blessed our plowing and preparing of the ground: Protect what we plant and bring it to maturity, that we and others may enjoy a fruitful harvest; through Jesus Christ our Sustainer. *Amen.*

*All then say*

Holy One: Bless and protect this garden and all who keep it. Strengthen and uphold them in their labor, that these plants may bear good fruit and our care for the earth may witness to your love and justice; in the name of the Holy and Undivided Trinity. *Amen.*

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.