

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday following the  
Epiphany  
24 January 2021

The Sunday in the Week of Prayer  
for Christian Unity

**Grace Episcopal Church**  
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Honesdale, PA

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**The Third Week after Epiphany, 2021**  
*Virtual Grace*  
Observing the Week Of Prayer  
**For Christian Unity**

Organ Prelude - *“There is a Spirit that desires to do no evil”*

N. Rorem

*ANNOUNCEMENTS*

Hello and welcome to “Virtual Grace”  
from Grace Episcopal Church in Honesdale, PA,  
as we offer a service in this week during which throughout the world  
each year we are called to prayer for Christian Unity.

This week we heard wondrous words from the youngest Poet Laureate ever  
in our country, Amanda Gorman,  
challenging all Americans to be one union under God.  
Inspiring words from the youth of our country.

I’m Fr. Ed, the rector of our parish, and we’re glad you’re here in “Virtual Grace,”  
not knowing when our doors will be open again for in-person worship  
and the offering of the Blessed Sacraments.

The Clergy of the Diocese met virtually - we’re getting way too good at this -  
we met virtually with Bishop Nichols.  
And there are hopes and prayers that we may be hitting the peak of the virus,  
and could possibly open our doors for in-person celebration of Easter -  
the Resurrection to New Life -  
and we pray a renewal of life, after this season of death.

It is our Christian mission to spread the Good News of Salvation  
in whatever situation one may find themselves.  
And we here are the people of Grace as our name proclaims to our community.

If you, or anyone you know, are in any pastoral need at all, call me, 24/7.  
I am more than ready to come to your spiritual aid and visit with a mask.  
We’ve learned that it is possible to make ‘porch visits’ as we call it.

Let us always remember that our salvation lies only  
in our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, in this life and in the world to come.

## CONFESSION & ASSURANCE of PARDON

St. Paul writes:

In Christ we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us.

*Ephesians 1:7-8*

Let us confess our sins against God and our fellow sisters and brothers.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,

by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart;

we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us;

that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways,

to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive our sins through our savior Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, strengthen us in all goodness, ✚ and keep us in eternal life. Amen.

COLLECT for The Unity of the Church

BCP p.255

Let us pray...

Almighty Father, whose blessed Son before his passion prayed for his disciples that they might be one, as you and he are one: Grant that your Church, being bound together in love and obedience to you, may be united in one body by the one Spirit, that the world may believe in him whom you have sent, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

FIRST READING

*Isaiah 35: 1-10*

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Here ends the Reading.

GRADUAL

*Psalm 122*

- 1 I was glad when they said to me, \*  
"Let us go to the house of the Lord."
- 2 Now our feet are standing \*  
within your gates, O Jerusalem.
- 3 Jerusalem is built as a city \*  
that is at unity with itself;
- 4 To which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, \*  
the assembly of Israel, to praise the Name of the Lord.
- 5 For there are the thrones of judgment, \*  
the thrones of the house of David.
- 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: \*  
"May they prosper who love you.
- 7 Peace be within your walls \*  
and quietness within your towers.
- 8 For my brethren and companions' sake, \*  
I pray for your prosperity.
- 9 Because of the house of the Lord our God, \*  
I will seek to do you good."

## SECOND READING

*John 17: 1-3, 17-23*

Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Here ends the Reading.

## MEDITATION

It was in 1901 that the World Council of Churches

inaugurated the annual observance of The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Until this year, locally, we celebrated each others' traditions in an annual gathering

at St. Peter's Cathedral in Scranton, hosted and presided over by the Bishop.

Last year our own Bishop Kevin was the guest preacher.

Years ago, two good friends in the Catholic Diocese who were in charge

and knew me to be a musician (one of them now down the street here)

asked if I would chant the Invocation of the Holy Spirit

with the assembled Choir.

This was shortly after the former Pope declared all other denominations... well...

So I said to the two of them, "Let me understand,

if the Pope has declared my ordination invalid, am I actually able

to invoke the Holy Spirit?"

“Oh, shut up, Ed,” was the response.

“Just sing.”

I also have to share that the other of the two Catholic priests and I shared a family - most were Catholic, the son was Episcopalian, and would often bring his father, now deceased to St. John’s.

I was asked to share in the Requiem Mass, and as the two of us were in the Sacristy vesting ourselves, my colleague threw out, “Well, if a certain person comes to the Altar Rail to receive Communion, I don’t know that I would refuse.”

I chuckled and declined, “I appreciate the sentiment.

But there are enough of both parishes present who might be offended.”

One more story:

the Ministerium here would meet monthly for lunch.

We invited a new local pastor of more fundamental leanings to join us - and he did.

At our first gathering I looked at him, knowing our theological differences, and said, “If my being here as a liberal Episcopalian is a hindrance, it is more important to me for you to be with our colleagues here.”

His generous respons, “As long as we all acknowledge that Jesus is Lord, all else falls into place.”

We’ve remained friends ever since.

One of our own parishioners has been noted to say many times,

“Can’t we all just get along?”

It is a truly sad thing that has come upon us, these days.

I need not enumerate the events of these past weeks, years, maybe even decades.

But we heard this week, “Unity is our path forward.”

Jesus lifts his eyes to heaven and prays, "Let them all be one."  
Is this prayer lifting up his eyes to the heavens  
really a plea for God's mercy and grace as Jesus anticipates  
what we throughout the centuries will become?

"DEAR GOD!

MAKE THEM ONE.

PLEASE!

I BEG YOU.

SANCTIFY THESE PEOPLE.

MAKE THEM ONE

THAT YOU MAY BE GLORIFIED IN THEM!"

Michael Curry, our Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church,  
is constantly in his ministry reminding us, no, PUSHING us,  
to remember that God is Love,  
and we Christians are to be the example of love -  
each and every one of us Christians.

Let us start in our own house.

We Episcopalians can and should be the light of love, reconciliation and peace  
to this broken world, to this torn and divided Christian faith.

Let us, like I hear Jesus, plead in earnest voices, cry aloud to God:

Please, O God, make us one!

But not let it fall lightly on God's ears.

For I know in my heart that God wants us not just to put words in the ear,  
but wants the faithful to commit ourselves and work out the call to love,  
to reconciliation, and peace.

We Episcopalians recognize and celebrate the truth that we don't have to agree.  
We honor and enjoy the yin and yang struggle of being challenged  
by our sisters and brothers in the faith  
and yet join together, side by side, helping each other to stand at the Altar,  
and raise the cup and break the bread.

We are, after all, a Communion,  
sharing in the Common Cup,  
a Comm-Unity,  
"One Body, many parts," as St. Paul reminds us,  
and each as important and as needed as the other.

The Psalmist rejoices:

"How good and pleasant it is when the family of God lives together in unity!"  
*Psalm 133:1*

How good and pleasing indeed.

"Where true charity and love dwell, God himself is there."  
*ubi caritas*

AMEN

Let us offer together the Creed of our Baptism,  
at which time we vow to honor the dignity of every human being.

The APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the Virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection ☩ of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

We have been dividing the Parish Directory each week to lift up a portion of our family of faith.

Let us pray for God's people throughout the world.

PRAYERS, Form II, *adapted*

BCP, p.385

I ask your prayers for God's people throughout the world; for Justin, the Archbishop of Canterbury; Michael, our Presiding Bishop; Kevin, our Bishop; and for all ministers and faithful. Remembering those in our parish family: Fr. Ed & Sue, David and Miwa, Jean, Sandy and John, Dee Dee and James, Betsy, Eileen & Onre, Margo, John & Page, and Ellie; Pray for our parish family, and the Church throughout the world.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for peace; for Joe and Kamala, President and Vice President of our country; for Tom our Governor; Sarah, our mayor; for goodwill among nations; and for the well-being of all people. Pray for justice and peace in our country, in our homes and abroad.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for the poor, the hungry, the oppressed, those in prison, those separated from loved ones, for the sick, the crippled, the disabled and those suffering from Covid-19 symptoms, especially Mike. Pray for those in any need or trouble.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for the departed, especially Mark, those who have succumbed to the virus, and those killed by violent acts. Pray for those who have died.

*Silence*

I ask your thanksgiving for loved ones, and the creative ways they and we have found to share our love, especially in this holy season. Pray for our families wherever they may be.

*Silence*

To sum up all these petitions, let us pray the words which Christ has taught us:

Our Father...

*BLESSING*

The blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, be with us, and remain with us always. *Amen.*

Organ Postlude

*“Ubi caritas et amor”*

J. Bertier (Taizé)