

Welcome to the First Communion of 2021

January 3, 2021

Good Morning to our members and friends at home,

This Sunday is the first service and the first communion of the new year. If you wish to participate in communion please have two elements ready. First, a drink in a cup or glass. This could be juice or any kind of water. Second, a piece of bread of any kind.

If you are unable to access the Sunday video, you are welcome and encouraged to follow this resource on your own and celebrate Communion by reading the Communion prayers and serving yourself keeping in mind that even when alone, we are all a part of the body of Christ.

Unison Morning Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Loving God on this the first Sunday of the new year, we confess the sins of the year past; the multitude of unkind words, self-centered actions, bitter thoughts, angry contests of will and our lack of love. In this new year, keep us safe from repeating the sins of the old, that we may at last be worthy to follow your Christ who taught us pray saying...*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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Prayers of the People

Lord God of all the ages, from whom we all gain life and breath, and to whom we at last return, once again we turn our thoughts to you as another year begins. This past year has been a trial, a season of contagion, of anger and fear, of clarity and confusion that has brought us an overarching and exhausting sadness. Even those precious moments that brought a smile, some laughter, a twinkle of light have not been enough to dispel the creep of melancholy. On this day pray that you, who can make all things new, will affect in us a new birth, a new faith, and a new hope in 2021. Decades have passed and from this church have gone unnumbered women and men to be disciples of Jesus and priests in the priesthood of all believers. Over those years that included war and peace, love and hatred, you doubtless found in them a new body for your ministry, responsive to your bidding, and attentive to your will; sometimes you must have found them a burden and a stumbling block to your design.

Of our own weaknesses in our time to be your body for ministry, we already know many and we ask of you both forgiveness and redemption. Other stumbling blocks we suspect that we do not yet recognize and pray that you will lead us into such knowledge of them that we discover how sorely we need your guidance. Frail in ourselves, we are mighty in your way; and in the year now opening before us, we beg that you will save us from the temptation of believing there is nothing more for us than what we see as the glories of our past. Loving God, this year grow us into what you have designed us to be; warmhearted, joyful Christians. Instill within us the hunger to be unobtrusively and incorruptibly good, truthful, kind, trustworthy, generous, and forgiving. Draw us ever closer to you; plant our feet ever more firmly in the footsteps of Jesus. Enable us this year to fight the good fight, to finish the race that you have set before us, to keep the faith, looking unto you, who hears each and every prayer, even as we lift to you those whom we know and love..... Loving God, in this new year may we endeavor to show our faith in all we say and all we do, Amen.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 2:13-23

Of the two Gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus, only The Gospel of Matthew tells the story of King Herod, the wise men from the east and the tragic events that follow the first Christmas in the town of Bethlehem. This accounting, while different from that of the Gospel of Luke, does not necessarily conflict with Luke's telling of Mary and Joseph bringing Jesus to the temple after eight days for the rites of the law. They can be seen as fitting together in a longer time frame with the story of the escape to Egypt, taking place after Mary, Joseph and Jesus had been to the temple.

Our lesson for today is from the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 2, verses 13-23.

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son." When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

"A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled,
because they are no more."

When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean."

After the reading, you may reflect on this passage.
The Communion Meditation is included on our video.

Communion Meditation: *Into the Woods*

The Sacrament of Communion

The Invitation

In this holy Communion, in humble thanksgiving for the life, suffering and resurrection of our Lord, may we offer to him our whole being in this new year.

In this holy Communion, may we be one in the mystical and universal Body of Christ, united in loving fellowship with God and with each other.

In this holy Communion, may we see ourselves as one with humanity and a part of God's creation.

In this holy Communion, may we remember with penitence and joy, Christ's great love for us, and his sacrifice for our redemption that has set us free.

In this holy mystery, may we abide in Christ and may Christ abide in us.

The Prayer of Consecration

Show us, O God, the brightness of your spirit as we gather about the table of Christ. Show us, O God, the radiance of your grace in the breaking of this bread. Show us, O God, the brilliance of your presence in the pouring of this cup. Reveal to us the depth of your love, reveal to us the ever-flowing streams of your forgiveness, reveal to us the wideness of your mercy. As we come to this table of grace, forgiveness, and mercy, may we catch a glimpse of your glory, your mystery, and your peace.

Blessing of the Bread

On the night that Jesus was to be betrayed, he sat at table with all of his disciples. During the course of the meal, he took bread off the table. When he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."
(You break your bread and eat)

Blessing of the Cup

Again, on that same night, Jesus took a cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. (You may drink from your cup)

Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving

In this new year, we give thanks, O God, for the grace given in the breaking of bread and the pouring of the cup. Keep us ever mindful of the depth and mystery of our faith so that in times of trial and times of rejoicing this common meal will be sufficient for us.

For the sake of Christ. Amen.

Benediction:

Go forth and serve your God with
patience and passion,

Be deliberate in living your faith.

Be steadfast in celebrating
the power of the Holy Spirit.

And may peace be your way in the world. Amen