

“Jesus Wept”
A Rite to Mark the First Anniversary
of the Global Coronavirus Pandemic Declaration



This rite is designed to begin at, or around 11:30AM on March 11, 2021 so three minutes of silence may be observed at 11:35AM.

A bell may be rung, a candle lit, or some other ceremonial action take place to signal the beginning of the rite.

Reader: Mary came where Jesus was and saw him. Kneeling at his feet, she said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother, Lazarus, would not have died.” Disturbed by her weeping, and by the grief of those who came with her, Jesus was troubled in spirit and deeply moved. He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept.

After a moment of silence, the rite continues:

Leader: Out of the depths we cry to you, O God.

People: **Turn your ear to the voice of our supplication.**

Leader: With yearning hearts we wait for you, trusting in your promises.

People: **We wait and we hope, more than a sentry waits for the morning light.**

Leader: For you, O God, are our strength and hope.

People: **Steadfast is your love, and your power to set free beyond measure.**

The Leader continues in these or similar words,

Today we mark the first anniversary of the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic by the World Health Organization. Over the past year, many have suffered pain and loss, and all of us have faced hardship or disruption. Yet, we also have experienced God’s presence in new and meaningful ways, witnessing the resiliency of God’s people when we trust in this presence. Therefore, our testimony is that, in the midst of darkness, uncertainty, and fear, we are not alone.

As we look back on both the tragedies and blessings of the past year, we call to mind the story of Jesus visiting the grave of his beloved friend Lazarus. Though Lazarus had been laid to rest for a period of four days, and death seemed to have the final word, Jesus commanded the stone sealing the tomb be rolled away. He called forth Lazarus into life, and exhorted the people to unbind the once dead man from his grave clothes and set him free. However, we also recall that Jesus was moved in his deepest being and wept at the grave of his friend.

As we mark this day, we weep with those who mourn and suffer and serve. Yet, we also look forward in confidence, trusting God's power to heal and deliver the creation he called into life and continues to love.

Let us pray.

After a brief period of silence, the Leader prays,

God of tender and fierce consolation,
your anointed One wept at the grave of his beloved friend Lazarus.
Cry us into love again:
break open our hearts to all who are vulnerable and alone,
to ourselves in our glorious finitude,
and to you, the source of all being,
so we may face sickness and fear, despair and death
with hope in the resurrection
and faith in the One who calls forth life from death,
Jesus Christ our Comforter,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**ⁱ

Reading *Matthew 11.28-30*

Reader: A Reading from the Gospel according of Matthew.

Jesus said, "All you who are struggling or carrying heavy burdens, come to me; come, and I will give you rest. Put on my yoke. Learn from me. I am gentle, and humble of heart. Come to me and you will find rest for yourselves. My yoke is easy to bear, and my burden is light."

Reader: The word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Moment of Silence

The Leader or a Cantor may introduce three minutes of silence, singing or saying,

In silence we wait; in darkness you come to us. Bring us your light.ⁱⁱ

The refrain may be repeated by participants.

Then a bell may be sounded to initiate the three minutes of silence.

After a period of three minutes of silence is observed, a bell may be sounded to signal the end of the period of silence.

Prayers the People

The Leader or another individual leads the Prayers of the People.

Let us join our voices with the One who is gentle and humble, lifting our hearts to God, praying, "Hear us as we pray, God of grace and mercy."

"Hear us as we pray, God of grace and mercy."

For the sick and suffering, particularly those afflicted by the COVID-19 virus; that God will bring them to wholeness, and restore them to those who love them, let us lift our hearts to God: **/R/**

For all who care for patients and their loved ones; that God will give them strength for their service, and wisdom to seek help when they are in need, let us lift our hearts to God: **/R/**

For the fragile elderly, those struggling with fear, people vulnerable in health, and all enduring isolation in this time of pandemic; that they may know the warm embrace of God's compassion, let us lift our hearts to God: **/R/**

For decision-makers at all levels of government and community health care; that they will be gifted with wisdom and courage for the wellbeing of those whom they are called to serve, let us lift our hearts to God: **/R/**

For all those who have died, and for mourners who must grieve their loss apart from loved ones; that the time will come when we may gather once again to sing "Alleluia" over the graves our beloved, let us lift our hearts to God: **/R/**

For whom or what else do we pray this day?

After a period of silence for biddings to be voiced, the Intercessor continues,

Let us lift our hearts to God: **/R/**

Collect

The Leader concludes the Prayers of the People, saying,

God of grace and compassion,
you shoulder our burdens and ease our heavy hearts.
As we mark the first anniversary
of the declaration of the pandemic by the World Health Organization,
be comfort for those who grieve,
strength for those who falter,
and eternal rest for those who have died.
Buttress our hearts and wills,
spark our imaginations,
and kindle hope in our depths,
that we may trust, follow, and love you,
for our wellbeing and the sake of the world.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Leader: Gathering all our cares into one,
let us pray as our Saviour taught us,

All: **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.**

or

Leader: And now, as our Saviour Christ has taught us,
we are bold to say,

All: **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,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Dismissal

Leader: Let us bless the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

ⁱ This collect is based upon two prayers, one for Christmas Eve composed by Ellen Clark-King, © 2020, used by permission; and the other Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002). All rights reserved.

ⁱⁱ Text by Susan Masters. Copyright © 2009, Augsburg Fortress. A musical version is available here:

<https://www.augsburgfortress.org/store/productgroup/1184/Holden-Prayer-Around-the-Cross>. A recording is found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIFQGaYFNek>