



“We will all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ”
cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
Ecumenical Prayer Service
Sunday, 22 January 2012 at 4:00 pm
Catholic Pastoral Center
Des Moines

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERVICE

The Ecumenical Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2012 comes to us from Poland where an ecumenical group has written a liturgy that draws on the experience of Polish Christians who have lived through times of joy and adversity. The history of Poland has been marked by a series of defeats, victories, invasions, partitions and oppression by foreign powers and hostile systems. The constant striving to overcome all enslavement and the desire for freedom are a feature of Polish history.

The service takes as its theme 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 which speaks of the transformative power of faith in Christ, particularly in relation to our praying for the visible unity of the Church, the Body of Christ. As we pray for and strive towards the full visible unity of Christians, we will be changed, transformed and conformed to the likeness of Christ. This is an exciting vision but it may fill us with some fear! The unity for which we pray will be brought about in God's own time, and such unity requires us to open ourselves to each other, to offer gifts to and receive gifts from one another, so that we might truly enter into the new life in Christ, which is the only true victory.

Poland has a particular custom of sharing a special wafer, the "opłatek" (plural: "opłatki"), in people's homes before the Christmas Eve meal, and also over Christmas in meetings in churches, and even at work. This custom is so precious to Poles, living at home and abroad, that it is practiced not only by people of different confessions, but also by non-believers. Each person is given a wafer. People then share this wafer by breaking off a piece of another person's wafer and eating it. In doing so they convey their best wishes to each other: expressions of unity, love, reconciliation, and forgiveness between people with whom they share their lives. The origin of the use of bread during this sharing comes from the Christmas story itself: Christ was born in Bethlehem, a word which means "house of bread." Then Jesus himself became the bread of life (John 6:35). On this occasion, we share the opłatek to heighten our expressions of peace and joy to one another, praying that one day all Christians may be brought to full visible unity.

Thank you for joining in prayer for Christian unity! You are invited to participate with full heart and voice, to the extent you are comfortable. As you arrive, you are invited to take an optatek for use during the sign of peace later in the service. You may wish to handle it carefully as it is somewhat fragile. **A:** Assembly **L:** Leader **R:** Reader

Prelude Music

“Evensong”, by Derek Hakes
Westminster Chimes Handbell Choir

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Call to Worship

“He Leadeth Me”, arr. Arnold Sherman
Westminster Chimes Handbell Choir, Westminster Presbyterian Church; John Cook, director

Entrance Hymn

Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service
Those who are able stand.

1. Lord, whose love in hum - ble ser - vice Bore the weight of hu - man need,
2. Still your chil - dren wan - der home - less; Still the hun - gry cry for bread;
3. As we wor - ship, grant us vi - sion, Till your love's re - veal - ing light,
4. Called from wor - ship in - to ser - vice Forth in your great name we go,

1. Who up - on the Cross for - sak - en, Of - fered mer - cy's per - fect deed;
2. Still the cap - tives long for free - dom: Still in grief we mourn our dead.
3. Till the height and depth and great - ness Dawns up - on our hu - man sight:
4. To the child, the youth, the ag - ed, Love in liv - ing deeds to show;

1. We, your ser - vants, bring the wor - ship Not of voice a - lone, but heart:
2. As, O Lord, your deep com - pas - sion Healed the sick and freed the soul,
3. Mak - ing known the needs and bur - dens Your com - pas - sion bids us bear,
4. Hope and health, good - will and com - fort, Coun - sel, aid and peace we give

1. Con - se - cra - ting to your pur - pose Ev - 'ry gift which you im - part.
2. Use the love your Spir - it kin - dles Still to save and make us whole.
3. Stir - ring us to tire - less striv - ing, Your a - bun - dant life to share.
4. That your chil - dren Lord, in free - dom, May your mer - cy know, and live.

Greeting

L: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

A: And also with you.

Introduction to the Service

After some remarks, the leader begins the introductory dialogue:

L: Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed.

A: Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

L: God in Christ is the Victor. Victory requires effort and struggle. As we pray for and strive towards the full visible unity of Christians, we will be changed, transformed and conformed to the likeness of Christ. Christians want to make this effort together, without triumphalism, in humility, serving God and their neighbor according to the example of Jesus Christ. In striving for unity, this is the attitude we desire to ask of God together.

Opening Prayer

L: Almighty God,

Through Jesus you say to us

that whoever wishes to be first must become the least and the servant of all.

We enter into your presence,

knowing that your victory is won

through the powerlessness of the cross.

We come to pray that your people may be one.

Teach us to accept humbly

that this unity is a gift of your Spirit;

through this gift, change and transform us

and make us more like your Son Jesus Christ.

A: Amen.

Prayer of Repentance

L: Almighty God, in spite of the unity we receive in Christ, we persist in our disunity. Have mercy on us.

A: Have mercy on us.

L: We harden our hearts when we hear the Gospel. Have mercy on us.

A: Have mercy on us.

L: We fail to serve You in our brothers and sisters. Have mercy on us.

A: Have mercy on us.

L: The disobedience of Adam and Eve brought suffering and death to us, and creation was wounded and torn apart. Have mercy on us.

A: Have mercy on us.

L: (After a moment of silence has been kept)

May God Almighty have mercy on us, forgive our sins, and lead us to eternal life.

A: Amen.

All are seated.

THE WORD OF GOD

Old Testament Reading

Habakkuk 3:17-19

R: A reading from the Book of the Prophet Habakkuk

Though the fig tree does not blossom,
and no fruit is on the vines;
though the produce of the olive fails
and the fields yield no food;
though the flock is cut off from the fold
and there is no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
I will exult in the God of my salvation.
God, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
and makes me tread upon the heights.

The word of the Lord.

A: Thanks be to God.

New Testament Reading

1 Corinthians 15:51-58

R: A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’
‘Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?’

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

The word of the Lord.

A: Thanks be God.

Meditation

“Fantasy on Kingsfold”, by Dean Wagner
Westminster Chimes

Gospel Reading

John 12:23-26

Those who are able stand.

R: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John.

All: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

R: Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Hymn After the Gospel

Now the Green Blade Rises

Please remain standing.



All 1. Now the green blade ris - es from the bur - ied grain,
Choir 2. In the grave they laid him, love by ha - tred slain,
All 3. Forth he came at East - er, like the ris - ing grain,
All 4. When our hearts are win - try, griev - ing, or in pain,



Wheat that in dark earth man - y days has lain;
Think - ing that he would nev - er wake a - gain,
He that for three days in the grave had lain;
Your touch can call us back to life a - gain,



Love lives a - gain, that with the dead has been;
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps un - seen;
Raised from the dead, my liv - ing Lord is seen;
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been;



Love is come a - gain like wheat a - ris - ing green.

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Message

SHARING CHRISTIAN FAITH

All are seated.

Choral Meditation

“How Very Good and Pleasant”, by K. Lee Scott
Quartet from Grandview University; Dr. Kathryn Duffy, Director

During this music, a collection is taken for the DMARC Food Pantry.

Confession of Faith: Apostles' Creed (Ecumenical Text)

Those who are able stand.

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary
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,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and 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.

Prayers for Unity and Transformation

R: United in Christ who gives us the victory, let us pray to God: For the Church, the Body of Christ, that we might truly live the unity we receive through the Holy Spirit. God our strength:

A: **Change us by your grace.**

R: For the leaders of our churches that they may be faithful to the unity to which all Christians are called. God our strength:

A: **Change us by your grace.**

R: For the nations of the world, that they may live in peace with one another and promote justice for all. God our strength:

A: **Change us by your grace.**

R: For all people, that we may be good stewards of the earth. God our strength:

A: **Change us by your grace.**

R: For the people of our society, that we may be transformed to live as caring neighbours to each other. God our strength:

A: **Change us by your grace.**

R: For the sick and suffering, that they may be transformed by your healing presence. God our strength:

A: **Change us by your grace.**

R: For all families and households, that their struggles and joys may find their fulfillment in your love. God our strength:

A: **Change us by your grace.**

R: For those who are dying, that they may be comforted by your presence. God our strength:

A: **Change us by your grace.**

L: *Lord, stand in our midst and grant us unity and peace.*

A: **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer (Ecumenical Text)

L: *When the disciples asked Jesus, "how shall we pray", he responded, "When you pray use these words:"*

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**

Sign of Peace: The Sharing of the Opłatek

Poland has a particular custom of sharing special wafer, the “opłatek”, in people’s homes, workplaces, and churches at Christmas. Each person is given a wafer. People then share this wafer by breaking off a piece of another person’s wafer and eating it. In doing so they convey their best wishes to each other, an expression of mutual unity, love, forgiveness, and reconciliation. We invite you to do the same as a sign of peace and a prayer for deepened unity, a unity which we pray may one day bring us to share the Eucharist. Today’s sharing falls short of the Eucharist; nevertheless, let our prayer for full unity and our genuine expression of the peace of Christ be sincere and filled with joy.

L: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

A: And also with you.

L: Let us offer each other this sign of peace.

All share the opłatek with one or more persons near them.

CONCLUDING RITES

Hymn

The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve

The musical score is written for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. It consists of three systems of music. The first system contains the first four lines of the hymn. The second system contains the next four lines. The third system contains the final four lines. The lyrics are as follows:

1 The Spir - it sends us forth to serve; we go in
 2 We go to com - fort those who mourn and set the
 3 We go to be the hands of Christ, to scat - ter
 4 Then let us go to serve in peace, the gos - pel

Je - sus' name to bring glad tid - ings
 bur - dened free; where hope is dim, to
 joy like seed and, all our days, to
 to pro - claim. God's Spir - it has em -

to the poor, God's fa - vor to pro - claim.
 share a dream and help the blind to see.
 cher - ish life, to do the lov - ing deed.
 pow - ered us; we go in Je - sus' name.

Prayer of Commitment

L: We remember what the Paul the Apostle writes in the First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15, 57-58):

R: Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

L: Praise to the Lord, who leads us into unity! Father, we dedicate this week to pray for the deepening of our unity in Christ. He has overcome death, and called us into new life in the Spirit. And so we pray:

*L: Changed by the Servant Christ–
A: Send us and together we will go!*

*L: Changed by the peace of the Risen Lord–
A: Send us and together we will go!*

*L: Changed through patient waiting for the Lord–
A: Send us and together we will go!*

*L: Changed by God's steadfast love–
A: Send us and together we will go!*

*L: Changed by the Suffering Servant–
A: Send us and together we will go!*

*L: Changed by the Good Shepherd–
A: Send us and together we will go!*

*L: Changed by the Lord's victory over evil–
A: Send us and together we will go!*

*L: United in the reign of Christ–
A: Send us and together we will go!*

Blessing and Sending Forth

The blessing is bestowed by all the vested clergy.

*L: The Lord be with you.
A: And also with you.*

*L: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.
A: Amen.*

*L: Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.
A: Thanks be to God.*

Recessional

*“Bell Peal on LASST UNS ERFREUEN”, by Linda Lamb
Westminster Chimes*

Thank you for joining to share our faith in Jesus today!

The International Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity is observed January 18-25 each year.
Please continue to pray for the unity of all Christians.

Acknowledgements

“The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve”

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“Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service”

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