



–Jean-Marie Pirot (Arcabas)

Holy Week Prayers

Easter Vespers

*You are invited to pray these words following supper,
or anytime in the evening before going to sleep.*

Before beginning...

- ✚ *Light a candle as a sign that God is present with you in Spirit.*
- ✚ *If you're using the audio recording, feel free to stop and start it as necessary. If you're not using the recording, you are free to pray through the material as you wish.*
- ✚ *If you're with a group, you may wish to have different people read different sections. Or you may have a leader read the light print, and have the group read together the text in bold print.*
- ✚ *Where you see a + you are invited to make the sign of the cross.*
- ✚ *If you are using these prayers later in the evening (not at a meal), be sure to have something to eat and a beverage of your choosing at hand.*



THE CALL TO PRAYER

There is a sound of exultation and victory in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the Lord has triumphed! The right hand of the Lord is exalted! The right hand of the Lord has triumphed! Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter them; I will offer thanks to the Lord, for he answered me and has become my salvation. The same stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. On this day the Lord has acted; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

-Psalm 118:15-16, 19, 21-24

THE GREETING

We will bless the Lord, from this time forth for evermore. Hallelujah!

-Psalm 115:18

Rejoice! Christ is risen! Halleluia!

SONG FOR THE DAY ~ *And Can It Be?*

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain—
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace—
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

-Wendell Kimbrough

PRAYER OF ORIENTATION

O Lord, you are my chosen portion and my cup; and you choose to hold my future securely in your hands! The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; being your heir is all I could wish. I praise you, Lord, because you guide me; even in the darkest night your counsel fills my heart. I am always aware of the Lord's presence; with the Lord at my right hand, nothing can shake me. My heart, therefore, is glad and my spirit rejoices; my body also shall rest in hope. For you will not abandon me to the grave, nor let your holy one see the Pit. You show me the path of life; in your presence there is fulness of joy, and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

-Psalm 16:5-11

CONFESSION

Almighty God, our heavenly Father: I have sinned against you, through my own fault, in thought, and word, and deed, in what I have done and in what I have left undone. For the sake of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive me all my offenses; and grant that I may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your Name. Amen. +

Listening Silence

(Feel free to pause your playback device)

Rejoice! The One who called life out of chaos in the beginning, now breathes new life and wholeness into us. You are forgiven. Alleluia!

We praise You, O Christ, dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life: Lord Jesus, come in glory.

WORD OF GOD, WORD OF LIFE
(read by Andrea Janzen)

That same day two of Jesus' disciples were going to the village of Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. As they were talking and thinking about what had happened, Jesus came near and started walking along beside them. But they did not know who he was.

Jesus asked them, "What were you talking about as you walked along?"

The two of them stood there looking sad and gloomy. Then the one named Cleopas asked Jesus, "Are you the only person from Jerusalem who didn't know what was happening there these last few days?"

"What do you mean?" Jesus asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

Then Jesus asked the two disciples, "Why can't you understand? How can you be so slow to believe all that the prophets said? Didn't you know that the Messiah would have to suffer before he was given his glory?" Jesus then explained everything written about himself in the Scriptures, beginning with the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets.

When the two of them came near the village where they were going, Jesus seemed to be going farther. They begged him, "Stay with us! It's already late, and the sun is going down."

So Jesus went into the house to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together... Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. *-Luke 24:13-35*

Rejoice! Christ is risen! Alleluia!

**We praise You, O Christ, dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life:
Lord Jesus, come in glory.**

FEASTING WITH THE BREAD OF LIFE

In the days of the Exodus, the children of Israel wandered in the desert, and God sustained them with manna from heaven.

On the night he was betrayed, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying: *This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.*

On the same day he was born again, the disciples sojourned in the wilderness, and God surprised them with the living bread which comes down from heaven and gives to the world life eternal.

The Bread of Life offers himself for us. The Bread of Life offers himself to you. The one who eats this bread will live forever. Alleluia!

We bless you, Christ our Saviour. At the Last Supper as a suffering servant, you were a stranger to us: washing our feet, speaking cryptically, hosting us at a meal of bread and wine. At your First Supper as a resurrected king, you were a stranger to us: warming our hearts, speaking plainly, blessing us as our guest at a meal of bread and wine. After the Friday comes the feast! After the Saturday comes the surprise! You are risen! Making all things new!

Singing:

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the song 'Alleluia'. Both staves are in the treble clef and the key of D major (indicated by two sharps). The melody is simple and repetitive, consisting of a series of eighth and quarter notes. The lyrics 'Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.' are written below each staff, with hyphens indicating the syllables are spread across multiple notes.

King Jesus, as the grain once scattered in the fields and the grapes once dispersed on the hillside are now reunited on this table in bread and drink, you reintegrate us and all creation with ourselves, our neighbours, and You as we joyfully receive these gifts.

Through bread broken in love and a simple cup of grace, remake us into your new creation—a resurrection community that is a forerunner of your coming kingdom. May this time and place be a foretaste of your great feast, where all peoples and all things in heaven and on earth find themselves joyfully and wholly alive in relationship with each other and with You, singing:

Singing:

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and repetitive, consisting of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics 'Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.' are written below the notes. The first staff ends with a double bar line, and the second staff continues the melody and lyrics.

Jesus said, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

As you eat and drink (whether at supper or later in the evening), consider this: What eye-opening, “Ah ha!” gifts have you been given? Speak them out loud, and toast our King with the words, “To the Giver!”

Come, eat, and let us raise a glass: Christ is risen!

Singing:

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

This block contains the same musical notation as the first block, including two staves of notes and lyrics. The melody and lyrics are identical: 'Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.' The notation is in G major and 4/4 time.

Eating Together (Pause your playback device)

PRAYER FOR OTHERS

At the table we receive food for the journey back to the city of God, but the gifts we have received are the gifts we share. As we set out, we go with eyes open, hands ready to respond to the hungers of the human family. In the silence to follow, in which people and situations is there a hunger for the Bread of Life?

(Feel free to pause your playback device)

Risen Christ, our Passover and our Peace, we go forth into the world to show hospitality to others. Through the presence of every friend and stranger, reveal to us the face of the One who had first to suffer, but who now lives and reigns in glory. As we bear witness to your life and death, and celebrate your resurrection and new hope, to you, Lord Jesus, who fills the hungry with good things, be honour and glory, now and forever. Amen.

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous. May the Lord Almighty grant us and those we love a peaceful night and a perfect end; and all for your love's sake. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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 forever.

THE CONCLUDING PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Lord, it is evening after a long day. What has been done has been done; what has not been done has not been done; let it be.

The night is dark. It is for stillness. Let our fears of the darkness, of the world, and of our lives rest in You. Let us be still in your Presence.

The night is quiet. Let the quietness of your peace enfold us, all who are dear to us, and all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn. Let us look expectantly to a new day, new joys, and new possibilities. Amen. +

Listening Silence

(Feel free to pause your playback device)

THE PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Almighty God, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by this glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of our enemy and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant me, by your life-giving Spirit, so to die daily to sin, that I may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. +

THE FINAL THANKSGIVING

Lord, you now have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised; for these eyes of mine have seen the Saviour, whom you have prepared for all the world to see: a Light to enlighten the nations, and the glory of your people Israel. To you, Lord Jesus, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, whose good company is all we need in the gathering dusk, be honour and glory, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

