Sermon

October 18, 2026

The Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost Proper 24



The Holy Eucharist:

The Liturgy for the Proclamation
of the Word of God
and Celebration of the
Holy Communion

Gloria Dei Episcopal Church

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Palenville, New York 12463

The Rev. John E. Miller, Priest-in-Charge
Kathie F. Miler, Organist

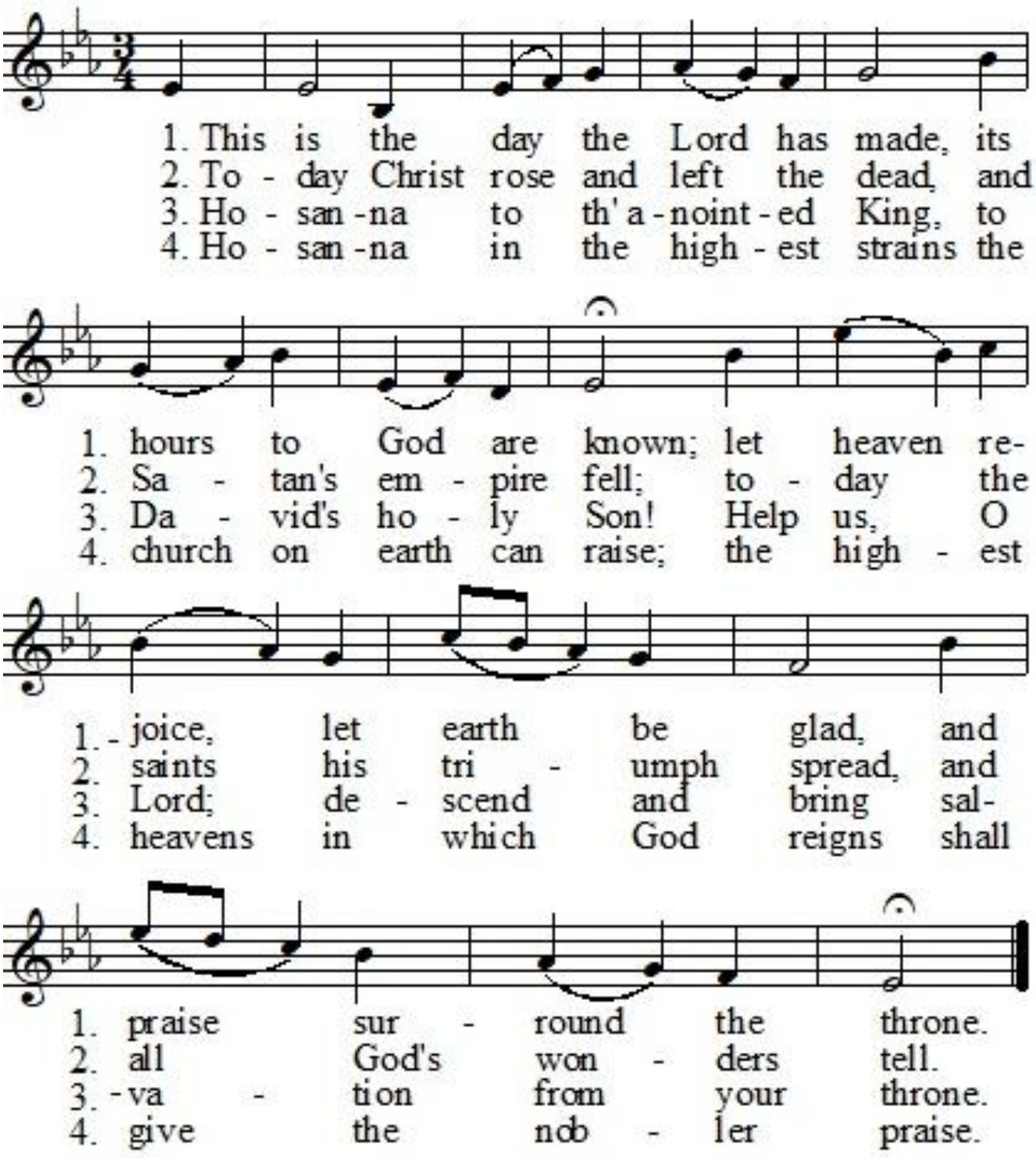
The Liturgy of the Word

Blessed are you, holy and living One.

You come to your people and set them free.

Collect for Purity

Song of Praise:



Collect of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, in Christ you have revealed your glory among the nations: Preserve the works of your mercy, that your Church throughout the world may persevere with steadfast faith in the confession of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah:

Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him
and strip kings of their robes,
  to open doors before him--
    and the gates shall not be closed:

I will go before you and level the mountains, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron,

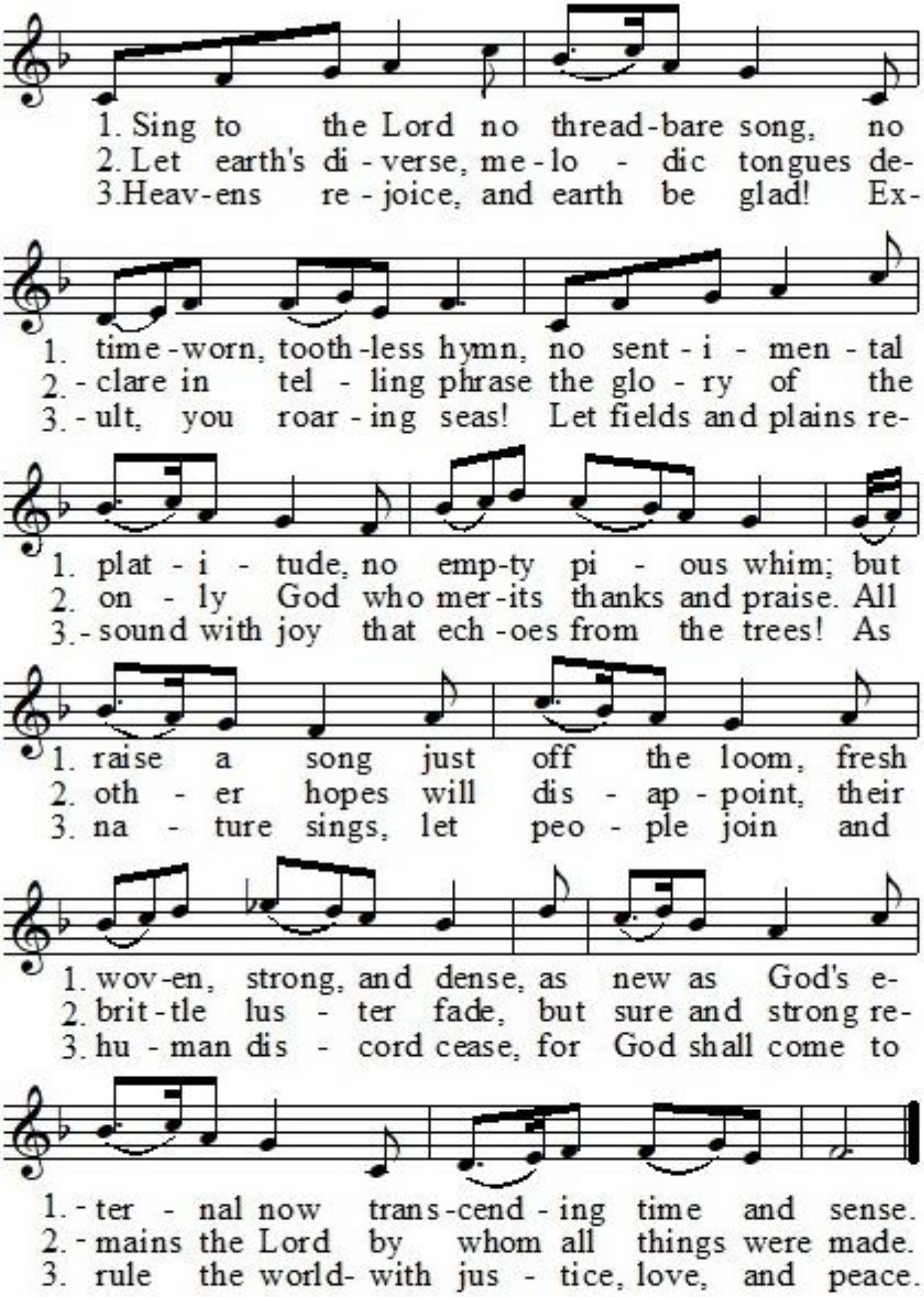
I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.

For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other;
besides me there is no god.
  I arm you, though you do not know me,
 so that they may know, from the rising of the sun
  and from the west, that there is no one besides me;
I am the LORD, and there is no other.
 I form light and create darkness,
    I make weal and create woe;
    I the LORD do all these things.

The word of the Lord. ***Thanks be to God.***

This week's Semi-continuous Old Testament Lesson and Psalm can be found inside the back cover.

Gradual Psalm 96 *(Not available)*



This is the song of the people of God. ***Thanks be to God.***

A reading from St. Paul's First Epistle
to the Thessalonians:

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead--Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the people of God.
Thanks be to God.

***Sequence Hymn*:**



The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ
according to St. Matthew: ***Glory to you, Lord Christ.***

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

The Gospel of the Lord. ***Praise to you, Lord Christ.***

The Sermon

Holy One, true and living God, by the message of the Gospel and the power of the Spirit, make us imitators of Jesus Christ our Lord.

When we hear the words of Jesus: “Give the things of Caesar to Caesar and the things of God to God,” it is easy to forget the context. This is not from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is not even teaching the people. He is inside the Temple precincts, engaged in a confrontation with an unlikely

coalition of Pharisees and Herodians. The saying is not a teaching on God and country, or about the separation of Church and State, but a clever evasion of a semantic trap.

The Herodians, of course, are supporters of King Herod Antipas, who ruled Galilee from shortly after the birth of Jesus until a few years after his death. Antipas was one of many puppet kings who represented the Roman Empire at the local level, enjoying the limited power and prestige of rule, so long as they toed the line with Rome and kept the tax money flowing and civil tensions under control.

The Pharisees, at the time of Jesus, were one of two parties in long-standing contention for the heart and soul of Judaism. Their symbol and focus was the Law of Moses, over against the Sadducees, who emphasized the Jerusalem Temple with its cult and sacrifices. By Matthew's time, the Pharisees had permanently gained the upper hand and would determine the future of Judaism, since the Temple was no more.

Over the past several weeks we have seen the immediate context develop.

Jesus has made his entry into Jerusalem, in a mocking imitation of the conquering military heroes who regularly made their grand appearances at the city gates.

He has disrupted the business of Temple worship, chasing away the sacrificial animals offered for sale, and tipping over the trays of coins offered for exchange, at one and a half times their face value. More about that in a minute.

He has refused to answer their questions about his authority to do and say the things he has been saying and doing, turning

their attention back to John the Baptist, whose legitimacy they dared not evaluate publicly.

He has told a story about two sons, one of whom refused his father's orders, then went and complied anyway while the other readily agreed but failed to follow through. This is followed up with a direct challenge to the religious leaders for their response to John the Baptist.

He has told a story about tenant farmers who not only refused to hand over the landlord's share of the crop, but abused the messengers sent to collect it, and killed the heir. Matthew tells us that they knew he was talking about them, but were afraid of his popularity with the people.

Last week we heard his story of the Wedding Banquet, a command performance in the royal palace and, again, the messengers sent to fetch the guests were treated badly.

So, we're told, the Pharisees got together to plot a way to either destroy Jesus' popularity with the crowds, or get him in trouble with the government.

Note that the Pharisees did not approach Jesus themselves. They sent some of their flunkies, along with a smattering of Herod's supporters. Approaching Jesus with the ultimate in contrived flattery, they want Jesus to tell them whether or not it's OK to pay taxes to the Roman emperor.

What we're talking about here is a nominal tribute tax amounting to a day's wages annually. To most people of the time it represented nothing more nor less than acceptance of the fact of imperial control. Answers to the question, and the passion behind the answers, would have ranged from the

Zealots, who contemptuously refused to pay it, to the Herodians, who had significant personal investment in it.

If Jesus said that this tribute tax was OK, he would have gone against popular opinion and lost the support of most of his followers. If he said it was not, the Herodians were right there, ready to arrest him for sedition. ***Gotcha!***

O--K! Says Jesus, show me the coin. One of them reaches into his pocket and pulls out a denarius, the exact amount of the tax. He holds it out in the palm of his hand to show it to Jesus.

H-m-m-m-m! Says Jesus—whose image and inscription is that?

Why, it's—

O-o-o-ps! I'm not supposed to be in the Temple with this coin!

But here I am. In the Temple.

Holding a graven image in my hand!

The whole purpose of the trays of money that Jesus dumped was for people to exchange their secular money, which bore the image of Caesar, for special coinage that did not, and could therefore be considered fit for offering in the Temple. The second of the Big Ten says: Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Much less bring it into the Temple with you! The deepest and most intense confrontations with Empire came about when foreign rulers insisted on erecting idolatrous

monuments to themselves inside the Temple. Now here are the Pharisees openly displaying one of these idolatrous monuments, right in the middle of the Temple!

So, OK—it's Caesar's image, and Caesar's inscription: Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus. In that case, says Jesus, give to Caesar that which is of Caesar, and give to God that which is of God.

Now, imagine you're standing there observing this encounter. You're steeped in the traditions of Israel, and you know your Bible cold. Jesus starts talking about the things that are God's, you might recall the words of the 24th Psalm (vss 1-2):

> The earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it,
> the world, and all who dwell therein.
> For it is he who founded it upon the seas
> and made it firm upon the rivers of the deep.

Everything belongs to God. Including that which belongs to Caesar. Love of God with your whole being is the first and greatest commandment. Then love your neighbor as yourself. That covers the Law and the Prophets in their entirety.

Just as the denarius bore Caesar's image and therefore belonged to Caesar, so we who belong to God bear the image of God. I came across an object lesson this week that involves a handful of coins and a small closed box. You show the class the coins, pointing out the images of presidents on them, then tell them that inside the box is an image of what God is like. After building up mystery and suspense—we cannot, of course, know exactly what God is like, you finally let them persuade you to open the box and show them what's inside.

One by one, they peer into the box and look in the mirror that forms the bottom of the box. Just as the denarius bears the image of Caesar, and American coins the government embodied in the presidents, we who belong to God bear God's image.

If you've been in a Thruway rest area, you may have seen one of those machines that you run a coin through, watching the gears grind and bend it as you turn the crank—the modern equivalent of placing coins on the railroad track and watching the train run over them. The image on the coin is often distorted beyond recognition.

In a similar way, the image of God has been distorted in us, individually and corporately. Our individual selfishness and willfulness can reach social dimensions that exceed the sum of our individual capacity to bring harm to ourselves and to others. And there is a fascination with evil at the cosmic level that I can only compare with the temptation to experiment with dangerous, addicting substances.

But unlike the image on a mangled coin, the image of God in us can be restored. The restoration of God's image in us is an important dimension of salvation, for that restoration creates and recreates that which we were meant to be, transforming us into our truest and best selves. Jesus demonstrated a life lived perfectly in the service of God, and he calls us to imitate him in a life of stewardship, compassion and distributive justice that respects the freedom and dignity of all, regardless of their social standing, and operates from a worldview of abundance, determined to so distribute the resources of God's creation that all may live.

The action of the Holy Spirit guides and empowers our transformation, showing us those places in our lives, and in our society, where the image of God is distorted, and enabling us to amend our lives so that our understanding of ourselves and the world around us, and the image which we reflect to the world, draws ever closer to the likeness of the God who is perfect love, and who calls us and enables us to embody that love in the various environments

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen

Prayers of the People

Let us pray for the Church and the world.

Maker and Lover of all,
in the mystery of your kindness
you have bound us to each other,
and called us to serve the earth and its people.

So hear us, as in this place of worship
dedicated to your glory,
we pray for the Church to which we belong
that we may ever be a center of faith,
hospitality and imagination,
modelling the future rather than lamenting the past.

(pause)

God, in your mercy, ***hear our prayer.***

Grateful for the life in our bodies,
we pray for those whose lives are diminished
by ill health, depression, grief or rejection,
asking for the healing, the affirming, the listening
which will encourage and restore them.

(pause)

God, in your mercy, ***hear our prayer.***

Conscious of the peace of this place,
we pray for those who have no peace
because of war or the fear of war,
or the threat of violence,
or the grip of hunger,
or the loss of hope. *(Over)*

May the voice of the victims be heard
and the work of the peacemakers be blessed.

(pause)

God, in your mercy, ***hear our prayer.***

Surrounded by rugged and tender beauty,
we pray for the earth,
especially where it is damaged
by human carelessness
and threatened by human greed;
and ask that we may learn
to care for the earth as you do.

(pause)

God, in your mercy, ***hear our prayer.***

The presider may finish with a Collect

Eternal God, you create us by your power and redeem us by your love. Guide and strengthen us by your Spirit, that we may give ourselves today in love and service to one another and to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**.


PRAY on it
PRAY over it
PRAY through it

Confession of Sin

Let us confess our sins to God.

Silence may be kept.

Minister and People

God of all mercy,
we confess that we have sinned against you,
opposing your will in our lives
We have denied your goodness in each other,
in ourselves, and in the world you have created.
We repent of the evil that enslaves us,
the evil we have done,
and the evil done on our behalf.
Forgive, restore, and strengthen us
through our Savior Jesus Christ,
that we may abide in your love
and serve only your will. Amen.

The Absolution

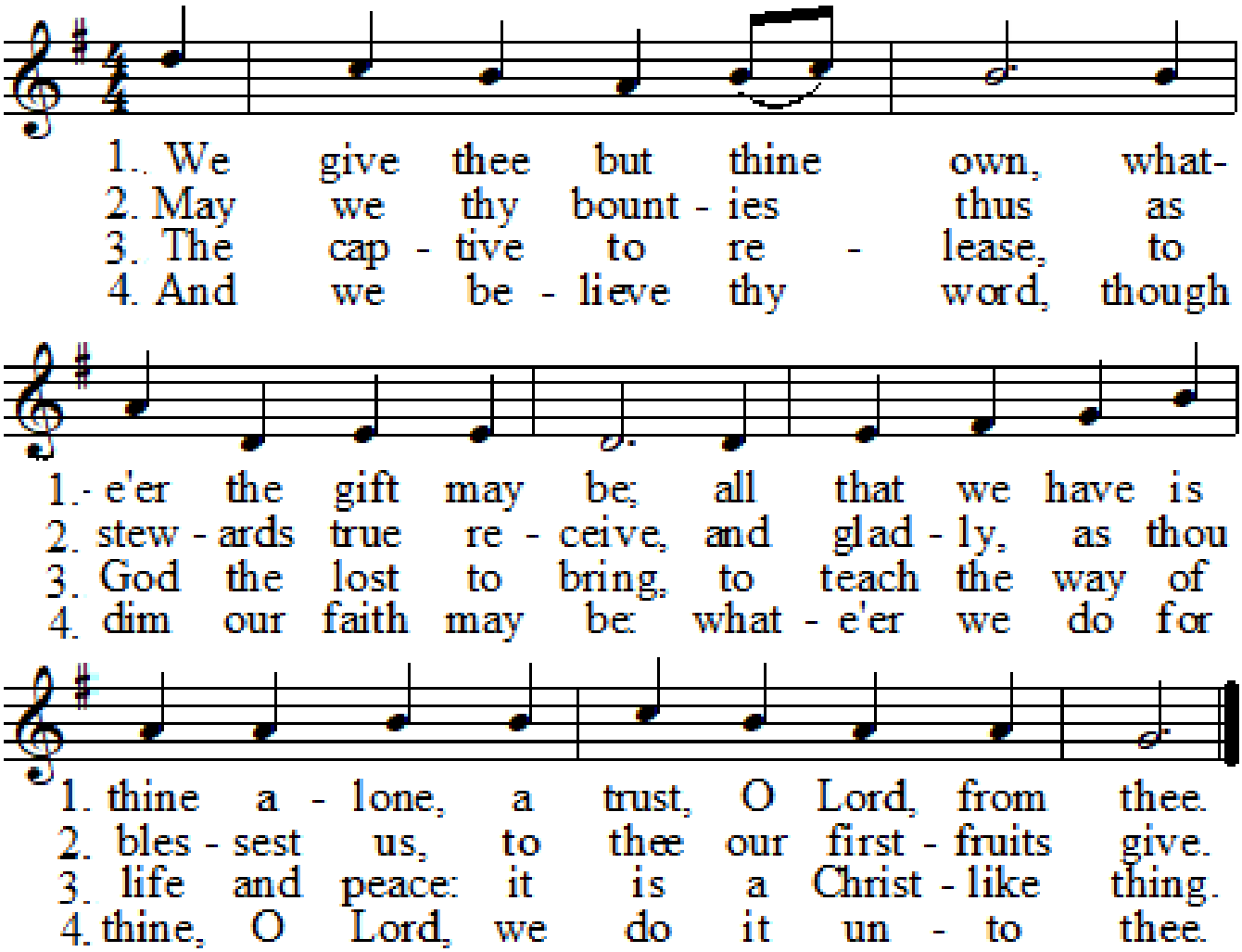
The Peace

The Liturgy for the Celebration of Holy Communion

The Offertory

The Celebrant begins the Offertory with a sentence of Scripture. Offerings of bread and wine, and money or other gifts, are presented and placed on the Altar.

Offertory Hymn:



The Great Thanksgiving: Eucharistic Prayer F

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

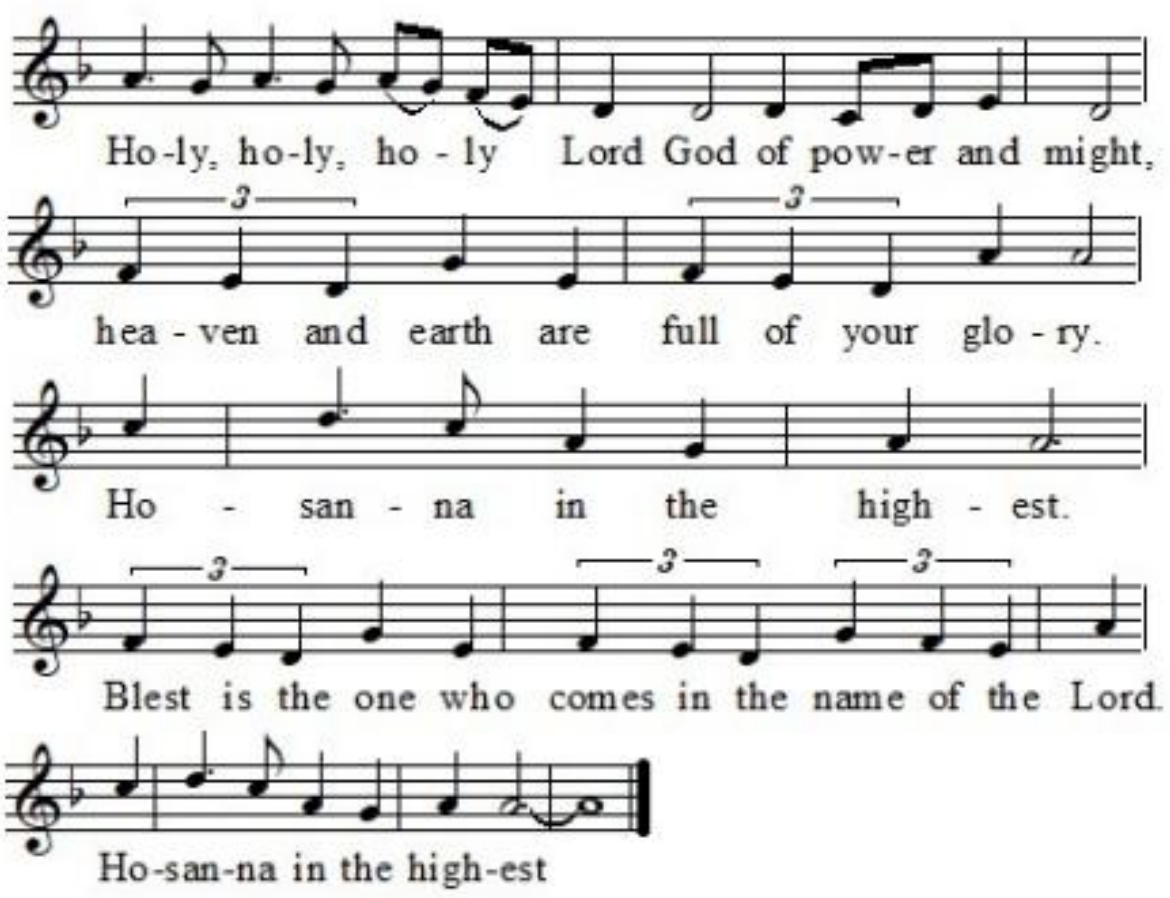
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We praise you and we bless you,
holy and gracious God, source of life abundant.

From before time you made ready the creation.
Your Spirit moved over the deep
and brought all things into being:
sun, moon, and stars; earth, winds, and waters;
and every living thing.

You made us in your image,
and taught us to walk in your ways.
But we rebelled against you, and wandered far away;
and yet, as a mother cares for her children,
you would not forget us.
Time and again you called us
to live in the fullness of your love.

And so this day we join with Saints and Angels
in the chorus of praise that rings through eternity,
lifting our voices to magnify you as we sing



The Celebrant continues

Glory and honor and praise to you,
holy and living God.
To deliver us from the power of sin and death
and to reveal the riches of your grace,
you looked with favor upon Mary,
your willing servant,
that she might conceive and bear a son,
Jesus the holy child of God.

Living among us, Jesus loved us.
He broke bread with outcasts and sinners,
healed the sick,
and proclaimed good news to the poor.
He yearned to draw all the world to himself
yet we were heedless of his call to walk in love.

Then, the time came
for him to complete upon the cross
the sacrifice of his life, and to be glorified by you.

At the following words concerning the bread, the Celebrant is to hold it; and at the words concerning the cup, to hold or place a hand upon the cup and any other vessel containing the wine to be consecrated.

On the night before he died for us,
Jesus was at table with his friends.
He took bread, gave thanks to you,
broke it, and gave it to them, and said:

"Take, eat:
This is my Body, which is given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me."

As supper was ending, Jesus took the cup of wine.
Again, he gave thanks to you,
gave it to them, and said:

"Drink this, all of you:
This is my Blood of the new Covenant,
which is poured out for you and for all
for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it,
do this for the remembrance of me."

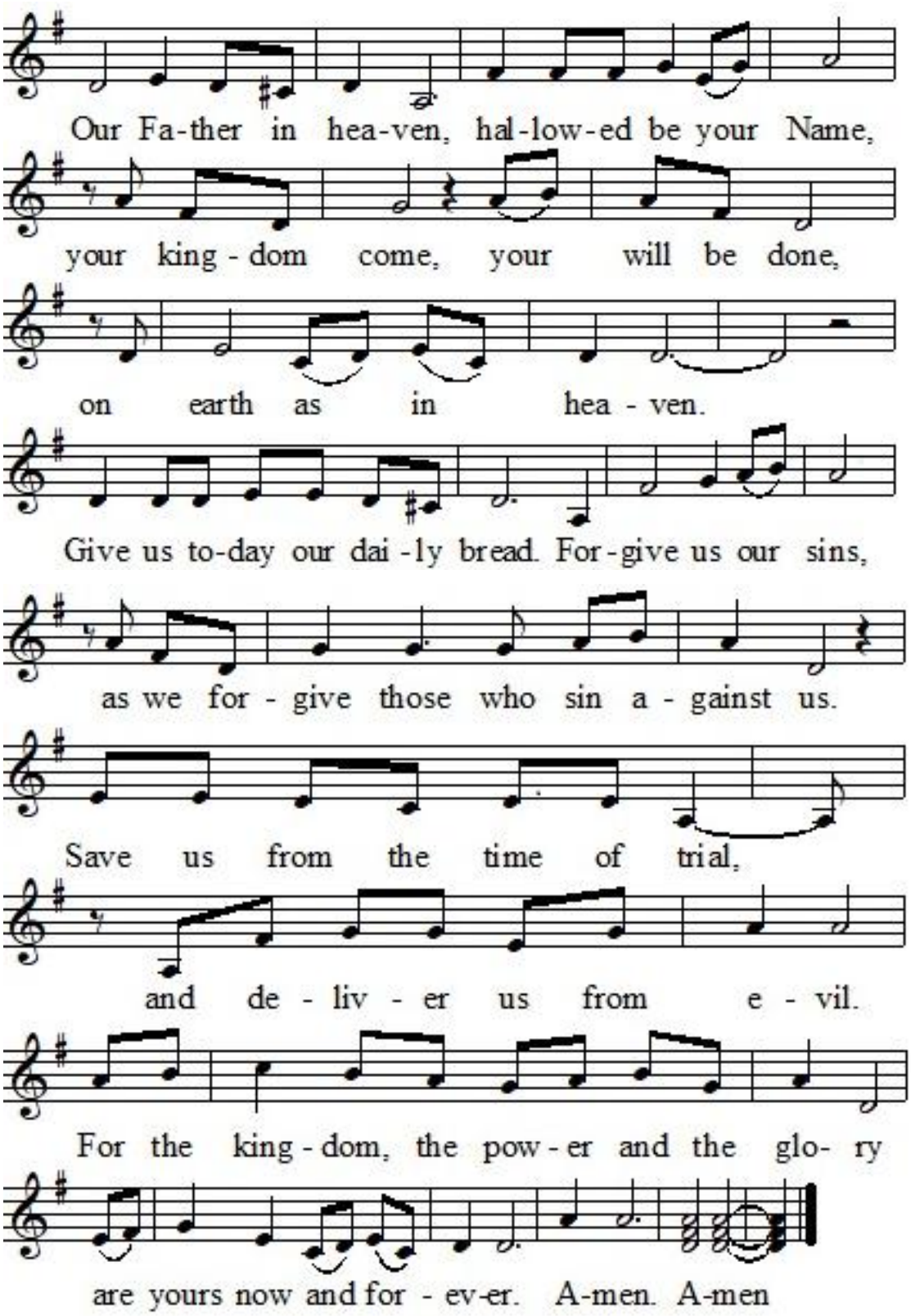
Now gathered at your table, O God of all creation,
and remembering Christ, crucified and risen,
who was and is and is to come,
we offer to you our gifts of bread and wine,
and ourselves, a living sacrifice.

Pour out your Spirit upon these gifts
that they may be the Body and Blood of Christ.
Breathe your Spirit over the whole earth
and make us your new creation,
the Body of Christ given for the world you have made.

In the fullness of time bring us,
with all your saints,
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
to feast at the banquet prepared
from the foundation of the world.

Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
to you be honor, glory, and praise,
for ever and ever. *AMEN*.

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray:



The Breaking of the Bread

The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread

A period of silence is kept.

Alleluia! ***Alleluia***!

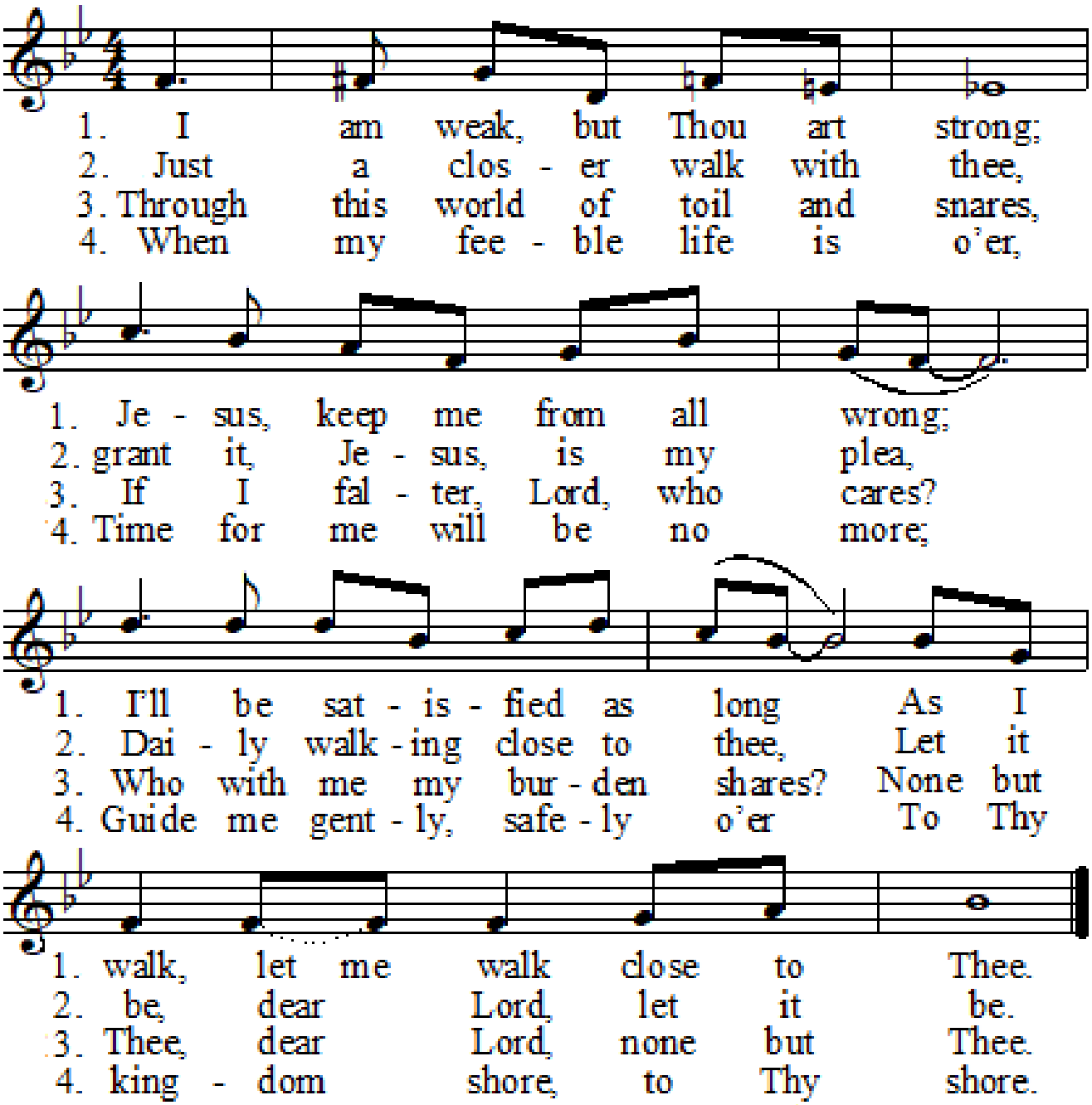
Shine as lights in the world,
holding fast the word of life.

Alleluia! ***Alleluia***!

Facing the people, the Celebrant says the following Invitation

The Gifts of God for the People of God.

Communion Hymn: *(Repeats vs 2 as refrain)*



Post-communion Prayer

Faithful God,
in the wonder of your wisdom and love
you fed your people in the wilderness
with the bread of angels,
and you sent Jesus to be the bread of life.
We thank you for feeding us with this bread.
May it strengthen us that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may embody your desire and be renewed for your
service, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Blessing & Dismissal

May the God of hope
fill you with every joy in believing. ***Amen.***
May the peace of Christ abound in your hearts. ***Amen.***
May you be enriched
by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. ***Amen***
…and the blessing…

Parting Hymn: The Hymnal, 1982 # 595

1 God of grace and God of glory,
on thy people pour thy power;
crown thine ancient Church's story;
bring her bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour.

2 Lo! the hosts of evil round us
scorn thy Christ, assail his ways!
From the fears that long have bound us
free our hearts to faith and praise:
grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the living of these days.

3 Cure thy children's warring madness,
bend our pride to thy control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal.

4 Save us from weak resignation
to the evils we deplore;
let the gift of thy salvation
be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
serving thee whom we adore.

Semi-continuous Old Testament Lesson & Psalm:

Moses said to the Lord, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people'; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people." He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." And he said to him, "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth."

The Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray." And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The Lord'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live."

And the Lord continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

Psalm 99

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Hymn: "This is the day the Lord has made" (Public domain)
Words: Isaac Watts (1674-1748); alt.
Music: *Irish*; *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, Dublin, 1749

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Psalm 96: "Sing to the Lord no threadbare song"
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Offertory Hymn: "We give thee but thine own"
Words: William W. Howe(1823-1897), alt.
Music: *St. Ethelwald*; William Henry Monk (1823-1889) (Public domain)

Communion Hymn: "I am weak but thou art strong"
Words & Music : Anonymous (American folk song) (Public domain)

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