

# 2020 Easter: Witnesses to Hope

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*Icon of the Resurrection by the hand of Thomas Xenakis*

## GATHERING

## ENTRANCE

## REFLECTION

The Christian faith is one that does not pretend things aren't bad. This is a faith that does not offer platitudes to those who lost children this week to suicide or a tornado. This is not a faith that produces optimism. It is a faith that produces a defiant hope that God is still writing the story and that despite darkness a light shines and that God can redeem our crap and that beauty matters and that despite every disappointing thing we have ever done or that we have ever

endured, that there is no hell from which resurrection is impossible.

*Nadia Bolz-Weber, "Sermon on Why Hope and Vapid Optimism Are Not The Same Thing," May 28, 2013 at <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/nadiabolzweber/2013/05/sermon-on-why-hope-and-vapid-optimism-are-not-the-same-thing/>*

## **CANDLE LIGHTING**

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

Leader: The Holy One calls us to celebrate and rejoice, for Christ has lived and died and lives again today.

People: We come carrying memories of yesterday's loss and fear.

Leader: The Spirit calls us to defiant hope that there is no hell from which resurrection is impossible.

People: We come to be witnesses to the hope that is within us.

Leader: Today, we are witnesses to hope, for Christ is risen!

All: Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

## **OPENING PRAYER**

### **HYMN**

### **SILENCE**

### **PRAYERS**

#### **CONFESSION**

Leader: Holy One, we long to be witnesses to hope.

People: Sometimes all we see is death, despair, and darkness.

Leader: We know that you are still writing the story of our lives.

People: Sometimes we want to control that story and we get frustrated, depressed, and angry.

Leader: We confess that we fail to be witnesses to hope.

All: Forgive us, Holy One, when we are unable to hope.

## INDIVIDUAL PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

### ASSURANCE

Leader: Despite the darkness a light shines.  
There is no hell from which resurrection is impossible.  
Christ is risen!!

All: Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia! Amen.

## THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE

### INTERCESSION AND PETITION

### COMMITMENT

All: O Holy One, we come today  
to claim our relationship with you.  
We pray for the commitment to grow together,  
sharing the gifts you give us with others  
here and in the wider world.

Forgive us for the hurt we have inflicted,  
and help us forgive those who have hurt us.

Give us strength and discipline  
to nurture our relationship with you;  
to care for every part of your creation;  
to foster justice and be in solidarity with those in need;  
to work to end all war, and violence, and discord;  
and to respond joyfully when you call,

freely giving our selves as you have shown the way.

We open our hearts to you and your creation  
in the name of Jesus, who is the Christ. Amen.

## **HYMN**

## **THE WORD**

SCRIPTURE

SERMON

SILENT REFLECTION

## **OFFERING**

## **COMMUNION**

PREPARATION

Leader 1: This is the table of the heavenly feast,  
the joyful celebration of the people of God.

Leader 2: We gather now as one body, joined around the  
table.

Here we celebrate God's presence among us,  
united in Christ's spirit, broken and whole all at once.

All: Nourished and hungry, loved and loving,  
sinner and forgiven, we make one circle  
of knowing, believing, rejoicing, being,  
as God lights and rests among us.

## **GREAT THANKSGIVING**

Leader 1: Persistent Midwife of Hope and Resurrection,  
we thank you for your  
witnesses to hope throughout the ages,  
who continue to remind us  
that your love endures forever.

People: We give you thanks for Jesus,  
a faithful and profound witness to hope  
through his life, death, and resurrection.

Leader 2: We give you thanks for your Holy Spirit,  
whose persistent witness invites us  
to be reborn into a living hope.

All: We give you thanks for your Holy Church,  
where we learn, fail, and try again  
to be your witnesses to hope.

#### BLESSING THE ELEMENTS

Leader 1: Christ invites everyone to eat the bread of life,  
to drink the cup of the new covenant.

Leader 2: Jesus said, I am the bread of life.  
You who come to me shall never hunger;  
you who believe in me shall never thirst.

Leader 1: On the night he gave himself up, Jesus took bread,  
and after giving thanks to God, broke it and said,  
This is my body,  
broken for the healing of the world.  
Whenever you eat it, do so remembering me.

Leader 2: After supper, Jesus took the cup and said,  
This is the cup of the new covenant,  
poured out for you and for all.  
Whenever you drink it, do so remembering me.

All: O Holy One, send down your Spirit  
that these gifts of grain and grape,  
and work of human hands  
may be for us the body and blood of Christ.  
Unite us with Christ forever  
and bring us with the whole creation  
to your eternal realm.

#### SHARE THE ELEMENTS

#### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION

All: God of abundance and mercy,

we give joyful thanks  
for your eternal love and healing presence  
in our celebration of bread and cup.  
Bless this Body of Christ  
that we may attend faithfully  
to our call to be your servants,  
with each other and throughout the world. Amen.

## **SHARED REFLECTIONS**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **HYMN**

## **BENEDICTION**

Leader:           And now, with good news of the empty tomb rising  
up within us,  
we are called to witness to the hope  
that leads us into resurrection.

Know that we are connected  
through the Universal Body of Christ  
as we reach out to offer healing presence  
to this fearful, suffering world.  
Christ is risen!

All:                Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.