

Sunday next before Lent (a) “One Humanity Sunday”

OPENING PRAYER:

Almighty God, creator of all peoples and Lord of every nation, you formed us from one humanity and have called us into one body through your Son: remove from us all pride and division, that, obeying Christ who prays for our unity, we may worship you with one heart and serve you in justice and truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah 56:1-8

Thus says the Lord:

Maintain justice, and do what is right, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed. Happy is the mortal who does this, the one who holds it fast, who keeps the sabbath, not profaning it, and refrains from doing any evil. Do not let the foreigner joined to the Lord say, ‘The Lord will surely separate me from his people’; and do not let the eunuch say, ‘I am just a dry tree.’

For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant— these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.

This is the Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

RESPONSORIAL PSALM from Psalm 99

God spoke to them out of the pillar of cloud.

God spoke to them out of the pillar of cloud.

The Lord is king; let the people tremble;
he is enthroned upon the cherubim;
let the earth shake.

God spoke to them

The Lord is great in Zion; he is high above all peoples.

Let them confess his name, which is great and awesome;
he is the Holy One.

God spoke to them out of the pillar of cloud.

‘O mighty King, lover of justice,
you have established equity;
you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.’

God spoke to them

Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God and fall down
before his footstool; he is the Holy One.

God spoke to them out of the pillar of cloud.

Moses and Aaron among his priests,
and Samuel among those who call upon his name,
they called upon the Lord and he answered them.

God spoke to them

He spoke to them out of the pillar of cloud;
they kept his testimonies and the decree that he gave them.

God spoke to them out of the pillar of cloud.

‘O Lord our God, you answered them indeed;
you were a God who forgave them,
yet punished them for their evil deeds.’

God spoke to them

Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God
and worship him upon his holy hill;
for the Lord our God is the Holy One.

God spoke to them out of the pillar of cloud.

SECOND READING

A reading from the Book of Revelation 7:9–17

I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!’

And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, singing, ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.’

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, ‘Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?’ I said to him, ‘Sir, you are the one that knows.’ Then he said to me, ‘These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’

For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.

They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’

This is the Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

GOSPEL John 17:20-24

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

Glorify you, O Lord.

‘I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have

loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

One Humanity Sunday — A Theological Reflection

This year we mark One Humanity Sunday rather than Racial Justice Sunday. The Church must confront injustice wherever it appears, yet we also speak in the language of Scripture. The Bible does not divide humanity into races; it speaks of one humanity created by God and of many peoples called into communion in Christ. We therefore keep the work of justice, but we name it in a way that reflects both theology and truth about human dignity. We speak as Scripture speaks.

Isaiah declares that God gathers foreigners to his holy mountain. The covenant is not restricted by origin but defined by obedience and faithfulness. God’s house is called a house of prayer for all peoples. Revelation shows the promise fulfilled: a great multitude from every nation, tribe, peoples and language standing before the throne. Diversity is not erased; it is ordered in worship.

In the Gospel, Christ prays that those who believe in him may be one. This unity does not arise from similarity, but from belonging to the same Lord. The Church proclaims one humanity under one God, reconciled through one Saviour. Division is not natural law; it is sin. Communion in Christ is the answer.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS:

God of all the earth, from every land you gather a people for your name: receive these gifts we bring before you, and as we are fed at one table make us faithful in your covenant and steadfast in love toward every neighbour; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COMMUNION SENTENCE:

There is one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Ephesians 4:4–6

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION:

Lord God, you have nourished us with the bread of heaven and gathered us from many peoples into one communion: strengthen us to walk in your ways, to honour the dignity of every person made in your image, and to bear faithful witness to Christ among the nations; who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**