

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

8 – 15 May, 2016

“Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord”

(cf. 1 Peter 2:9)



Photo: Denise Stevens

Order of Service

ECUMENICAL WORSHIP SERVICE

'CALLED TO PROCLAIM THE MIGHTY ACTS OF THE LORD'

(cf. 1 Peter 2:9)

Introduction to the Worship

This ecumenical celebration, prepared by the churches of Latvia, uses the symbols of a Bible, a lighted candle and salt to express visually the mighty acts that we are called, as baptised Christians, to proclaim to the world. Both salt and light are gospel images that Jesus uses in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt 5:13-16). They describe our Christian identity: You are the salt... You are the light.... And they describe our mission: salt of the earth... light of the world... Salt and light are images of what Christians are called to be for the men and women of our times. We take a word from God that gives flavour to life, a life than can so often seem bland and empty; and we take a gracious word that guides and helps people to see and understand themselves and their world.

A Latvian symbol of hospitality is bread, particularly black bread. When people move to a new home friends will often present a loaf of bread with salt sprinkled on top in the shape of a cross as a sign of blessing. The Latvian writing group invite Christians around the world to imitate this gesture of hospitality in their time of fellowship after the service.

Alternatively bread might be shared as members arrive at the church for the service to consciously connect with the Latvian churches. It would be good to procure a loaf of bread from a Latvian baker if available, and have one or two local church

members break the bread and offer by way of welcome. The leader might make this link during the words of welcome.

The Latvian writing group suggests that representatives from different churches enter carrying a Bible, a lighted candle (which may be a Paschal or Easter Candle) and a bowl of salt. They further suggest that each of these symbols is provided by a different congregation. If the host church has a Paschal Candle this would be used. The Bible should be placed on the lectern for the readings, and the salt and candle may be placed either by the lectern, to connect as symbols of God's Word, or by the font, as signs of our baptismal calling.

A basket of small candles should also be set near the Easter Candle so that after the homily members of the congregation can light individual candles from the flame carried in (or lit) at the beginning of the service.

Although no hymns have been indicated, the Latvian writing group suggest Trinitarian hymns. They also suggest that the responses *Kyrie Eleison* and *Christe Eleison* be sung. During the Liturgy of the Word a short congregational response is provided in the text. The introduction to the readings uses the expression, "explosion of love", which comes from the founder of the *Pro Sanctitate* movement, *Guglielmo Giaquinta*. This movement is active in Latvia and its members contributed to the preparation of this celebration.

ORDER OF SERVICE

*Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord
(cf. 1 Peter 2:9)*

L: Leader

A: All

R: Reader

Gathering

Processional Hymn

Those leading the celebration enter and may carry a Bible, light and salt. If the Paschal Candle is already in place (beside the lectern or baptistery), it is left unlit.

Words of Welcome

L: Dear friends in Christ, as we gather together in this service of prayer for unity, we thank God for our Christian dignity and vocation, described in the words of St. Peter:
“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (cf.1 Peter 2:9).

The candle is now lit

We pray this year with the Christians of Latvia, who have prepared this service in the hope that we may grow in our communion with our Lord Jesus Christ and with all our sisters and brothers aspiring to unity.

Prayers invoking the Holy Spirit

L: Holy Spirit, gift of the Father through his Son Jesus Christ, dwell in us all, open our hearts and help us to listen to your voice.

A: **Holy Spirit, come upon us**

L: Holy Spirit, Divine Love, source of unity and holiness, show us the love of the Father.

A: **Holy Spirit, come upon us**

L: Holy Spirit, Fire of Love, purify us, removing all the divisions in our hearts, in our communities and in the world, and so make us one in Jesus' name.

A: **Holy Spirit, come upon us.**

L: Holy Spirit, strengthen our faith in Jesus, truly divine and truly human, who carried our sins of division to the Cross and brought us to communion in his Resurrection.

A: **Holy Spirit, come upon us.**

L: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, dwell in us so that we may become a communion of love and holiness. Make us one in you, who live and reign for ever and ever.

A: **Amen.**

Song of praise

Please insert hymn of your choice as suggested on page 3.

Prayers of Reconciliation

L: God invites us to reconciliation and holiness. Let us turn our minds, hearts and bodies to receive the grace of reconciliation on the way to holiness.

Silence

L: Lord, you created us in your own image. Forgive us when we do not respect creation and the world that you gave us. *Kyrie eleison*

A: *Kyrie eleison*

L: Jesus, you invite us to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. Forgive us when we fail to be holy, to be people of integrity and to respect the rights and dignity of others.
Christe eleison

A: *Christe eleison*

L: Lord of life, of peace and of justice, forgive us when we transmit the culture of death, of war and of injustice, and fail to build a civilization of love. *Kyrie eleison*

A: *Kyrie eleison*

L: Merciful God, fill us with your grace and holiness. Make us apostles of love wherever we go. This we pray through Christ, our Lord.

A: Amen.

Proclamation of the Word of God

L: The Word of God that we will hear is an explosion of love in our lives. Listen and you will live.

A: Thanks be to God.

Isaiah 55:1-3

R: Listen and you will live.

A: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 145:8-9, 15-16, 17-18

R: I will bless your name for ever and ever.

A: I will bless your name for ever and ever.

R: The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

A: I will bless your name for ever and ever.

R: The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.

A: I will bless your name for ever and ever.

R: The Lord is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

A: I will bless your name for ever and ever.

1 Peter 2:9-10

R: Listen and you will live.

A: Thanks be to God.

You may wish to include a hymn here.

Matthew 5:1- 16

R: Listen and you will live.

A: **Thanks be to God.**

Homily

A gesture of commitment to be Salt and Light

The Leader then makes the following invitation to the congregation:

L: We have listened to the Scriptures which we honour and treasure, and we have been nourished together at one table of the Word.

We will carry this holy Word out into the world with us, for we are joined in one mission, to be Salt of the Earth, to be Light to the World, and to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord.

As a sign of this mission in which we share, we invite those who wish to come forward, and taste a small pinch of this salt and to light an individual candle from the one flame of Christ.

Please keep the flame alight during the prayers of hope.

Prayers of Hope

L: As God's children, aware of our dignity and mission, let us raise our prayers and affirm our desire to be a holy people of God.

Silence

L: Loving Father, transform our hearts, our families, our communities and our society.

A: Keep all your people holy and one in Christ.

L: Water of life, quench the thirst that exists in our society, the thirst for dignity, for love, for communion and holiness.

A: Keep all your people holy and one in Christ.

L: Holy Spirit, Spirit of joy and peace, heal the divisions caused by our misuse of power and money, and reconcile us across different cultures and languages. Unite us as God's children.

A: Keep all your people holy and one in Christ.

L: Trinity of love, lead us out of darkness into your marvellous light.

A: Keep all your people holy and one in Christ.

L: Lord Jesus Christ, we are made one with you in baptism and therefore we unite our prayers to yours in the words you taught us.

A: Our Father....

Sharing of the Peace

L: Jesus says:

You are the salt of the earth.

You are the light of the world.

Let your light shine before others,

so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Be salt of the earth.

Be light to the world.

I invite you to blow out your candles and you yourself radiate the light of Christ through your lives.

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

A: And with your spirit.

L: Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

Blessing and Dismissal

L: Blest be the poor in spirit.

Blest be those who mourn.

Blest be the meek.

Blest be the merciful.

Blest be the pure in heart.

Blest be the peace-makers.

Blest be the persecuted.

Blest be you by God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A: Amen.

L: Go in the peace of Christ.

A: Amen.

Concluding hymn of your choice.