

WORSHIP READINGS AND PRAYERS

FOR CONTEMPORARY CHURCHES

VOLUME 2: THE CYCLE OF LIFE

Liturgies and Readings for Lent, Good Friday, Easter and Pentecost

DAN WILT

worshiptraining.com



Voice From The Darkness: Death

A Lenten & Good Friday Reading

There is Death.
Lack of Breath,
Lack of Blood,
Lack of Life.

Death can only be conquered by Life,
And that Life must be Life after Death.
That Life, then, must be a physical Life
To truly conquer a physical Death.

There is the Sting Of Death.
Lack of Hope,
Lack of Faith,
Lack of Health.

The Sting Of Death can only be healed by the Balm Of Life,
And that Balm of Life must be the Balm Of Life that redresses, must set right, the Sting Of Death.
That Balm Of Life, then, must be a repairing agent,
To truly heal the Sting Of Death.

Into Death's dark cave,
And into the shadows of the Sting Of Death,
Many have moved, and
Many have succumbed.

One has stepped deep into Death's tomb,
Been enveloped in the wiry shadows of the Sting Of Death,
And in its hungry hall,
Has Spoken.

A Voice from the Darkness,
Not silenced, but full of Breath,
Nor hollow, but full of Blood,
Nor lifeless, but full of all manner of Life,

Now Speaks.

---

an eResource for Worship
© 2010 Wild Pear Creative
All rights reserved. Written by Dan Wilt, M.Min.
www.WorshipTraining.com



Alleluia

The Easter Vigil (with Lucernare)

Celebrant: Darkness, meet the Light Of The World. No longer will your shadows blind our souls.
Community: *Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.*

Celebrant: Death, meet the Author Of Life. No longer will your sting last in the heart of humankind.
Community: *Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.*

Celebrant: Fear, meet the Giver Of Hope. No longer will your whispers speak louder than our joy.
Community: *Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.*

Celebrant: The Light has come into the world.
Community: *And the darkness has not overcome it.*

Celebrant: Death has been swallowed up in victory.
Community: *And we will never forget this truth.*

Celebrant: In Adam, all die; but in Christ, we will be made alive.
Community: *Resurrection Life is our everlasting inheritance, our living hope, and our great expectation.*

ALL: The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ the Lord is Risen Today. Resurrection Life is upon us. New Creation is here. Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia. Amen.

---

an eResource for Worship
© 2010 Wild Pear Creative
All rights reserved. Written by Dan Wilt, M.Min.
www.WorshipTraining.com

Guide To Using This Reading

This reading is designed for all sets of the three Alleluias to be either spoken, or sung to the tune of the Alleluias in "All Creatures Of Our God And King." The three Alleluias at the very end are meant to be sung as well, unless the spoken word is preferred.

The reading is based around the symbolic service of the Lucernare, where a candle is brought into to a darkened room celebrating the Light that came into the world, and the Light of the resurrection. References to 1 Corinthians 15 are part of the final declarations of the community.

As the candle is brought in from the back during the reading (we suggest by an older child or teenager), it is then placed at the front, in a central location, for visibility throughout the service.

Here is a brief synopsis of the **Easter Vigil** service from Wikipedia:

"The Easter Vigil, also called the Paschal Vigil or the Great Vigil of Easter, is a service held in many Christian churches as the first official celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus. Historically, it is during this service that people (especially children) are baptized and that adult catechumens are received into full communion with the Church. It is held in the hours of darkness between sunset on Holy Saturday and sunrise on Easter Day—most commonly in the evening of Holy Saturday—but is considered to be the first celebration of Easter Day, since the Christian tradition considers feasts and other days of observance where Masses are celebrated to begin at sunset of the previous day.

In the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion, the Easter Vigil is the most important Mass of the liturgical year as well as the first celebration of the Eucharist during the fifty-day long celebration of Easter, and is marked by the first use since the beginning of Lent of the acclamatory word "Alleluia", a distinctive feature of the liturgy of the Easter season. ...Because the new liturgical day begins at sunset, the vigil begins between sunset on Holy Saturday and sunrise on Easter Sunday outside the church, where a fire is blessed by the celebrant. This new fire symbolizes the radiance of the Risen Christ dispelling the darkness of sin and death. The Paschal candle is blessed and then lit. This Paschal candle will be used throughout the season of Easter, remaining in the sanctuary of the church or near the lectern, and throughout the coming year at baptisms and funerals, reminding all, that Christ is "light and life."

Once the candle has been lit there follows the ancient and dramatic rite of the Lucernarium, in which the candle is carried by a priest through the nave of the church, itself in complete darkness, stopping three times to chant an acclamation such as 'Christ our Light' or 'Light of Christ' (Lumen Christi), to which the assembly responds 'Thanks be to God' or 'Deo Gratias'. " (from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter_vigil)

an eResource for Worship
© 2010 Wild Pear Creative
All rights reserved. Written by Dan Wilt, M.Min.
www.WorshipTraining.com



Voice From The Darkness: Life

An Easter Reading

There is Life.
The Presence of Breath, The Presence of Blood, The Presence of Life.
Life has conquered Death,
And that Life is Life after Death.
That Life is a physical Life, a Resurrection,
That truly has conquered a physical Death.

All: Life has come to Us; Life has conquered Death.

There is the Balm Of Life.
The Balm of Hope, The Balm of Faith, The Balm of Health.
The Balm of Life heals the Sting Of Death.
And that Balm of Life redresses, sets right, and dissolves the Sting Of Death.
That Balm Of Life, is a repairing agent,
And truly heals the Sting Of Death.

All: The Balm Of Life has come to Us; The Balm Of Life has healed the Sting Of Death.

Into Death's dark cave,
And into the shadows of the Sting Of Death,
Many have moved, and
Many have succumbed.
One has stepped deep into Death's tomb,
Been enveloped in the wiry shadows of the Sting Of Death,
And in its hungry hall,
Has Spoken.

All: No Voice has been heard from the Hall of Death before; This Voice is Strong and Alive.

A Voice from the Darkness,
Now sings, strong and full of Breath,
Now shouts, loud and full of Blood,
Now rises, flesh and blood and full of all manner of Life,

All: Now Speaks Life into You, into Me, into Us, into the World.

---

an eResource for Worship
© 2010 Wild Pear Creative
All rights reserved. Written by Dan Wilt, M.Min.
www.WorshipTraining.com



Whispers Of New Creation

An Easter Reading

We hear a voice, now sweet, now strong,
Now fading into days to come
Compelling us to listen.

It lingers in the fragrant flow'r
It solos in the songs of wind
Restraining us from movement.

It writhes and twists within our souls
And groans for freedom's everlife
To dance with new creation.

It whispers from an age ahead
It stirs our hopes and haunts our dreams
Inviting us to listen.

It speaks of death and hate and harm
Confronted by a love more firm
A life more everlasting

It speaks of veils now torn in two
No separations yet to come
No walls to keep us distant

It speaks of life beyond our times
It sings that we will live beyond
And wake to see perfection

It speaks of peace between us all
It speaks of eden's garden walk
In everlasting union

We hear a voice, now sweet, now strong,
Now fading into days to come
Compelling us to listen.

---

an eResource for Worship
© 2010 Wild Pear Creative
All rights reserved. Written by Dan Wilt, M.Min.
www.WorshipTraining.com



Rushing Wind

A Pentecost Responsive Reading

Celebrant: The coming of the Spirit marks the birth of God's Church.
Community: *We are filled, renewed and empowered by the Breath of God at work in us.*

Celebrant: The coming of the Spirit means that the Presence of Christ indwells us.
Community: *We are transformed, healed and born anew by the Life of God moving within us.*

Celebrant: The coming of the Spirit is revealed in a Church changing society with divine strength.
Community: *We are equipped, instructed and led to action by the Mission of God that has taken ahold within us.*

Celebrant: We recognize, Lord, that without your Spirit we have no strength to bring lasting change.
Community: *To ourselves or to this world.*

Celebrant: We recognize, Lord, that without your Spirit we have no capacity to convey hope.
Community: *To our families or to our neighbors around us.*

Celebrant: Because of Pentecost, we remember that you are our Comforter, Counselor and Advocate.
Community: *We turn our hearts to you, Holy Spirit, and recognize that you are God.*

Celebrant: Baptised once in water, we welcome your transfiguring baptism of fire.
Community: *We lift our prayers aloud, asking for the same fire that compelled your Church in the beginning to compel us.*

ALL: We have begun this race by saying yes to Your call, Lord Christ. From this place of trust, we believe that you will complete the good work you have begun in Your Church. This You will do by the ongoing work of Your Spirit, and we respond with joy to Your approach. We believe that You have commissioned us to act with You as healing agents in this world you so passionately love. We believe that Your Church is built for speed and effectiveness – and we will follow where Your Spirit leads us.

Let the rushing wind of your Spirit move through the temple of your Church, built of these living stones. Rustle our spirits with Your call to love, refresh our souls with Your gift of love, and write on our hearts with Your law of love.

Amen.

---

an eResource for Worship
© 2010 Wild Pear Creative
All rights reserved. Written by Dan Wilt, M.Min.
www.WorshipTraining.com



On Pentecost: The Spirit's Coming

What Is Pentecost All About?

Over the course of the first few centuries of the Church, various Sundays began to take on a yearly meaning for celebration. With the goal to remember the whole of the Story of God's activity among humankind, a demarking of dates began to occur that spawned literally hundreds of ways of giving meaning to Sundays across Church history.

"How does the church express the spirituality of being with Christ in his incarnation, manifestation to the world, death, resurrection, ascension, and coming again? How can we as members of the church participate in a present spirituality that is rooted in past events and anticipates a future event? The answer to this question is that we are shaped and formed spiritually by Christ in the church through a worship that continually orders the pattern of our spirituality into a remembrance of God's saving deeds and the anticipation of the rule of God over all creation.

...The Christian year represents the historical unfolding of the life of Christ and his sure return. One may observe that Advent deals with the coming of Christ; Christmas, his birth; Epiphany, his manifestation to the Gentiles; Lent, his journey toward death; the Great Triduum, the last days of Jesus' earthly life; Easter, the time to celebrate his resurrection; and Pentecost, the time to experience life in the power of the Holy Spirit. According to this historical representation of the life of Christ, the Christian year begins with Advent and ends with Pentecost."

(From Robert Webber's, Ancient-Future Time, p. 31)

The Christian Year
The Christian year is one way that Christians have, for millennia, revisited the life of Christ and the acts of the Church on a yearly basis. The Christian year officially begins with Advent, and ends with the celebration of the Holy Spirit's coming at Pentecost. Let's just say a few words about the meanings and stories focused on during each of these seasons of the Christian year.

To understand the place of Pentecost in the Church Year, we must first remember the place of Easter, which precedes it. Pentecost is the culminating celebration of the resurrection season of Easter.

Easter Leads To Pentecost
Easter is the great day of triumph – it is the ultimate yearly celebration of the Church. It affirms the saving event of Christ rising in the world, breaking the chains of sin and death and inviting us into the new creation, resurrection life of the age to come. Easter goes on for fifty days (approximately 6 total Sundays) and includes Ascension Day and the culminating joy of Pentecost Sunday. Easter is the central celebration of the Christian year, and is the greatest storytelling Sunday of them all.

Pentecost And After Pentecost
Pentecost, rooted in the ancient Jewish celebration of the giving of the five (penta) books of the Law (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), is recognized as the birthday of the Church. The Acts 2 infilling in the upper room by the Holy Spirit is recalled, and the spread of the good news through a divinely empowered Church becomes the center of attention.

This season leads us with the theme of the Spirit's great inspiration through the remainder of the year, until Advent begins the cycle over again. (continued)

an eResource for Worship
© 2010 Wild Pear Creative
All rights reserved. Written by Dan Wilt, M.Min.
www.WorshipTraining.com

The Gospels and Acts become a focus of reading and devotional reflection, and the Church recovers and reclaims her role in innovatively and compassionately catalysing cultural change.

The After Pentecost season then leads us through the acts of the empowered Church in society, healing the sick, showing compassion for the broken, and impacting culture. As Easter is a season that spans many weeks, the Church Year ends on the day of Pentecost, leading us into a season of missional focus as we prepare again for Advent.

Lent, Easter and Pentecost form the "Cycle Of Life" portion of the Christian Year (in contrast to Advent, Christmas and Epiphany being the "Cycle Of Light" portion). In this culminating day celebrating the outpouring of the Spirit on the Church, Christians globally for more than a millenium have remembered our call to be a Church that is continually empowered, regularly renewed, and ultimately missional in all that we say and do.

Also, join us for our online course, Essentials Red, where we explore the ancient themes of Pentecost along with Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, communion, baptism and so much more.

Find out more at:

worshiptraining.com

an eResource for Worship
© 2010 Wild Pear Creative
All rights reserved. Written by Dan Wilt, M.Min.
www.WorshipTraining.com