AN EARLY SERVICE

**Easter Day**

Blessed are you, O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to your abundant mercy has bestowed upon us a new and living hope by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

You transformed the night of doubt and sorrow into the new and eternal day of joy and gladness by the rolling of the stone from the door of the tomb. You brought life and immortality to light by the glad tidings that Christ is risen, that death has no power over him. You sent to all people dwelling in this world of darkness and living under the shadow of death the joyful hope of an inheritance incorruptible and full of glory. O God, we thank you.

You delivered your Son from the grip of death, your Son who died for our sins, and you raised him by your power. You brought him forth like an offering at the altar for all who sleep and gave him the keys to death and hell. All the things which have been sown in dishonor and weakness, you have raised in glory and power. O God, we praise you that through Jesus you have taken away for us the sting of death and given us victory over the grave.

Fill our hearts with the joy of the resurrection. Grant unto your church and people everywhere the power of an endless life, that they may sing your praises. Bestow your grace upon our homes, and bless them with Easter's consolation and hope. Send forth the conquering banner of Christ's victory into all the world, that nations may join the hosts of heaven in songs of triumph.

Guard us, O Lord, by your power, that we may be kept in this holy faith. Wipe away all tears from our eyes. In every adversity and trial preserve us so that we do not fail in receiving the blessings of Christ's ransom and the fruits of his resurrection. In the promise of Easter take from us all fear of death. Let the radiant beams of the Easter dawn's early light shine into the depths of our souls. Renew us by the Spirit of him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Hold fast before our eyes the promise that in Christ our lowly bodies shall be fashioned likewise unto his glorious body, and that as we have borne the image of the earthly so shall we bear the image of the heavenly. And then when you call us to your heavenly rest, may we sleep peacefully in Jesus, awaiting the sound of the trumpet, when the dead shall be raised incorruptible.

In the Name of our risen and ever-living Lord. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)

A LATER SERVICE

**Easter Day**

O God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, we thank and praise you for your mercy in his glorious resurrection.

Give us the radiant joy of the first Easter. Fill our hearts with its sublime announcement and precious promise. Make us glad in the heavenly tidings that he who died for our sins rose again for our justification; that because he lives, we too shall live; that death has no power over us; that he has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light.

Grant us a lively faith, that we may receive both the infallible proofs of his death and the infallible testimonies of his resurrection. And as you have declared that if we shall confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in our heart that you raised him from the dead, we shall be saved, endow us with all such spiritual gifts as shall obtain for us your salvation.

Order our steps by your Word and quicken us by its power, that we, obeying your commandments and trusting in your promises, may receive the fullness of your blessing both in this life and that which is to come.

Bestow your gracious favor upon our homes and imbue our families with such a sense of your goodness and manifold gifts, especially the gift of eternal life in your Son Jesus, that Easter may be observed with the solemnity of sincere thanksgiving and celebrated with the joy of blessed hope.

Have dominion over all the nations of the earth, O Lord, and bring them to your obedience, that all humanity, from the least to the greatest, walking in your love and fear, may find him who has the words of eternal life.

For your church we pray: Grant that everywhere it may have faithful and true shepherds who are not ashamed of that Gospel which is power unto salvation; and endow all its members with the assurance of the resurrection faith, that as you raised our Lord, so also by your power you will raise us. Grant that all believers throughout the world this day may find the fullness of your grace and peace. Help all to be faithful unto death, that they may receive the crown of life. By your Spirit, Heavenly Father, make us perfect in every good work to do your will, and work in us that which is well pleasing in your sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)

EASTER

**Monday**

O Lord God, our Strength, our Song, and our Salvation, glorious in holiness, fearful in power, wonderful in love, we thank you for the marvelous fulfillment of the promises made to the prophets, in the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ from the dead.

Open our spiritual eyes that we may behold the glory of our Lord and receive from him the gift of life. Open to us your Holy Scriptures, in which we read that all that you proclaimed through the prophets concerning the Christ, his suffering, death, and rising from the dead, has most truly come to pass. Open our hearts that the Sun of righteousness may impart light and healing to our sin-darkened lives.

Anoint your church, O God, with the Holy Spirit and with its power, and ever manifest your presence to all who are gathered into its fold, that in worship and work it may proclaim your Word and testify that you ordained him now in this time to be the Savior of the world and in the end to be the Judge of the living and the dead.

Let the festival of this Easter be celebrated in our homes, to the end that we may rejoice in our salvation and glory in the Christ who broke the bonds of death and opened for us the gates of everlasting life.

Send forth your truth into the far reaches of the earth and to every habitation of humankind, that they may know Christ's power over sin and hell and his victory over the grave.

If any amongst us have trouble, care, or sorrow, endow them with the joy and peace of a pure faith, the quietness and confidence of a true love, and the blessed hope of a heavenly rest that awaits the people of God.

Make us mindful of those most dear to us who in faith have entered your eternal rest; may our comfort and consolation be that as they have truly served you here in this world, O Father, so they shall rejoice and praise your redeeming love forever. Grant that we may meet them in the joy of heaven, through Jesus Christ, who will come again and receive us also into his kingdom. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)

EASTER

**First Sunday**

O God of all grace, mercy, and peace, who, by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, declared him to be your Son and our Savior, and who, by the faithful testimony of the apostles, has given us assurance that our faith stands upon a most true and sure record, grant us the witness of your Spirit, that our hearts may rest in your truth.

We thank you for the unspeakable gift of eternal life in your Son. Preserve and defend us from all assaults upon our souls, so that we may hold fast to the profession of our faith. Deliver us from doubt and despair. Save us from vain philosophies and worldly wisdom. Give us your doctrine, the Spirit of truth, and the mind of Christ.

We lift up our hearts to you in thanksgiving for your Word. Grant us daily the desire for your Word’s pure and refreshing nourishment that we may bring forth the fruits of righteousness in our pilgrimage upon earth. Illumine us by its heavenly light and instruct us by its saving truth. Help us to find Jesus in your Word; and though do not see him among us unless we look with the eyes of faith, lead us to love him and to rejoice in him with joy inexpressible and full of glory, and grant that we may receive through our faith the salvation of our souls.

Breathe upon your church that it may faithfully preach your Word and proclaim the Gospel of our risen Savior with courage and diligence in all lands and to all people.

Hear our prayer, O Lord, for all the schools of the church, its colleges and seminaries, and its parish schools, that they may bring forth youth who walk in the way of your commandments and are obedient to your holy will.

Hear the prayers and needs that rise secretly in our hearts for some special help or favor and give us the assurance of your mercy. And if, in your unparalleled wisdom, you ask us to bear a cross, assure us that you will not demand more than we are able to give, but that you will strengthen us through the grace of Jesus Christ.

Forgive now the sins of your people. Strengthen the doubting and the faithless. Bring back the forgetful and the wayward. Comfort the anxious and the distressed.

And as we go from this hallowed place this day, grant unto us all your peace.

All this we pray in the Name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)

EASTER

**Second Sunday**

O Lord our God, how great is the goodness which you bestow upon those who fear you; how good are the things which you prepare for those who love you. Give us your holy fear and love, that we, through Jesus Christ thy Son, may obtain those glories which our eyes have not seen, nor our ears heard, and which have not entered our hearts.

We thank you for the grace which sent Christ the Good Shepherd into the world to lay down his life for the sheep, to ransom us by his blood from the power of evil, to redeem us by his Passion from the deserved consequences of our sins, and by his cross to liberate us from the fear and bondage of death.

We praise and bless you for his resurrection and the bright and glorious promise that all who hear his voice and follow him shall, in the likeness of his resurrection, also be raised.

Accept our thanksgiving for his compassion on us, who were like sheep without a shepherd, going astray, but who are now through your great mercy, returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

For your forgiveness and the remission of all our sins, for the promise of your peace and the pledge of your salvation, for your presence and power, for your loving-kindnesses and tender mercies, for every gift and grace in Christ Jesus, we thank you, merciful Father.

Bestow upon your church all the things that it needs, that it may be obedient to the example of its Savior and seek the lost sheep of the Israel of faith, raise the fallen, rescue the weary, comfort the faint, restore the erring, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned, shelter the homeless, and thus show forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. Draw all your people into a oneness of faith, doctrine, and spirit, that in obedience to truth, in loyalty to Jesus Christ, and in the concern for the prosperity of his kingdom, there shall be but one fold and one Shepherd.

In all parliaments and councils of nations, in all deliberations of commerce and industry, in all instruction in colleges and universities, in all civic and social life, give us the voice and leadership of the Good Shepherd, O God. Suppress the vain boasts, the deceitful words, and the hollow glorying of mortals. Let the earth be still that it may hear and obey the Word of the Lord of life.

Direct our path through the sin, strife, and uncertainty of these times, O Lord. Grant us true faith and a godly heart. Strengthen the sick, support the weak, supply the needy, and show yourself through a very present help in every necessity.

And when our last hour shall come, because our eyes have seen your salvation, let us depart in peace according to your Word. Receive us into everlasting glory through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Redeemer. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)

EASTER

**Third Sunday**

O Lord God, heavenly Father, who is mighty in power and infinite in majesty, who created the heaven and the heaven of heavens, and brings out by name each star in the celestial host, as we enter into the courts of your presence with thanksgiving and prayer, incline your ear to our voices, and in your mercy hear us.

We give thanks to you, everlasting God, that you glorified your Son Jesus in his resurrection from the dead, after he offered himself as Priest and as Sacrifice for all the world, laid himself upon the altar of the cross, and died to reconcile sinners with you. Grant us the blessings of his infinite grace and inexhaustible love.

We praise you for transforming the grief of the crucifixion sadness and defeat into the joy and victory of the resurrection. Help us to cling to Christ's promise of eternal life, and receive it in joy. Give us this glorious consolation by a true and living faith. Grant us the hope and assurance that our eyes will behold him when, according to your promise, our Redeemer on the last day will stand upon the earth and receive us and all who believe in him into his everlasting kingdom.

And as the empty tomb has been the cradle of the church of Christ, we pray that all believers may be endowed with zeal to perform your will so that you may be glorified and multitudes may be turned from their sin to faith in our risen Lord.

Bestow your favor upon our land. Give us a government that preserves liberty, upholds justice, seeks righteousness, curbs lawlessness, and by your ordinance bears its sword in courage and integrity. Let all Christian citizens in accordance with your will accept their lawful obligations cheerfully and dutifully, giving respect to those in authority and honor to all people.

And as our eternal dwelling place is with you, O Father, grant us, who are but strangers and pilgrims on earth, such a measure of your power and grace that we may resist all evil, fight the good fight of faith, and in the end receive the victor's crown of life.

Give the comfort of your promises to the sick, the sorrowful, the broken-hearted, and the perplexed. Cast out from our hearts all fear of death and the unknown. Instill in us patience in every adversity and enable us to receive all your many blessings in love and gratitude.

These things we ask in the glorious hope of an eternal day with you, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)

EASTER

**Fourth Sunday**

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who sent your Son into the world, not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life as a ransom for all, and who raised him by your glory when he had offered the one sacrifice for sins forever, grant us a sure faith in him, that we may possess the blessed hope of eternal life.

For the multitude of your mercies we thank you and pray that we may always be mindful that every good and perfect gift is from above and comes from you. Teach us that your mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear thee, and that there is no moment when you are lacking in kindness and compassion, for you are the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We thank you, O Father of Lights, for all spiritual and intellectual illumination and for the revelation of your divine truth in Jesus Christ. Grant that all who are of the truth may come to him. Pour out upon us your Spirit, that he may, through your Word, guide us into all truth by making known the mysteries of your will, your unchangeable purpose for the raising of the fallen, and the pure and perfect doctrines that pertain to our eternal salvation.

We thank you for the gift of your church and the fellowship of the saints. In order that it may be one, holy, Christian, and apostolic, keep it in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace, give it steadfast obedience to your commandments, preserve it in union with Jesus Christ in the true faith, and continue it in conformity with the inspired teaching of the apostles. Shower your blessing upon it everywhere. Protect it from all its enemies. Prosper it in all its labors.

For the gift of the home we give thanks to you. Let your Spirit dwell in each house, that love and tranquility, joy and consolation, strength and virtue, may reign in undiminished glory.

For the gift of our noble and pleasant land, accept our thanks, O God. Stretch forth your holy arm to defend it inwardly and outwardly from all who would bring it shame and reproach by reason of sin, from all who would overthrow it by strife and rebellion, and from all who would assault and destroy it by war.

For the gifts of our daily bread and all things which sustain us in this earthly life, we thank you. For the blessings of health and healing, for education and social joys, for friends and companions, for the beauties and powers of the earth and the wondrous marvels of the heavens, we thank you.

You are great, O Lord, and great is your goodness. You are mighty in all your works, and glorious in your salvation. Help us now and always to receive your gifts with gratitude. Hear our prayers. Grant us your graces, and finally receive us into everlasting communion with you and with your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ. In his Name we pray. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)

EASTER

**Fifth Sunday**

O Lord God, whose divine thoughts and sublime ways are as far removed from ours as the heavens from the earth, who lives to bless and to communicate life, love, beauty, and joy throughout your universe and to receive with pardon your penitent children, we praise and glorify you for your great goodness.

We give you our heartfelt thanks for the precious gift of your Son Jesus, whom you sent that we might have life and have it more abundantly, and who, to accomplish his mission, innocently suffered in meekness and humility the afflictions of this life, took our sins and infirmities in his own body, and bore them unto death upon the cross. For this great salvation, for our deliverance from the dominion of death by his resurrection, and for the sweet hope of heaven, we glorify you, O Lord God, and sing praises of your Name.

And now, trusting in the promise of your Son that whatever we ask of you in his Name you will grant, we beseech you to move our hearts to such love and affection for our Savior that in all things we will gladly hear his Word and willingly obey his doctrine.

Send forth your Word, O God, into all the world, that in the power of its sacred truth it may accomplish your will wherever you send it, bringing salvation where it is obeyed, condemnation where it is rejected, and judgment on the deeds of all people in this present time for eternity.

Bless your church and let it be, both here in this congregation and everywhere, a loving union of the faithful, a holy communion in sacred things, a people of faith and prayer, exercising a true religion in the performance of every merciful work.

As you govern the nations on this earth, look in mercy upon them and turn them toward the ways of justice, righteousness, and peace.

Especially we ask for your gracious favor upon our land. Bestow upon our president, our councilors and legislators, and all our magistrates such endowments of mind and heart that they may perform their duties with diligence, equity, honor, and intelligence. Defend us from all enemies within and without. Remove all grievances from our midst. Inspire obedience to law. Overthrow all workers of injustice and grant us a love of holiness and purity. For all who toil in industry we pray that they may prosper and receive the fruit of their labor. To all who serve you in their professions grant the satisfaction of a noble work. Bless the farmers and all who produce the fruits of the soil, that they may have favorable weather and a bountiful harvest, and ever acknowledge you who are the Giver of our daily bread.

Bless all our loved ones. Especially we name before you the sick and those who mourn. Let them seek you and receive your gracious help and be mercifully delivered from all their distresses.

Now, O Lord, keep us steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in your work, knowing that in you our labor is not in vain. In the Name of Jesus we pray always. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)

 **The Ascension**

O Lord God, our Father, who is our Strength and Song, and who prepared for us a well of salvation in Jesus Christ your Son, who through the eternal Spirit made himself an offering for the sins of the world, we thank you for your great mercy.

We heartily praise you for the life of grace and truth that Christ lived among us. We give thanks for his perfect revelation of you, and for the unfolding of your glorious purposes and solemn designs. Grant us to believe all that he has taught us and to do all that he has commanded us.

Accept our thanks also for his mighty works and merciful deeds. Help us by these signs to see with certainty that in you alone we live and move and have our being, and that all things are done in your power.

We especially thank you for Christ’s death and resurrection. By your Spirit enable us to receive his sacrifice for our redemption and to trust in him for the gift of eternal life.

Grant now, as we celebrate with joy the ascension of our Lord, that even as you raised him to the right hand of your power and majesty in heavenly places, so may we also always exalt and praise him in adoration and prayer and find in him the springs of gladness and devotion.

Lift the eyes of your church heavenward to see, beyond mortal sight, him who lives to make intercession for the saints, and grant your people hope and confidence in the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe. Rouse us who are baptized with the Holy Spirit to be witnesses to the saving grace of Jesus to multitudes at home and abroad and to preach the Gospel to every creature.

Establish Christ's kingdom in every nation, and from the four corners of the earth turn the hearts of humanity to his faith and obedience, so that every knee may bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord. Maintain our land in righteousness and peace. Let our rulers love and honor you. Give all our schools the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. Bless all institutions of mercy and uphold and further all good works. Deliver us from war and pestilence, and spare us from greed, rebellion, and lawlessness. Give our people a sincere love of piety and peace, and thus guide and prosper us.

We pray for your mercy upon all who are in any way afflicted. We especially ask for your gracious help for the sick. Give them the confidence that whatsoever they ask in accordance with your will, you will grant. May they pray with patience and trust.

And now, O God, as this same Jesus that was taken into heaven shall come again in the same manner as he ascended, let our hearts rise in gratitude and love, and help us to look for his appearing again to receive us into his kingdom, and to prepare in watchfulness and prayer for his return.

In the Name of Jesus Christ, whose Name is above every name, we offer these petitions. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)

THE SUNDAY AFTER

**The Ascension**

Almighty God, our Light and our Salvation, we adore and praise you for your manifold works of love and mercy toward all your children, but especially for the gift of your only-begotten Son, to whom you gave triumphant ascension into heaven to sit at your right hand, far above all principalities and powers, and a name that is above every name, not only in this world, but in that which is to come.

We give thanks that you crowned him with glory for his perfect life, his loving obedience, his innocent sufferings, and his redeeming death. And as you raised him as King over all the earth and Head over all the church, may we also confess that he is the true Lord of our hearts and the only Savior of humanity.

For this pure and holy intention, O God, may your Holy Spirit give us understanding and knowledge concerning the things that pertain to your eternal kingdom. Comfort and strengthen us by the light of heavenly truth, as the Spirit illumines our minds. Through your Spirit teach us of your manifold grace in Jesus, and lead us into the paths of Christian love, fervent charity, and willing generosity. Let him inspire us to give heed to this hour of history and to this time in our lives, and to watch and pray that we fall not into temptation. In any testing of our faith, grant us by your Spirit to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of our Lord.

All who serve in your church endow in full measure with the mind of the Spirit, that Christ may be confessed with all faithfulness, his cross uplifted, and his Gospel declared as the only way to salvation. Grant your ministers and missionaries grace and power, and your people zeal for your house.

Give your blessing to all parents, that they may be wholesome examples to encourage their children in love toward you, in the practice of virtue, in the desire to pursue learning to its foundation, and in usefulness to your church and to all people.

Pour out your Spirit upon our nation, that our people may dwell in peaceful homes and serve you in all godliness and honor. To this end bestow your benediction on all who labor with mind or hand, that they may work with diligence and honesty and receive the just reward of their toil. Give a sanctified intelligence to all in government, that they may perform their duties in such manner as to receive your favor. Hear the prayers of all who are afflicted with any adversity. In the quiet hours of the night when there is no one to lighten the weight of pain, loneliness, and anxiety, grant them strength and hope in the assurance of your love, your power, and your nearness.

And now, as we go from this season of prayer, we give glory to Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Adapted from Clemens H. Zeidler, *Altar Prayers for the Church Year* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962)