

Liturgy for Return to the Church Building

When all are ready to gather the priest says the following or in similar words

Through the ages, Almighty God has moved God's people to build houses of prayer and praise, and to set apart places for the ministry of God's holy Word and Sacraments. In gratitude we return to this place, now gathered as the Body of Christ to hear God's Word proclaimed and to celebrate the sacraments of the New Covenant.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we thank you for making us in your image, to share in the ordering of your world. Receive the work of our hands in this place, set apart for your worship, for the building up of the living, and for the remembrance of the dead, to the praise and glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A procession approaches the door of the church

Standing at the door of the church, the presider says

Let the door(s) be opened

The doors are opened then the threshold is blessed by the priest by these or similar words:

Since faithful people desire to worship together in a house of prayer, dedicated to the Glory of God, we give thanks to God for this building, remembering also that our very bodies are to house the prayers of the saints.

Let us pray.

May our distance in times of sickness or separation of any kind be always for us an opportunity to quiet our hearts and minds, and to give thanks for the many occasions when we can gather, and never lose sight of our unity in the bonds of love. Increase your faith in us, Lord Christ, that we might become rest for the weary, food for those who hunger, light for those in darkness, comfort for those who mourn, and an increase of joy for those who celebrate your life. Amen.

V: I was glad when they said unto me,

R: "Let us go to the house of the Lord."

Breath

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**V: The Lord is in his holy temple;
R: Let the whole earth keep silent.**

Procession as everyone takes their place in the assembly. A moment of silence is kept.

V. Our Help is in the name of the Lord

R. The maker of heaven and earth

V. Let us pray

A warden or some other appointed representative of the congregation prays

Everliving Father, watchful and caring, our source and our end: All that we are and all that we have is yours. Accept us now, as we return to this place to which we return to praise your Name, to ask your forgiveness, to know your healing power, to hear your Word, and to be nourished and transformed by the Body and Blood of your Son. Be present always to guide, challenge, and to judge, to illuminate and to bless your people.

A warden or some other appointed representative of the congregation prays

Lord Jesus Christ, may this continue to be a temple of your presence and a house of prayer. Be always near us when we seek you in this place. Draw us to you, when we come alone and when we come with others, to find comfort and wisdom, to be supported and strengthened, to rejoice and give thanks. May it be here, Lord Christ, that we are made one with you and with one another, so that our lives are sustained and sanctified for your service to become Eucharist for the life of our hurting world.

Minister or other congregational leader

Holy Spirit, continue to open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts, that we may grow closer to you through joy and through suffering. Be with us in the fullness of your power as new members are added to your household, as we grow in grace

through the years, as we walk together through difficult conversations, when we turn to you in sickness or in special needs for our times, and, at the last, when we are committed into the Father's hands.

A Hymn may be Read with music

Reading: Acts 16.13-33

Homily

The Renewal of Baptismal Vows

Celebrant Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil, particularly the evils of racism, injustice, and apathy and renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?

People I do.

Celebrant Do you believe in God the Father?

People I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Celebrant Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

People I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Celebrant Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

People I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and
fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the
prayers?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting evil, particularly the evils of racism,
white supremacy, oppression, and indifference, and, whenever you fall
into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you proclaim by word and example the Good
News of God in Christ?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, particularly persons of color,
and those different from yourself, always loving
your neighbor as yourself?

People I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace and Beloved Community among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People I will, with God's help.

The Celebrant concludes the Renewal of Vows as follows

May Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and bestowed upon us the forgiveness of sins, and the spirit of justice keep us in eternal life by his grace, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Increase, O Lord, our devotion to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, the prayers, and to purifying our hearts and minds by feeding on scripture and the sacred writings of the faithful.

Lord, make us to become Eucharist for the building of your Church.

Fulfill your promise to be with us always, and strengthen us to abide in your presence, even when we are separated by affliction in this world.

Lord, make us to become Eucharist for those who suffer.

Sustain all members of your holy Church, that in our vocation and ministry we may truly and devoutly serve you, placing the needs and weakness of others above our own.

Lord, make us to become Eucharist for the poor in spirit.

Bless all clergy in your Church, that they may diligently preach Christ Crucified, proclaim Christ's Resurrection, and faithfully nurture healing and joy in your Body.

Lord, make us to become Eucharist for those who have not heard the Gospel.

Open our hearts and minds to embrace what we have learned during this time when we could not gather in this house of prayer, that our relationships will increase in strength, and our responsibility to and for each other be sustained by grace.

Lord, make us to become Eucharist for those who are lonely.

Help us, O Lord, to confess the sins of racism, poverty, and systemic abuse of all kinds, newly exposed by the Coronavirus, so that we might receive forgiveness and be transformed, in, by, and through the active witness of faithful discipleship.

Lord, make us to become Eucharist for all who are oppressed.

We remember before you, O Lord, those who have died from the coronavirus, and all who suffer in its wake. Lighten our darkness, and grant your healing grace to all who are sick.

Lord, make us to become Eucharist for those who mourn.

Fill us with your holy and life-giving Spirit, so that we may continue to be your hands and feet in the world around us.

Lord, make us to become Eucharist for the life of the world.

Concluding Collect (one example of many)

A Prayer in Time of Pandemic, Written by the Rev. Dr. Kate Sonderegger

This hour we turn to you, O Lord, in full knowledge of our frailty, our vulnerability, and our great need as your mortal creatures. We cry to you, as one human family, unsure of the path ahead, unequal to the unseen forces around us, frightened by the sickness and death that seem all too real to us now. Stir up your strength and visit us, O Lord; be our shield and rock and hiding place! Guide our leaders, our scientists, our nurses and doctors. Give them wisdom and fill their hearts with courage and determination. Make even this hour, O Lord, a season of blessing for us, that in fear we find you mighty to save, and in illness or death, we find the cross to be none other than the way of life. All this we ask in the name of the One who bore all our infirmities, even Jesus Christ our Risen and Victorious Lord. Amen.