

## **At Home Service 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021 Easter 2**

### ***The Preparation***

Alleluia! Christ is risen! Alleluia! He is risen indeed!  
He unites us in heart and soul. We share joy in his resurrection.

### ***Mission Praise 74 Christ is risen! Hallelujah! – John Samuel Bewley Monsell (1811-75)***

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| 1. Christ is risen! Hallelujah!<br>Risen our victorious Head;<br>Sing His praises; Hallelujah!<br>Christ is risen from the dead.<br>Gratefully our hearts adore Him,<br>As His light once more appears;<br>Bowing down in joy before Him,<br>Rising up from griefs and tears | 2. Christ is risen! All the sadness<br>Of His earthly life is o'er;<br>Through the open gates of gladness<br>He returns to life once more;<br>Death and hell before Him bending,<br>He doth rise the Victor now,<br>Angels on His steps attending,<br>Glory round His wounded brow. |
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*Christ is risen: Hallelujah!  
Risen our victorious Head;  
Sing His praises; Hallelujah!  
Christ is risen from the dead.*

3. Christ is risen! Henceforth never  
Death nor hell shall us enthrall;  
We are Christ's, in Him forever  
We have triumphed over all;  
All the doubting and dejection  
Of our trembling hearts have ceased,  
'Tis His day of resurrection;  
Let us rise and keep the feast.

### ***A prayer of approach***

I come in more sombre mood today; the excitement of Easter past, I return to normal life. But for Jesus' followers, after that first Easter, life would never be the same again. Their new life with the risen Lord was just beginning. Let me stir myself to remember that I am a child of the resurrection, and I approach my Lord with senses alert to the new life and lessons he has to share with me today. Amen.

### ***A prayer of adoration***

Lord, you accept my doubts and embrace my questions like a wise parent encouraging your child to express themselves; hiding your hurt at my scepticism, always hoping for the best and seeing my potential. I worship and adore you for believing in me. Amen.

### ***A prayer of confession and an Assurance of forgiveness***

I confess that I am so often judgemental of others. In particular, I berate those who do not share my beliefs. What need have they of proof? Why can't they just believe? Yet I live in a world where little is taken at face value. Fake news surrounds me, and the camera definitely does lie. Therefore, Lord, forgive me when I look down upon the unbelievers, the doubters, the ones who demand proof; for this is the world in which I live, and the world to which I must proclaim your truth.

There is no proof I can offer in these times, except to show my belief in the ways in which I reach out, by accepting and loving unconditionally, by showing patience and forbearance to those who differ from me – or

is it I who differ from them?

Therefore, forgive me when I fail to reflect your truths in my daily life, and let me become a testament to your risen power. May Christ be evident in me and in all that I do. Amen.

Lord, I thank you for your patience with me, your acceptance of my doubting and questioning, and your assurance of forgiveness. How many times do I grieve your heart with my lack of belief, and exasperate you with my lack of faith? But like a good parent, you gather me to you, and answer my misgivings. With you, Lord, there is infinite forgiveness. Amen.

### **John 20.19-31**

<sup>19</sup>When it was evening on the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' <sup>22</sup>When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

<sup>24</sup>But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

<sup>26</sup>A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' <sup>27</sup>Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' <sup>28</sup>Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' <sup>29</sup>Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

<sup>30</sup>Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup>But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

### ***Singing the Faith 629 God of my faith, I offer you my doubt (the tune Abide with me is this metre)***

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| 1 | God of my faith, I offer you my doubt,<br>for life at times seems far too dark for me,<br>and my belief becomes more insecure,<br>when worldly cares produce uncertainty.           | 2 | God of my hope, I offer you my fear,<br>when I am scared by my anxiety,<br>when all I hear is suffering and woe,<br>in all my shadows you will walk with me.      |
| 3 | God of my joy, I offer you my grief,<br>when I sink down in sadness or despair,<br>when in depression I cannot be touched,<br>I pray in all my depths to find you there.            | 4 | God of my love, I offer you my pain,<br>when I'm alone and feel nobody cares,<br>in aching age or in rejected youth,<br>you bear my cross and dry my human tears. |
| 5 | God of my life, I offer you my dreams,<br>light in the darkness where I hide from view,<br>light in my faith, my hope, my joy and love,<br>light in my life and all my life in you. |   |   |

Colin Ferguson (b. 1937). Words: © Colin Ferguson

### ***Reflection***

Today's Gospel reading comes as a challenge to us all. As I read it I wonder about the recorded conversation between Thomas and the rest of the disciples. Would Thomas give the same account? I think my reaction would have been to question sanity or sobriety, or perhaps both – resurrection, despite the account of Lazarus

rising, was not to be expected, especially now that Jesus himself was dead. And yet a week later as he sees the risen Jesus Thomas declares, 'My Lord and my God!'

What the story does is help those amongst us (all of us?) who on occasions have our doubts about Jesus or even of God. When the tornado or cyclone hits, with an earthquake or volcanic eruption destroys and kills, where injustice appears to be victorious, where the worst of human nature is seen we can all doubt the very existence of God and by default the salvation offered through Jesus. The doubts do not mean that God doesn't exist, they do not mean that Jesus is not present, only that we cannot easily see God the Father, or His Son Jesus present in the world around us.

The world can be a dark place where evil seems to have the upper hand, but this does not mean that light is not present as well. Sometimes we will see the light as those disciples did on the evening of the first day of the week, sometimes we will not see and will doubt its existence as with Thomas.

Perhaps I'm generous in the way I think of Thomas but I feel that he was someone who wanted to believe that Jesus had risen but his logic, his mind would not accept it. In the light of a pandemic, of corrupt governments across the world, of warfare, starvation, of the misuse of creation and of unrest I often ask myself 'where is God in this'. Why can't I see God's presence and good overcoming evil?

I have learnt that Jesus is there in each believer who acts for good and in each act of love that happens. So, my faith in God through Jesus continues despite the times of doubt. I still believe that Jesus will change this world, and this starts in individual hearts and minds. And I believe this even when his presence is hard for me to find.

What we all need to be able to do is to keep the open and receptive heart and mind so that when we see him we too can say "My Lord and my God!"

### ***Mission Praise 264 I believe in Jesus***

I believe in Jesus	I believe in You, Lord
I believe He is the Son of God	I believe You are the Son of God
I believe He died and rose again	I believe You died and rose again
I believe He paid for us all	I believe You paid for us all.
And I believe He is here now	And I believe You're here now
Standing in our midst	Standing in our midst
Here With the power to heal now	Here With the power to heal now
And the grace to forgive	And the grace to forgive

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### ***A prayer of praise and thanksgiving***

Thanks be to the God who embraces me even in my times of greatest doubt. When my thinking is clouded and my spirit bewildered, God holds sacred space for me.

Thanks be to the Son who accepts my questions without judgement. He who was questioned by pauper and priest alike remains a touching place for me.

Thanks be to the Holy Spirit who guides me to answers in my day. The one who breathes God's understanding into me opens a safe place for me. Amen.

### ***Prayers of intercession***

I pray for a world in need of peace: peace between warring nations, peace between conflicting political ideologies, peace between peoples of faith.

I pray for a world in need of love: love for people who have lost their self-respect, love for friends who have become alienated, love for relatives who have lost their affection for each other.

I pray for a world in need of hope: hope in the midst of despair when all seems lost, hope when evil seems to be winning, hope for a better future for everyone.

I pray for a world in need of joy: joy when there is cause for celebration, joy where there is a reason to give thanks, joy as a means of sharing in the wonder of creation. Amen.

### ***The Lord's Prayer***

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

### ***Offering and prayer of dedication***

God of all goodness and grace, receive each gift I bring. I offer of my resources, skills, talents and time for your kingdom. But I ask also that you accept my doubts and questions along with my certainties and faith. Bless all I bring and use for your kingdom. Amen.

### ***Singing the Faith 296 Christ has risen while earth slumbers***

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| 1 | Christ has risen while earth slumbers,<br>Christ has risen where hope died,<br>as he said and as he promised,<br>as we doubted and denied.<br>Let the moon embrace the blessing;<br>let the sun sustain the cheer;<br>let the world confirm the rumour.<br>Christ is risen, God is here!     | 2 | Christ has risen for the people<br>whom he loved and died to save;<br>Christ has risen for the women<br>bringing flowers to grace his grave.<br>Christ has risen for disciples<br>huddled in an upstairs room.<br>He whose word inspired creation<br>is not silenced by the tomb.    |
| 3 | Christ has risen to companion<br>former friends who fear the night,<br>sensing loss and limitation<br>where their faith had once burned bright.<br>They bemoan what is no longer,<br>they expect no hopeful sign<br>till Christ ends their conversation,<br>breaking bread and sharing wine. | 4 | Christ has risen and forever<br>lives to challenge and to change<br>all whose lives are messed or mangled,<br>all who find religion strange.<br>Christ is risen. Christ is present,<br>making us what he has been —<br>evidence of transformation<br>in which God is known and seen. |

John L. Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958). Words and Music: From Enemy of Apathy © 1988, WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH Scotland.  
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### ***A sending out prayer***

Father, your Son Jesus did not reject Thomas. Help me to value questions and questioners, and not to reject either when they are awkward; to discern what kind of evidence is appropriate and trustworthy in different situations; and to have the courage myself to be a questioner and seeker of truth. Amen.

### ***Blessing***

May the peace and the presence of the Risen Christ be with me; and the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, rest upon me now and always. Amen.

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