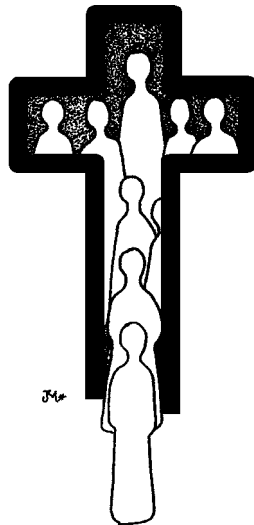


# **Pastoral Council Prayers and Faith Sharing**

**Lent – Easter 2019  
Cycle C**



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## AN INVITATION TO PRAY WITH YOUR PASTORAL COUNCIL

**Begin and end with prayer!!** These opening and closing prayers have been prepared to help your pastoral council become what it is intended to be: a *leadership body* in *communion* with God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—focused on enabling the community to carry out the *mission* of the Church. As stated in the “Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines” of the Diocese of Rochester, the specific purposes of the pastoral council, in harmony with the goals of the Pastor, are:

- to develop a common vision and purpose, actively advocate for the poor and the powerless, and to extend Christian commitment to the surrounding neighborhoods and communities;
- to orchestrate a statement of mission for the parish community and become the reference point for activity in the parish;
- to provide recommendations for priorities, directions, and policies through pastoral planning for worship, evangelization, outreach, stewardship, etc.;
- to promote communication, understanding, and collaboration among parish organizations and between the parish, the diocese, and the universal Church.

In our enthusiasm to “get the business of the council done,” we may forget that we are to role model spiritual leadership. As a pastoral council, we are challenged to ongoing renewal through prayer, study, listening, and dialogue. Because of our familiarity with secular boards of directors, we may forget that we are a body of church leaders engaged with our pastor or pastoral administrator in discerning the ways God is speaking to this community in this time and place. For our actions to be imbued with the wisdom of God, they must begin with prayer and with listening to one another in faith and love, and they must include listening to the larger community of parishioners in similar faith and love.

We strongly encourage you to set aside time at the beginning and end of your pastoral council meetings to pray. These prayers are a tool used by many councils and other groups. We are confident that the quality of your decisions as well as your relationships with one another and the faith community at large will be enhanced as you take time for shared prayer in God’s presence.

**Nick Frega**  
**Liaison for Pastoral Councils**  
**Pastoral Services, Diocese of Rochester**

## HINTS FOR THE PRAYER LEADER

We recommend designating a different person on your council to lead prayer for each meeting,

### **Preparation before the Pastoral Council meeting**

1. Read through the prayer session for the Sunday following your meeting. Become familiar with it.
2. Make enough copies of the prayer for all you expect to attend the meeting. You may distribute these at the beginning of the meeting or send them out to members ahead of time along with the agenda and minutes of the previous meeting.
3. If a visual image is suggested for this particular prayer session, bring it to the meeting if possible. Having an image in the center of the gathering will help members remember throughout the evening that the meeting unfolds in God's presence.

### **A Walk through the Prayer Outline**

#### ***Prayer at the beginning of the meeting (allow 10-15 minutes on your agenda):***

1. Invite those present to become quiet and remember that they are in the presence of God. After a brief pause, begin the ***Invitation to Prayer***.
2. Either read the ***Scripture*** passage yourself or have someone else do so (ask this other person before the meeting begins).
3. Allow several minutes for ***silent reflection*** and consideration of the faith sharing questions.
4. Invite those present to respond (in groups of two or three or in the larger council group) to any of the suggested ***questions for faith sharing*** out loud. People may also choose to share how the reading spoke to them in general. All do not need to respond, but please allow silent pauses so that people can reflect comfortably.
5. Proceed to the beginning of your meeting's agenda.

#### ***Prayer at the end of the meeting (allow 5 minutes on your agenda):***

1. Begin the ***intercessory prayers*** as written in the prayer session.
2. Invite others to share their own prayers aloud.
3. When all who choose to share prayers are done, say "For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts."
4. Begin the ***closing prayer***.

### Notes

1. The intercessory prayers may be offered at the end of the "prayer at the beginning of the meeting," in the middle of the meeting, or at the end of the meeting, depending on what you feel works best.
2. Some communities like to develop one intercessory prayer related to the issues on which the pastoral council is working. This prayer is prayed by the entire community at Sunday liturgies over the course of the month. This practice provides spiritual

support for the parish's leadership, helps the entire congregation be conscious of issues under consideration by the pastoral council, and helps all to focus on the God who leads the community into the future.

3. These prayer sessions are designed for pastoral councils, but they can be used at the meetings of the parish staff, other parish committees, and the planning group council with minor adaptation.

### ***Faith Sharing Guidelines***

Each person is led by God on his or her personal spiritual journey. Faith sharing refers to shared reflections on the action of God in one's experience as related to Scripture and faith. Faith sharing is not discussion, problem solving, or scripture study. The purpose of this experience is an encounter between a person in the concrete circumstances of his or her life and the Word of God, which leads to a conversion of heart. The entire faith sharing process is prayer. That means listening to the Word of God as revealed in scripture, sharing, and listening to each other's experience are all part of the prayer.

1. Participants are given time to reflect before sharing begins, and a period of comfortable silence might occur between individuals sharing. Silence is a vital part of the total process of faith sharing.
2. Sharing is optional. Each person shares at the time and on the level where he or she feels comfortable.
3. There is no set order for sharing (you do not need to go in a circle around the group).
4. Listen respectfully and openly. If someone does not hear the sharing or does not understand, he or she can ask for clarification.
5. There is no discussion or commenting on what is shared. An appropriate response from the prayer leader or group might be a smile, a nod, or a "thank you."
6. The prayer leader and group are not there as "problem solvers" or "advice givers."
7. Participants are encouraged to share in the first person (I feel...I believe...etc.).
8. Anything that is shared in the group is confidential and does not leave the group. It is meant to be a gift for this group only.

## Meeting Obstacles/Lent

### 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent

March 10, 2019



Visual suggestions: Bowl of sand, rocks, candle, Bible, picture of desert scene or Christ's temptations

### **Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

#### *Invitation to Prayer*

Leader: Teach us your ways, O Lord, that we may walk in your truth.  
**All: Teach us your ways, O Lord, that we may walk in your truth.**  
Leader: Give us undivided hearts, Lord, to praise your name.  
**All: Teach us your ways, O Lord, that we may walk in your truth.**  
Leader: You, Lord, are merciful and gracious.  
**All: Teach us your ways, O Lord, that we may walk in your truth.**  
Leader: Give your strength to your servants.  
**All: Teach us your ways, O Lord, that we may walk in your truth.**  
*(from Psalm 86)*

#### *Scripture Reading: Luke 4:1-13*

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry.

The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to him, "I shall give to you all this power and their glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me." Jesus said to him in reply, "It is written: 'You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.'"

Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' and: 'With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him in reply, "It also says, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'"

When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## ***Silent Reflection***

### ***Questions for Faith Sharing*** (choose one or two for faith sharing)

1. *What parts of my life do I need to look at to help me serve better as a true Christian leader?*
  2. *What are the stumbling blocks for our parish or cluster as we try to be a united community?*
  3. *What are we trying to cling to that prevents us from working in better harmony with other parishes or nearby organizations?*
- As we continue our meeting, may we remember that the Lord, our God, is guiding us.

## **Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting**

### ***Intercessory Prayers***

Leader: In confidence we now offer God our prayers and our needs.

For wisdom and strength for our Pastoral Council, that when faced with the difficulties, jealousies, and fears that change brings, we may be able to do what is good and true. We pray to the Lord...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...

(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

### ***Closing Prayer***

**All: Lord God,  
our Guide on the journey,  
as we walk the path of leadership in this community,  
may we know your presence with us always  
as did our ancestors of faith who walked before us.  
May we have the strength to keep going when the path becomes  
difficult and challenging.  
We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

**Transfiguration and the Journey to the Cross**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent**  
**March 17, 2019**

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

*Invitation to Prayer*

Leader: You are God's chosen Son, the one transfigured on the mountain.

**All: We praise you, Jesus our Christ.**

Leader: You are God's chosen Son, the one who journeyed to Jerusalem, suffered and died for our sake.

**All: We praise you, Jesus our Christ.**

Leader: You are God's chosen Son who calls us tonight to listen to your Word in Scripture, to glimpse your presence in one another, and to share in the leadership of your church.

**All: We praise you, Jesus our Christ.**

*Scripture Reading: Luke 9:28b-36*

Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem.

Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But he did not know what he was saying.

While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## ***Silent Reflection***

### ***Questions for Faith Sharing*** (choose one or two for faith sharing)

1. *Jesus was transfigured in appearance while at prayer. When has my prayer transfigured me or transfigured the way I look at a particular situation?*
2. *In Luke's gospel Jesus' transfiguration immediately precedes his journeying to Jerusalem, a path that will lead to his suffering and death. Why and how are the transfiguration and the cross connected?*
3. *How does this gospel passage relate to the work we will do tonight?*  
As we continue our meeting, may we be guided by the beauty and challenge of the transfiguration.

## **Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting**

### ***Intercessory Prayers***

Leader: In confidence we now offer God our prayers and our needs.

For all those who suffer from injustice and the violence of others,  
we pray.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...

(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

### ***Closing Prayer***

**All: God our Father, we seek to listen to your Son Jesus and to follow him as his disciples. May we bring his good news to all we meet. Amen.**





**Fruitful Growth**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent**  
**March 24, 2019**

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

***Invitation to Prayer***

**Leader:** Lord God, source of all life and growth, help us to live lives of mercy, compassion and forgiveness as we work together to spread the Good News of your love to others.

**All:** **Through your guidance may our efforts this evening be fruitful and help our community to move forward in growth.**

***Scripture Reading: Luke 13:1-9***

At that time some people who were present there told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. He said to them in reply, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them--do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!" And he told them this parable: "There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, 'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?' He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.'"

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

***Silent Reflection***

***Questions for Faith Sharing (choose one or two for faith sharing)***

1. *What are the fruits of this council since last fall?*
  2. *What can we do to be a more fruitful council?*
  3. *Where is God calling us to consider this scripture reading in our meeting tonight?*
- As we continue our meeting, may we be mindful of Jesus's call to bear good fruit.

## **Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting**

### ***Intercessory Prayers***

Leader: In confidence we now offer God our prayers and our needs.

For all people of goodwill, that they continue to repent for wrongdoing and put their faith in the mercy of the Lord, we pray to the Lord.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: For those who lead the church and this community, that they be guided by Jesus the savior of the world, we pray to the Lord.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...

(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts ...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

### ***Closing Prayer***

**All: Lord God, Creator of the universe,  
we give you thanks and praise for the many gifts you have given us.  
Be our protection and our help in whatever we do  
and wherever we go.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**



**Reconciliation and Renewal in Christ**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent**  
**March 31, 2019**

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

***Invitation to Prayer***

Leader:        O God of all creation,  
                      you are constantly at work in our world,  
                      renewing, refreshing and reconciling all of creation to yourself.  
                      Enable us, your servants, to assist you in your work.  
                      Use us as instruments of your vision.  
                      Bring about healing and peace through our efforts  
                      until we are One in you forever.  
                      We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**All:                Amen.**

***Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21***

So whoever is in Christ is a new creation:  
the old things have passed away;  
behold, new things have come.  
And all this is from God,  
who has reconciled us to himself through Christ  
and given us the ministry of reconciliation,  
namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ,  
not counting their trespasses against them  
and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.  
So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us.  
We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.  
For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin,  
so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**



***Silent Reflection***

***Questions for Faith Sharing*** (choose one or two for faith sharing)

1. *During the past month, how has God used you as an ambassador, inviting people to be reconciled with each other and with God through your efforts?*
2. *What areas in our community (church or larger) do you think need reconciliation? What specific things do you think you/we can do?*
3. *How can we, as the pastoral council, become a model of reconciliation for our faith community, especially during this holy season of Lent? How do you think this could affect the parish?*

As we continue our meeting, may we remember that Christ has called us to the ministry of reconciliation.

**Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting**

***Intercessory Prayers***

Leader: In confidence we now offer God our prayers and our needs.  
That the church be ever open to the workings of the Holy Spirit, we pray:  
**All: Forgiving Lord, hear our prayer.**

(The leader may add prayers that address subjects/concerns dealt with in this evening's meeting.)

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...  
(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...  
**All: Forgiving Lord, hear our prayer.**

***Closing Prayer***

Leader: Let us say the *Prayer of St. Francis* together  
(or sing "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace")  
**All: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.**  
**Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;**  
**Where there is injury, pardon,**  
**Where there is doubt, faith;**  
**Where there is despair, hope;**  
**Where there is darkness, light;**  
**Where there is sadness, joy.**  
**O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek**  
**to be consoled as to console,**  
**to be understood as to understand,**  
**to be loved as to love.**  
**For it is in giving that we receive,**  
**it is in pardoning, that we are pardoned,**  
**and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.**



**The Desert/New Life  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent  
April 7, 2019**

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

***Invitation to Prayer***

Leader: The desert is the habitat where we are most aware of our need for water.  
On the spiritual journey, the desert is the habitat where we grow aware of  
just how much we need the grace of God.  
O God of Infinite Mercies,  
you are the wellspring of our desire.

**All: Open our hearts that we may receive the Word of Life.**

***Scripture Reading: Isaiah 43:18-21***

Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not;  
see, I am doing something new!  
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
In the desert I make a way; in the wasteland, rivers.  
Wild beasts honor me, jackals and ostriches,  
for I put water in the desert and rivers in the wasteland  
for my chosen people to drink,  
the people whom I formed for myself, that they might announce my praise.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

***Question for Silent Reflection and Faith Sharing***

*The leader allows some time in silence for the reading to settle in, then slowly, thoughtfully, poses the following invitation:*

Leader: Take a moment to let the Holy Spirit remind you of a time when you were  
in the desert--perhaps it was a time when your life seemed wildly out of  
control... or when happiness was dried up by depression or pain.... or a  
time when you felt completely at a loss... Recall a time when you really  
needed God....  
Now recall moving out of that time....  
Do you have a sense of God making a way for you.... renewing your  
spirit....

*After a time in silence, the leader initiates the time for faith sharing:*

Leader: I invite anyone who would like to share what it was like to recall this experience to do so.

*When all who wish to share have had a chance to do so, the leader begins the intercessory prayers.*

*\*This is slightly different from most other weeks.*

***Intercessory Prayers***

Leader: Lord God, we thank you for all the times you have made a way to bring new life into our lives when we thought there was no way.  
Help us to notice the new life emerging in us today, for this we pray to the Lord...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: For what else shall we pray...

(When all who choose are finished voicing prayers) That we may have vision to notice when God is working to bring about a new thing in our parish community, we pray to the Lord...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

As we continue our meeting, may we recall the gentle guidance of God.

**Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting: Psalm 42: 1-2, 7-8**

**All: As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.  
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When shall I come to behold the face of God?**

**Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your cataracts;  
all your waves and your billows have gone over me.  
By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,  
at night his song is with me,  
a prayer to the God of my life.  
Amen.**

**Humble Service**  
**Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion**  
**April 14, 2019**

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

*Invitation to Prayer*

Leader: Open wide the doors and gates.

**All: Lift high the ancient portals. The King of glory enters.**

Leader: Who is the king of glory?

**All: He is God, the mighty Lord. (Psalm 24:9)**

*Scripture Reading: Philippians 2: 6-11*

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

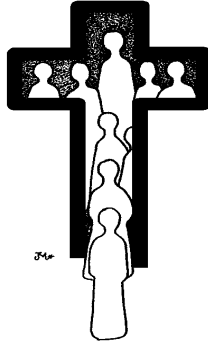
The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

*Silent Reflection*

*Questions for Faith Sharing (choose one or two for faith sharing)*

1. *How do we as a council empty ourselves and become servants of God and God's people?*
2. *How can we become greater servants of our community as a whole?*
3. *Who are some of the greatest servants of God that you know?*
4. *Where is God calling us to consider this scripture reading in our meeting tonight?*

As we continue our meeting, may we be inspired by Christ's example of service.



### **Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting**

#### ***Intercessory Prayers***

Leader: In confidence we now offer God our prayers and our needs.

For all who serve others in any capacity, that they do so humbly and with loving kindness. We pray to the Lord.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...

(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

#### ***Closing Prayer***

**All: Good and gracious God,  
it is through your Son Jesus that we learn  
the meaning of true love and service.  
May we always follow in the footsteps of Christ. Amen.**





**Resurrection/New Life/Hope**  
**Easter Sunday**  
**April 21, 2019**

Visual suggestions: Flowers, candle, Bible

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

***Invitation to Prayer***

Leader: Alleluia, give thanks to the Lord, call on God's name!  
**All: Alleluia, give thanks to the Lord, call on God's name!**  
Leader: Make known God's deeds among the peoples.  
**All: Alleluia, give thanks to the Lord, call on God's name!**  
Leader: Sing to God! Sing praises to God!  
**All: Alleluia, give thanks to the Lord, call on God's name!**  
Leader: Glory in God's holy name.  
**All: Alleluia, give thanks to the Lord, call on God's name!**  
*(from Psalm 105)*

***Scripture Reading: John 20:1-9***

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb.

So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him."

So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in.

When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place.

Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## ***Silent Reflection***

### ***Questions for Faith Sharing*** (choose one or two for faith sharing)

1. *Where do we (individually or collectively) seek and find our Lord?*
  2. *How does it help me to know that Jesus is risen from the dead?*
  3. *As a pastoral council when or where do we give up easily when things get difficult? What might an act of faith in God's promise of new life look like for us?*
- As we continue our meeting, may we be inspired by the joy and hope of the resurrection.

## **Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting**

### ***Intercessory Prayers***

**Leader:** In confidence we now offer God our prayers and our needs.  
For those in leadership positions in our church, that they may continue to proclaim the good news of the risen Jesus in all they say and do, we pray to the Lord...

**All:** **Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...

(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

**All:** **Lord, hear our prayer.**

### ***Closing Prayer***

**Leader:** Risen Jesus,  
at this time we meet you at the tomb with its memories of fear and suffering. Grant that we may also come to delight with joy in your risen presence, right here in our midst.

**All:** **Amen.**

