2021 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Virginia State LARCUM Conference
based on the texts prepared by the Graymoor Ecumenical
and Interreligious Institute and the World Council of Churches

“Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit.”
Jn 15:5-9

Most Rev. Michael F. Burbidge  | Catholic Diocese of Arlington
The Rt. Rev. Susan E. Goff  | Episcopal Diocese of Virginia
The Rt. Rev. Susan B. Haynes  | Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia
Bishop Robert F. Humphrey  | Virginia Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Bishop Sharma D. Lewis  | Virginia Conference, United Methodist Church

Music Director: David Mathers
Cantors: Erin Bullock and Allan Palacios Chan
Flute: Susan Deck
Lectors: Loan Hudson and Tony Weilbacher
Order of the Celebration

Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit
Jn 15:5-9

GATHERING SONG

Holy Spirit, Come to Us

Tune: Jacques Berthier, 1923–1994


WORD OF WELCOME

Bishop Lewis:
May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you always!
All: And also with you.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this year the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, chosen by the sisters of the Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland, is “Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit.”

It is the great desire of God, expressed by Jesus, that we might come to him and abide in him. He waits for us tirelessly, hoping that, united to him in love, we will bear fruit that will bring life to all. Faced with the difference of ‘the other,’ we risk withdrawing into ourselves and seeing only that which separates us. But let us listen to how Christ calls us to abide in his love, and so bear much fruit.

In the three moments of prayer that follow, we remember the call of Christ, we turn to his love, to him who is the center of our life. For the path of unity begins in our intimate relationship with God. Abiding in his love strengthens the desire to seek unity and reconciliation with others. God opens us up to those who are different from us. This is an important fruit, a gift of healing for the divisions within us, between us, and in the world.
**Bishop Lewis:**
In peace let us pray to the Lord:  
Lord, you are the vinedresser who cares for us with love.  
You call on us to see the beauty of each branch united to the vine,  
the beauty of each person.  
And yet, too often the differences in others make us afraid.  
We withdraw into ourselves.  
Our trust in you is forsaken.  
Enmity develops between us.  
Come and direct our hearts toward you once again.  
Grant us to live from your forgiveness  
so that we may be together and praise your name.

**LITANY OF PRAISE**

**Bishop Burbidge:** We sing your praise in the midst of the world and among all peoples,  
**Bishop Goff:** We sing your praise in the midst of the world and among all peoples,  

**All:** You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!

**Bishop Humphrey:** We sing your praise among suffering and tears,  
**Bishop Haynes:** We sing your praise among promises and achievements.  

**All:** You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!

**Bishop Burbidge:** We sing your praise in the places of conflict and misunderstanding;  
**Bishop Goff:** We sing your praise in the places of encounter and reconciliation.  

**All:** You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!

**Bishop Humphrey:** We sing your praise in the midst of rifts and divisions,  
**Bishop Haynes:** We sing your praise in the midst of life and death,  
the birth of a new heaven and a new earth.  

**All:** You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!

**FIRST VIGIL**

**ABIDING IN CHRIST: THE UNITY OF THE WHOLE PERSON**

Psalm: 103

**First Reader:** Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
and all within me, his holy name.  
Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
and never forget all his benefits.

**Second Reader:** It is the Lord who forgives all your sins,  
who heals every one of your ills,  
who redeems your life from the grave,
who crowns you with mercy and compassion,
who fills your life with good things,
renewing your youth like an eagle’s.

First Reader: The LORD does just deeds,
gives full justice to all who are oppressed.
He made known his ways to Moses,
and his deeds to the children of Israel.

Second Reader: The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger and rich in mercy.
He will not always find fault;
nor persist in his anger forever.
He does not treat us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our faults.

First Reader: For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so strong his mercy for those who fear him.
As far as the east is from the west,
so far from us does he remove our transgressions.

Second Reader: As a father has compassion on his children,
the LORD’s compassion is on those who fear him.
For he knows of what we are made;
he remembers that we are dust.

First Reader: Humanity, their days are like grass;
they flower like the flowers of the field.
The wind blows, and they are no more,
and their place never sees it again.

Second Reader: But the mercy of the LORD is everlasting
upon those who hold him in fear,
upon children’s children his justice,
for those who keep his covenant,
and remember to fulfill his commands.

First Reader: The LORD has fixed his throne in heaven,
and his kingdom is ruling over all.
Bless the LORD, all you his angels,
mighty in power, fulfilling his word,
who heed the voice of his word.

Second Reader: Bless the LORD, all his hosts,
his servants, who do his will.
Bless the LORD, all his works,
in every place where he rules.
Bless the LORD, O my soul!
Bishop Burbidge: A reading from the Gospel according John.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Response

Ubi caritas
Live in charity
Et amor,
And steadfast love,

Ubi caritas
Live in charity:
Deus ibi est.
God will dwell with you.

Text: 1 Corinthians 13:2-8; Where charity and love are found, God is there;
Taizé Community, 1978
Tune: Jacques Berthier, 1923-1994
Intercessions

**Bishop Burbidge:** God of love, through Christ you said to us: “You did not choose me but I chose you.” You seek us, you invite us to receive your friendship and abide in it. Teach us to respond more deeply to this invitation, and grow in a life that is ever more complete.

*All:* The joy of our heart is in God.

**Bishop Burbidge:** God of life, you call us to be praise in the midst of the world and to welcome one another as a gift of your grace. May your loving gaze, which rests upon each person, open us to receive each other just as we are.

*All:* The joy of our heart is in God.

**Bishop Burbidge:** God who gathers, you knit us together as one vine in your Son Jesus. May your loving Spirit abide in us at parish meetings and local ecumenical gatherings. Grant that together we might celebrate you with joy.

*All:* The joy of our heart is in God.

**Bishop Burbidge:** God of the one vineyard, you call us to abide in your love in all we do and say. Touched by your goodness, grant us to be a reflection of that love in our homes and workplaces. May we pave the way for bridging rivalries and overcoming tensions as you provide us with sincere concern for one another and the generosity to truly listen to one another.

*All:* The joy of our heart is in God.

**Bishop Burbidge:** Very often we think of prayer as something we do, an activity of our own. In this short time we are invited to an interior silence, and to turn aside from all the noise and concerns of our lives and thoughts. In this silence the action belongs to God. We are simply called to abide in God’s love, to rest in him.

Silence (approximately 1 minute)

SECOND VIGIL
THE VISIBLE UNITY OF CHRISTIANS

Psalm: 85

*First Reader:* O LORD, you have favored your land, and brought back the captives of Jacob. You forgave the guilt of your people, and covered all their sins. You averted all your rage; you turned back the heat of your anger.

*Second Reader:* Bring us back, O God, our savior! Put an end to your grievance against us. Will you be angry with us forever? Will your anger last from age to age?
First Reader: Will you not restore again our life, that your people may rejoice in you? Let us see, O LORD, your mercy, and grant us your salvation.

Second Reader: I will hear what the LORD God speaks; he speaks of peace for his people and his faithful, and those who turn their hearts to him. His salvation is near for those who fear him, and his glory will dwell in our land.

First Reader: Merciful love and faithfulness have met; justice and peace have kissed. Faithfulness shall spring from the earth, and justice look down from heaven.

Second Reader: Also the LORD will bestow his bounty, and our earth shall yield its increase. Justice will march before him, and guide his steps on the way.

Bishop Humphrey: A reading from the first Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, “I belong to Paul,” or “I belong to Apollos,” or “I belong to Cephas,” or “I belong to Christ.” Has Christ been divided?

Response

There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism.
Hay un Señor, una fe, un bautismo.

There is one God, who is Father of all.
Un solo Dios, quien es Padre de todos.
Intercessions

_Bishop Humphrey:_ Holy Spirit, you create and re-create the church in all places. Come and whisper in our hearts the prayer which Jesus addressed to his Father on the eve of his passion: “that they may all be one … so that the world may believe.”

_All:_ **Lord have mercy**

_Bishop Humphrey:_ Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, light the fire of your love in us so that suspicions, contempt and misunderstanding cease in the church. May the walls that separate us fall, and heal the wounds of discrimination and division in our society and world.

_All:_ **Lord have mercy**

_Bishop Humphrey:_ Holy Spirit, Consoler of all, open our hearts to forgiveness and reconciliation and bring us back from our wanderings.

_All:_ **Lord have mercy**

_Bishop Humphrey:_ Lord Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, give us poverty of spirit so that we may welcome the unexpectedness of your grace.

_All:_ **Lord have mercy**

_Bishop Humphrey:_ Holy Spirit, you never abandon those who are persecuted for their fidelity to the gospel. Give them strength and courage, and support to those who help them.

_All:_ **Lord have mercy**

**Action:** **Sharing a Sign of Peace**

_Bishop Humphrey:_ The Lord calls us to be united among ourselves. Though we are limited during this pandemic in the ways we can be physically close, the Lord gives us his peace and invites us to share it. Let us exchange a sign of his peace, perhaps with a bow, to our neighbors in a manner that is appropriate.
THIRD VIGIL
THE UNITY OF ALL PEOPLES AND ALL CREATION

Psalm: 96

First Reader: O sing a new song to the LORD; sing to the LORD, all the earth. sing to the LORD; bless his name. Proclaim his salvation day by day. Tell among the nations his glory, and his wonders among all the peoples.

Second Reader: For the LORD is great and highly to be praised, to be feared above all gods. For the gods of the nations are naught. It was the LORD who made the heavens. In his presence are majesty and splendor, strength and honor in his holy place.

First Reader: Give the LORD, you families of peoples, give the LORD glory and power; give the LORD the glory of his name.

Second Reader: Bring an offering and enter his courts; worship the LORD in holy splendor. O tremble before him, all the earth.

First Reader: Say to the nations, “The LORD is king.” The world he made firm in its place; he will judge the peoples in fairness.

Second Reader: Let the heavens rejoice and earth be glad; let the sea and all within it thunder praise. Let the land and all it bears rejoice.

First Reader: Then will all the trees of the wood shout for joy at the presence of the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with justice; he will govern the peoples with his truth.

Bishop Goff: Reading: Rev. 7: 9-12

I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!” And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, singing, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

Bishop Haynes: Homily
Response

Intercessions

Bishop Goff: God of life, you have created every human person in your image and likeness. We sing your praise for the gift of our many cultures, expressions of faith, traditions and ethnicities. Grant us the courage always to stand against injustice and hatred based on race, class, gender, religion, and fear of those not like ourselves.

All: God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

Bishop Goff: Merciful God, you have shown us in Christ that we are one in you. Teach us to use this gift in the world so that believers of all faiths in every country may be able to listen to each other and live in peace.

All: God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

Bishop Goff: O Jesus, you came into the world and shared fully in our humanity. You know the hardships of life for people who suffer in so many different ways. Especially in these challenging and uncertain times of pandemic may the Spirit of compassion move us to reach out to all those in need and share our time, life and goods.

All: God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

Bishop Goff: Holy Spirit, you hear the fury of your wounded creation and the cries of those already suffering from climate change. Guide us toward new behaviors. May we learn to live in harmony as part of your creation.

All: God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!
Action: Moving to the center... and out to the world

Inspired by a text of Dorotheus of Gaza

Bishop Haynes: We are called to be ministers of God’s healing and reconciling love. This work can only be fruitful when we abide in God, as branches of the true vine which is Jesus Christ. As we come closer to God we draw closer to one another. Imagine a circle drawn on the ground. Imagine that this circle is the world.

Four persons stand up and form a circle around a central candle.

First Reader: The center represents God, and the paths to the centre are different ways people live. When people living in this world, desiring to draw closer to God, walk toward the center of the circle...

The persons take several steps toward the center.

Second Reader: ... to the extent that they move closer to the center, to God, they move closer to one another. And the closer they come to one another....

The persons move to the center together.

Second Reader: ... the closer they come to God.

When the candle-bearers reach the center they each light their candle. As they stand together at the center all keep a time of prayer in silence.

Short Silence (approximately 1 minute)

Bishop Lewis: With the words that Jesus taught us, let us now pray together:

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, and the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Bishop Lewis: Spirituality and solidarity are inseparably linked. Prayer and action belong together. When we abide in Christ, we receive the Spirit of courage and wisdom to act against all injustice and oppression. This is our shared mission:

Bishop Burbidge: Pray and work that God may reign.

Bishop Goff: Throughout our day let the Word of God breathe life into work and rest.

Bishop Humphrey: Maintain inner silence in all things so as to dwell in Christ.

Bishop Haynes: Be filled with the spirit of the Beatitudes: joy, simplicity, mercy.

These words are recited daily by the Sisters of the Grandchamp Community.
BLESSING

*Bishop Lewis*: Be one, so that the world may believe! Abide in his love, go into the world and bear the fruits of this love. May the God of hope fill us with all joy and all peace in faith, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us go in peace, and be peace.

**Closing Song**

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