

## Prayers of Intercession

*The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.*

Sustained by God's abundant mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

*A brief silence.*

O God, you so love your church. Raise up leaders who care for your people. Bless lay theologians, seminary and college professors, and all who are called to the ministry of teaching, that they form and inspire us for the work of the gospel. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

O God, you so love your creation. Breathe new life into our planetary home. Guide the work of researchers, scientists, and activists who love your earth and who inspire us to care for the natural world. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

O God, you so love the world. Uphold leaders who resist tyranny and oppression. Strengthen organizations that promote peace and harmony (*especially*). Direct their work to alleviate human suffering and to address its root causes. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

## Preparing for Next Week

**Monday** Psalm 128. **Tuesday** (commemoration of Perpetua and Felicity and companions, martyrs at Carthage, died 202) Isaiah 65:17-25. **Wednesday** John 7:53—8:11. **Thursday** Psalm 95. **Friday** (commemoration of Harriet Tubman, died 1913; Sojourner Truth, died 1883; renewers of society) Ephesians 2:11-22. **Saturday** Exodus 16:27-35. **Third Sunday in Lent** (commemoration of Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome, died 604) Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42.

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# Celebrate

Second Sunday in Lent  
March 5, 2023

*During Lent we journey with all those around the world who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil. In today's gospel Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born of water and Spirit. At the font we are given a new birth as children of God. As God made a covenant with Abraham, in baptism God promises to raise us up with Christ to new life. From worship we are sent forth to proclaim God's love for all the world.*

## Prayer of the Day

O God, our leader and guide, in the waters of baptism you bring us to new birth to live as your children. Strengthen our faith in your promises, that by your Spirit we may lift up your life to all the world through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## First Reading

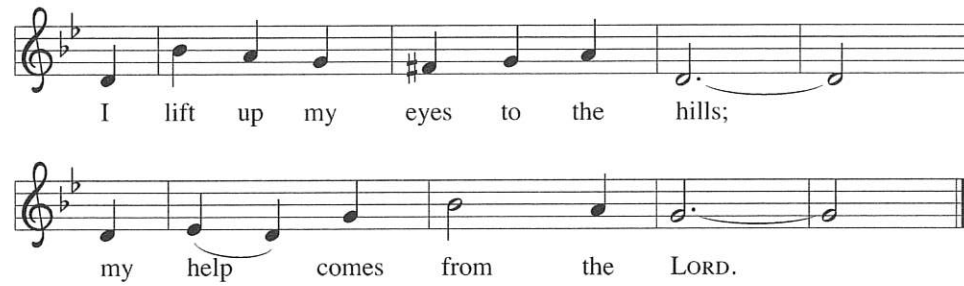
Genesis 12:1-4a

*God's call of Abram and Sarai has a clear purpose—that through them all the families of the earth would gain a blessing. As they set out on their journey, they are accompanied by promises of land, nation, and a great reputation.*

The LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will

be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

<sup>4a</sup>So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him.



I lift up my eyes <sup>1</sup> to the hills;

from where is my <sup>1</sup> help to come?

<sup>2</sup>**My help comes <sup>1</sup> from the LORD,  
the maker of heav- <sup>1</sup> en and earth.**

<sup>3</sup>The LORD will not let your <sup>1</sup> foot be moved  
nor will the one who watches over you <sup>1</sup> fall asleep.

<sup>4</sup>**Behold, the keep- <sup>1</sup> er of Israel  
will neither slum- <sup>1</sup> ber nor sleep; R**

<sup>5</sup>the LORD watches <sup>1</sup> over you;  
the LORD is your shade at <sup>1</sup> your right hand;

<sup>6</sup>**the sun will not strike <sup>1</sup> you by day,  
nor the <sup>1</sup> moon by night.**

<sup>7</sup>The LORD will preserve you <sup>1</sup> from all evil  
and will <sup>1</sup> keep your life.

<sup>8</sup>**The LORD will watch over your going out and your <sup>1</sup> coming in,  
from this time forth for- <sup>1</sup> evermore. R**

## Second Reading

## Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

*In the person and example of Abraham we discover that a right relationship with God does not involve earning a reward from God but entails trusting God's promises. Abraham is the forebear and model for both Jews and Gentiles, because we too trust that ours is a God who gives life to the dead.*

What are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? <sup>2</sup>For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

<sup>3</sup>For what does the scripture say?

"Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."

<sup>4</sup>Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. <sup>5</sup>But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the

## Second Reading, continued

ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

<sup>13</sup>For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. <sup>14</sup>If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. <sup>15</sup>For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

## Gospel

## John 3:1-17

*A curious Pharisee visits Jesus by night to learn from the teacher his friends reject. Jesus speaks to him about life in the Spirit and the kingdom of God.*

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." <sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. <sup>6</sup>What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." <sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said to him,

<sup>16</sup>For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, <sup>17</sup>as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations")—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

"How can these things be?" <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

<sup>11</sup>"Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup>"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

<sup>17</sup>"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."