PRAYER SERVICE
Sixth Sunday of Easter Year A

(A gospel reflection, plus context commentaries, questions and suggested learning activities for use after the prayer service are included at the end of this document.)

Introductory Rites

The Lectionary/Roman Missal or a Bible may be placed on a table together with a candle and a cross.
A short hymn might be sung. For suggestions see https://www.resurrectionde.org/music-for-sundays-and-holy-days.

Sign of the Cross
Leader:
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
All:
Amen.

Greeting
Leader:
Blessed be Jesus Christ who has redeemed us and raised us to new life.
All:
Blessed be God forever.

Introductory Remarks
Leader (in these or similar words):
Friends in Christ, although we cannot celebrate the Eucharist this day, we gather in God’s name for when two or more come together God is always with us.
United with the whole Church, we celebrate the joy of Easter and keep this day of the Lord holy.

Penitential Act – Form C LITANY OF PRAISE
Leader:
Before listening to the Word of God let us praise the Lord Jesus Christ who has raised us to new life.
A brief period of silence follows.
Leader:
Loving Savior, you are our healing and life: Lord, have mercy.
All: Lord, have mercy.
Risen Lord, you call us to live your commandment of love: Christ have mercy.
All: Christ, have mercy.
Paschal Lamb, you are food and strength: Lord, have mercy.
All: Lord, have mercy.
Leader:
May almighty God have mercy on us,
 forgiven us our sins,
 and bring us to everlasting life.
All:
Amen.

Gloria
Leader:
With peoples everywhere,
 let us glorify our God (in joyful song).
All:
Glory to God in the highest,
 and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you,
 we bless you,
 we adore you,
 we glorify you,
 we give you thanks for your great glory,
 Lord God, heavenly King,
 O God, almighty Father.
 Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
 Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
 you take away the sins of the world,
 have mercy on us;
 you take away the sins of the world,
 receive our prayer;
 you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
 have mercy on us.
 For you alone are the Holy One,
 you alone are the Lord,
 you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

Opening Prayer
Leader:
Let us pray.
All pause for silent prayer.
Almighty God,
may the joy of the risen Lord
bring us unity and peace.
Send your Spirit into our hearts
and help us to remember
everything that Jesus has taught us.
We make this prayer through Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever.
All:
Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word
First Reading
Acts 8:5-8, 14-17
A reading from the Acts of the Apostles
Peter and John laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
Philip went down to the city of Samaria
and proclaimed the Christ to them.
With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip
when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing.
For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice,
came out of many possessed people,
and many paralyzed or crippled people were cured.
There was great joy in that city.
Now when the apostles in Jerusalem
heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God,
they sent them Peter and John,
who went down and prayed for them,
that they might receive the Holy Spirit,
for it had not yet fallen upon any of them;
they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
Then they laid hands on them
and they received the Holy Spirit.
To indicate the end of the reading, the reader acclaims:

The word of the Lord.

All reply:

Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16, 20. R. v.1 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLUo4gXd0T4]

(R.) Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Shout joyfully to God, all the earth,
sing praise to the glory of his name;
proclaim his glorious praise.
Say to God, “How tremendous are your deeds!
(R.) Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

“Let all on earth worship and sing praise to you,
sing praise to your name!”
Come and see the works of God,
his tremendous deeds among the children of Adam.
(R.) Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

He has changed the sea into dry land;
through the river they passed on foot;
therefore let us rejoice in him.
He rules by his might forever.
(R.) Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Hear now, all you who fear God, while I declare
what he has done for me.
Blessed be God who refused me not
my prayer or his kindness!
(R.) Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Second Reading -- 1 Pt 3:15-18

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Peter
Beloved:
Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.
Always be ready to give an explanation
to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope,
but do it with gentleness and reverence,
keeping your conscience clear,
so that, when you are maligned,
those who defame your good conduct in Christ
may themselves be put to shame.
For it is better to suffer for doing good,
if that be the will of God, than for doing evil.
For Christ also suffered for sins once,
the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous,
that he might lead you to God.
Put to death in the flesh,
he was brought to life in the Spirit.
The word of the Lord.
All reply:
Thanks be to God.

**Gospel -- John 14:15-21**

**Reader:**
From the holy Gospel according to N.

All:
Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples:
“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
And I will ask the Father,
and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always,
the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept,
because it neither sees nor knows him.
But you know him, because he remains with you,
and will be in you.
I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.
In a little while the world will no longer see me,
but you will see me, because I live and you will live.
On that day you will realize that I am in my Father
and you are in me and I in you.
Whoever has my commandments and observes them
is the one who loves me.
And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father,
and I will love him and reveal myself to him.”

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

**Reflection on the Word**
A short period of reflection may be observed.
Profession of Faith

Leader:
In union with the whole Church
let us profess our faith.

All:
I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

At the words that follow, up to and including the Virgin Mary, all bow.

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

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

Prayer of the Faithful Option A  as here or in option B below

Here is a way to invite all present to join in the Prayer of the Faithful:

Leader: We are grateful for our many blessings, and we pray together
for the world and all people.

Reader: For the Church…
Prompt: Is there anyone or any situation in the Church that you would like us to pray for.

Allow everyone to add petitions and once all are offered say: We pray to the Lord…

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: For the World…
Prompt: What is happening in the world right now that we want to ask God to help in a special way? Anything on the news or something you learned about at school?
Wait until all petitions are offered before saying:
We pray to the Lord…
All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: For people who are poor and suffering…
Prompt: Is there someone who is poor or needing help. someone who doesn’t have the things they need to live and be happy?
Wait until all petitions are offered before saying:
We pray to the Lord…
All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: For the Resurrection community,
for our neighbors at school and at home and for our family…
Prompt: Name any people you’d like us to pray for, or any problems that you know about, right here where we live.
Wait until all petitions are offered before saying:
We pray to the Lord…
All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: For people who are sick…and for all the people who give them care…
 If you’d like us to pray for someone who is sick, please name them now…
Wait until all petitions are offered before saying:
We pray to the Lord…
All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: For people who have died…
If you’d like us to remember someone who has died, please name them now…
Wait until all petitions are offered before saying:
We pray to the Lord…
All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Hear our prayers, O God.
Be with us as we love each other.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
All: Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful Option B
Leader: Sisters and brothers, through the Holy Spirit, we turn to God with our prayers.
Reader: That our Holy Father Pope N. will continue to lead the Church through a love of Christ and his commandments.

(pause)

In your glory:
All: Lord, hear our prayer.
Reader: That those affected by war and injustice will be treated with fairness and compassion.
In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That religious missionaries will be supported in their work of bringing Christ’s love to all people.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That our parish community may share the love of Christ and the Spirit of truth with all we encounter.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That the sick will be comforted through the Holy Spirit, especially N.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That those who have died will live with God in eternal love, especially N.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: God our Father, we trust in your Spirit of truth. Hear our prayers and help us to live by your commands in love through the Holy Spirit. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer

Leader:

At the Savior’s command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say:

All:

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 the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever.
Amen.

The Concluding Rite

Blessing

Leader:

Through the resurrection of his Son
God has redeemed us and made us his children.
May the Lord bless us with joy
and fill us with fruits of the Spirit.

All make the sign of the cross during the blessing.

All:

Amen.

Dismissal

Leader:

Let us go and announce the Gospel of the Lord. Alleluia.

All:

Thanks be to God.

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REFLECTION BY JENNY CLOSE

In this Sunday’s gospel reading Jesus describes his relationship with us in terms of being “in” us: “I am in my Father and you in me and I in you.” What does this mean, that God is an organic part of us? There is no way to test this assertion using scientific reasoning. But scientists are apt to get lyrical these days: astronomers use evocative, poetic terms like “event horizon” and “singularity” and they come remarkably close to theology when they describe the fate of the universe as “infinite.” One theorist claims that everything in the universe derives from stardust. If that is so then, metaphorically speaking, God is the ultimate star and it is God’s Spirit, the “Advocate,” who lights up our lives—from the inside.

Gospel Reflection, Questions and Learning Moments by Greg Sunter

Although this week’s gospel passage comes from the Last Supper discourse, it is the perfect reading for this time in the liturgical cycle. In next week’s liturgy we celebrate the Ascension of the Lord and the following week we celebrate Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. This week’s reading is the perfect precursor to these coming weeks. Prior to this section of the Last Supper discourse, Jesus has told the disciples that he will be leaving them. He alludes to that fact again in this section but also spells out that he will ask the Father to send to the disciples another advocate (sometimes translated as paraclete or counsellor). By referring to the Spirit as “another” advocate or paraclete, Jesus names himself as having been an advocate. The Spirit is to continue the work that Jesus has begun in and with the disciples, standing as witness and strength for them to help them when the world turns against them.

Jesus says to the disciples that “In a short time the world will no longer see me; but you will see me, because I live and you will live.” Christian people believe that Christ continues to be present in the world even though he is no longer physically present. Jesus’ reference to “the world” is a reference to those who do not believe. It is only those who believe who continue to recognize and affirm his ongoing presence in the world. Whilst the Spirit, the advocate or paraclete, will act in the world to bring about the reign of God, it is in the hearts and minds of those who believe where the Spirit will act most strongly.

From the perspective of … The disciples

The words of Jesus in this gospel passage were addressed to the disciples at the Last Supper. They had almost no inclination of what was about to befall them, nor the heart-wrenching loss that they would feel. Yet Jesus tried to prepare them and reassure them that they would not be abandoned by him. In the days after his death, the disciples struggled to remember these words and they were caught up by despair. Even once they had witnessed the Risen Lord, he told them that he would again be leaving them. They must have been so confused and afraid.
Living the Gospel – Live in love
Throughout the gospel of John, we are reminded of the enduring relationship between Jesus and the Father. A number of times, Jesus announces that he and the Father are one. In today’s passage, Jesus also says to the disciples that they can share in this relationship of love. When Jesus speaks about anyone who “loves” him, he speaks about anyone who lives by his message and seeks to be like him. Anyone who does that will share in the love that exists between the Father and the Son. That invitation is open for each of us today as well.

Gospel Focus – Paraclete
The Greek word, *parakletos*, is translated into a number of different terms in English translations of the gospel. Its technical use was for a lawyer or attorney. However, its use in scripture is like the broader meaning of advocate that we use today: someone who stands up for another; someone who speaks up for another; someone who intercedes on behalf of another. An advocate is one who lends strength and support to someone who is disempowered. That is exactly what Jesus did for many people during his ministry and it is also what the Holy Spirit is sent to do.

Questions for Adolescents
Q. What does the sending of the Spirit say about the relationship between God and the world?
Q. Why might Jesus have felt the need to tell the disciples that the Spirit would come to them?
Q. How might the disciples have reacted to Jesus’ words when they first heard them?
Q. What are some of the ways Christians believe the Holy Spirit acts in the world today?
Q. How can you be an agent of the Holy Spirit?

Questions for Adults
Q. How might this passage have contributed to the teaching of God as Trinity?
Q. In what ways did Jesus fulfill the role of a paraclete or advocate?
Q. What are the commandments that Jesus refers to as “his commandments”?
Q. What does this passage tells us about Jesus’ vision of what it is to be a disciple?

Learning moments
Gather a collection of song lyrics that describe different aspects of “love”. Compare what these songs say about love with the way in which Jesus speaks about love in today’s gospel.

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Greg Sunter has worked in Catholic Education (Brisbane) for many years, most recently as a member of the Religious Education team and Mission and Formation team. He has extensive experience of praying with young people and forming others to lead prayer with young people. He is the author of books on adolescent faith, is a regular speaker at youth and evangelisation conferences, and is a retreat and reflection facilitator and presenter. His areas of interest include religious education, theology, scripture, spirituality, Catholic ethos, prayer, and ministry with young people.