



# Easter 6: “Rachel’s Day”

May 5, 2024 † 9:00 AM

*Welcome to our worship of the Lord Jesus Christ on this Sixth Sunday of Easter! Though we’re well into the Easter season, today’s “Rachel’s Day” observance carries with it many of the themes of the Christmas season’s Feast of the Holy Innocents. In 1994, at Bethel Lutheran Church on the west side of Chicago, a woman who was a member of the church called upon her congregation to stand up against the violence towards the children in her area. Their church began by transforming a vacant lot into a garden, “Rachel’s Garden”, a place of reflection and mourning for the children killed by gun violence in their area. White crosses were placed for mothers to mourn and reflect. What they discovered was that the visitors were not only the mothers of the children, but others who mourned the loss as well. In 1996 the Metro Chicago Synodical Women’s Organization brought the memorial to the Women of the ELCA Triennial Convention in Minneapolis, not only to expand awareness of the violence that children face, but to take actions to address the issue. The memorial was passed, resolving “That ELCA women encourage their congregations recognize the first Sunday in May each year as Rachel’s Day, based on Jeremiah 31:15-17 wherein Rachel grieved for her children, to mourn the loss of our children and to renounce the forces of evil and fear that plague our nation.”*

*Congregational responses are printed in indented boldface italics.*

## GATHERING

### GATHERING MUSIC

### INTRODUCTION TO “RACHEL’S DAY”

*Rose Sutkins*

### GATHERING HYMN: “As We Your People Gather” →

*Sung to the tune of “Lead On, O King Eternal” ELW 805*

*As we, Your people, gather with wearied hearts, O Lord,  
Let prayers be now uplifted for peace to be restored.  
May healing and repentance in every land be known,  
As sword is turned to plowshare and seeds of trust are sown.*

*The cries of desperation, the orphan in distress,  
Instill in us a longing that words cannot express.  
Yet, as the Spirit's presence within each heart is stirred,  
We find new strength and courage in God's unfailing Word.*

*The prophet voices call us to seek that promised day  
When hatred and oppression at last are swept away.  
No darkness will surround us, and all may dwell secure;  
God's purpose is accomplished when peace and love endure.*

*Text: Howard Maple, © 2014 Howard Maple*

## **INVOCATION AND RESPONSIVE PSALMODY:**

*Psalm 73  
Marie Shaw*

We gather today just as God has gathered us into His family in our Baptism:  
in the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

***Amen.***

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!  
But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold.  
For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

***May I be true to the circle of Your children!***

They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong.  
They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills.  
Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence.  
From their callous hearts comes iniquity; their evil imaginations have no limits.  
They scoff, and speak with malice; with arrogance they threaten oppression.  
Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth.

***May I be true to the circle of Your children!***

Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance.  
They say, "How would God know? Does the Most High know anything?"  
This is what the wicked are like—always free of care, they go on amassing wealth.  
Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence.  
All day long I have been afflicted, and every morning brings new punishments.

***May I be true to the circle of Your children!***

If I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children.  
When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply  
till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.  
Surely You place them on slippery ground; You cast them down to ruin.  
How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors!  
They are like a dream when one awakes;  
when You arise, Lord, You will despise them as fantasies.

***May I be true to the circle of Your children!***

When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered,  
I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before You.  
Yet I am always with You; You hold me by my right hand.  
You guide me with Your counsel, and afterward You will take me into glory.  
Whom have I in heaven but You? And earth has nothing I desire besides You!  
My flesh and my heart may fail,  
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

***May I be true to the circle of Your children!***

Those who are far from You will perish; You destroy all who are unfaithful to You.  
But as for me, it is good to be near God.  
I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all Your deeds.

***May I be true to the circle of Your children!***

## **GREETING AND PRAYER OF THE DAY:**

*Stefanie Bauman*

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

***Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!***

And so the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit are with you all.

***And also with you.***

Then let's pray: Look with pity, merciful God, upon the children in this world who live with injustice, terror, disease, and death as their constant companions. Have mercy upon us. Help us to eliminate our cruelty to these our neighbors. Strengthen those who spend their lives establishing equal protection of the law and equal opportunities for all; and grant that every one of us may enjoy a fair portion of Your bounty, through Christ Jesus our Lord. *Amen.*

## WORD

*Reader: Sascha Baringer*

### FIRST READING:

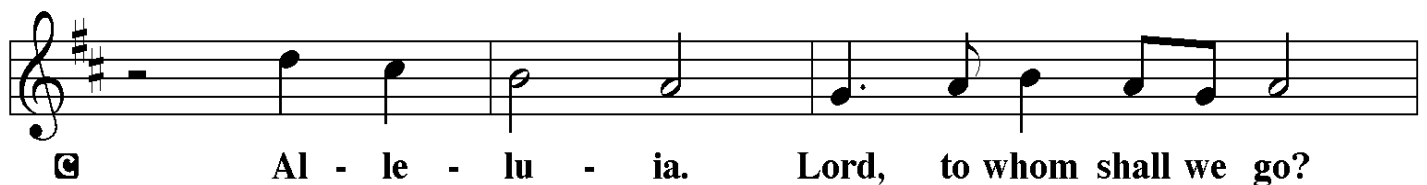
### Jeremiah 31.15-17

NRSVUE

Thus says the LORD: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." <sup>16</sup> Thus says the LORD: "Keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work," says the LORD. "They shall come back from the land of the enemy; <sup>17</sup> there is hope for your future," says the LORD; "your children shall come back to their own country."

This is holy wisdom; this is holy word.

*Thanks be to God!*

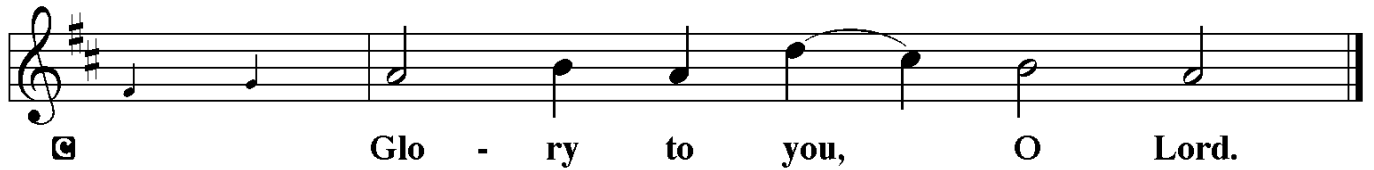


# THE HOLY GOSPEL:

# Matthew 2.13-18; Mark 10.13-16

Reader: The Rev. Stephanie [Sutter] Steele NRSVUE

The Holy Gospel according to Sts Matthew and Mark.

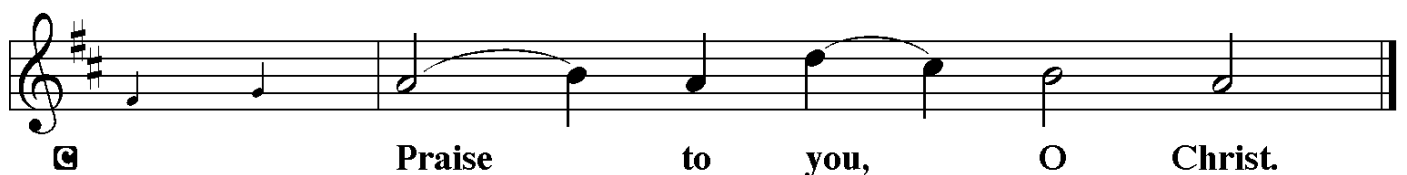


<sup>13</sup> Now after *the Magi* had left *the child Jesus and His family*, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy Him.” <sup>14</sup> Then Joseph got up, took the child and His mother by night, and went to Egypt <sup>15</sup> and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called My son.”

<sup>16</sup> When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the Magi, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the magi. <sup>17</sup> Then what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: <sup>18</sup> “A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

*Later, when Jesus was an adult and ministering to the people*, <sup>13</sup> people were bringing children to Him in order that He might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. <sup>14</sup> But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to Me! Do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. <sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” <sup>16</sup> And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

This is the Gospel of our Lord.



**PROCLAMATION OF THE GOOD NEWS**    *The Rev. Stephanie [Sutter]Steele*

**HYMN OF THE DAY:            “The Deeply Painful Questions”**

*Sung to the tune of “O Savior, Precious Savior” ELW 820*

*The deeply painful questions our minds cannot resolve  
Are “why”s we boldly mention and woes we yearn to solve.  
God's purposes elude us, those truths that no one knows,  
As life and all creation, contracts, expands and grows.*

*God, may we step in, closer, to see continual change  
Not as a line unbroken, but spirally arranged:  
One segment, harsh or heavy, one segment mild and light,  
One arc of change as suffering, the other arc, delight.*

*To sprout, unfold and flower, there follows endlessly,  
Birth, death, and resurrection— what is brings what shall be.  
Each phase, a crucial action: no loss without a gain,  
No growth without affliction, no pleasure without pain.*

*Joy brings its share of anguish; fulfillment yields to loss.  
Each helps us to distinguish life with its gold and dross.  
Else we would be but phantoms, instead of what is real.  
And no good thing would happen; God's love we would not feel.*

*God, give a new advantage to us so we may find  
Life from a prayerful vantage, and glimpse some of Your mind.  
The arc of change is bending to start again, anew,  
The ring of love unending, the springboard, God, to You.*

*God, You are good unchanging, flawless Reality,  
The spark of all beginnings, end of eternity,  
The hinge of human history, all time and space above,  
The truth revealed in mystery, more clearly seen in love!*

*Text: John A Dalles. © 2013 Wayne Leupold Editions, Inc.*

## **NICENE CREED:**

*We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth— of all that is, seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father:  
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.  
Through Him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation, He came down from heaven;  
by the power of the Holy Spirit,  
He became incarnate from the virgin Mary and was made man.  
For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
He suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;  
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and His Kingdom will have no end.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.  
With the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

## **LITANY FOR PEACE:**

*Cecelia "Peggy" Casey*

We weep for our children who are no more.

*We refuse to be consoled.*

We weep for our boys who are no more.

*We refuse to be consoled.*

We weep for our girls who are no more.

***We refuse to be consoled.***

We weep for our parents who grieve.

***We refuse to be consoled.***

We weep for our families forced to grieve.

***We refuse to be consoled.***

We weep for our cities and towns torn by gun violence and terror.

***We refuse to be consoled.***

We weep.

***We refuse to be consoled.***

*(Voices may name children recently lost to gun violence, neighborhoods affected by gun violence, streets where gun violence is visible, each time saying "We weep for..." with the response, "We refuse to be consoled.")*

We cry out for justice for our children.

***We refuse to be defeated.***

We cry out for hope for our boys.

***We refuse to be defeated.***

We cry out for serenity for our girls.

***We refuse to be defeated.***

We cry out for tranquility for our parents.

***We refuse to be defeated.***

We cry out for peace in our cities and towns.

***We refuse to be defeated.***

We pray for hope!

***We pray for hope!***

We act for peace!

***We act for peace!***

We work for justice!

***We work for justice!***



Eternal God, amid all the turmoil and changes of this world, Your love is steadfast and Your strength never fails. In times of danger and trouble, when we're tempted to seek our security, honor, and power in the idolatrous instruments and practices of violence, be our sure Guardian and Rock of defense. Guide our leaders at every level of society with Your wisdom, comfort those in distress, still the storms of warfare and terror in every land, and give us the courage and hope to face the future. Trusting in Your power to make all things new, we pray,

***Lord, make us instruments of Your peace.***

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep today, and give Your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for Your love's sake. We especially seek Your healing grace and peace for those we remember before You now...

God of peace, God of justice, You weep with us for our children, our brothers and sisters, our parents, our families, our cities and towns torn apart by violence. Give us courage, give us determination, give us strength, that we may work untiringly for the hope and peace and justice You desire for all the world. This we ask through Your Son, the Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. ***Amen.***

## **SHARING OF THE PEACE OF CHRIST:**

The peace of the Lord is with you always.

***And also with you.***

*Reconciled to God and to one another, we share a sign of Christ's peace.*

## **MEAL**

## **OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS AND OURSELVES, WITH ANTHEM:**

"A Voice Was Heard in Ramah"

-- Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

*Linda Hertzog and Stefanie Bauman, soloists*

# OFFERTORY CANTICLE: "Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful"



Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bles-sing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be



fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of all; u -



nite them with the prayers we of - fer. Grace our ta - ble with your



pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

God of love, You call us beloved children and welcome us to Your table.

Receive our lives and the gifts we offer.

Abide with us and send us in service to a suffering world;

for the sake of Your beloved Child, Christ Jesus our risen Lord.

*Amen.*

# EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER:

The Lord be with you.

*And also with you.*

Lift up your hearts!

*We lift them to the Lord!*

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

*It is right to give our thanks and praise!*

It's indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should always and everywhere give thanks and praise to You, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ Jesus our Lord, who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by His glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with Mary Magdalene and Peter and all the witnesses of the resurrection, with earth and sea and all their creatures, and with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, we praise your Name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might:



Heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.



Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes



in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

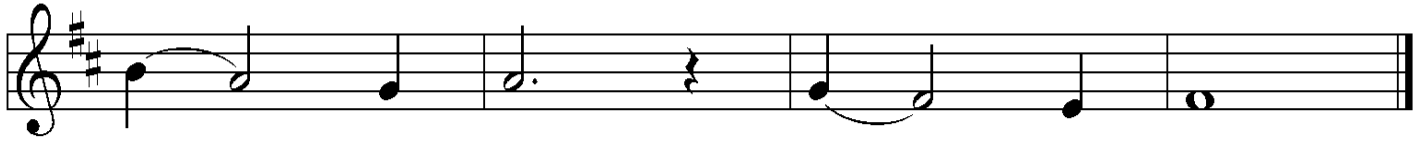




Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world;



grant us peace, grant us peace.

## THE HOLY COMMUNION

*Now we share God's consecrated gifts among God's consecrated people, knowing that our living Lord Jesus is fully present with us in His Supper, giving Himself to us in bread and wine and forgiving love. Today, we'll share the Lord's Supper by receiving the body and blood of Christ at communion "stations" at the altar rail. Come forward a pew at a time; take a glass already filled with grape juice if necessary. Receive "**the body of Christ, given for you**" from the Pastor; then, by dipping the bread into the wine ("intinction") or drinking the grape juice from your glass, receive "**the blood of Christ, shed for you**" from our communion assistant. We'll pause for silent prayer after we've all communed...*

*If you're joining us from your home, we invite you to share the bread and cup with one another. When giving the bread to your neighbor, say "**The body of Christ, given for you.**" When giving the wine/grape juice say, "**The blood of Christ, shed for you.**" Whatever's left over may be reverently eaten and drunk by everyone after our worship is over. Once we've all shared in the body and blood of Christ, we continue in blessing and prayer:*

## SENDING

### THANKSGIVING, PRAYER, AND BENEDICTION:

May the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen us and keep us in His grace.

*Amen.*



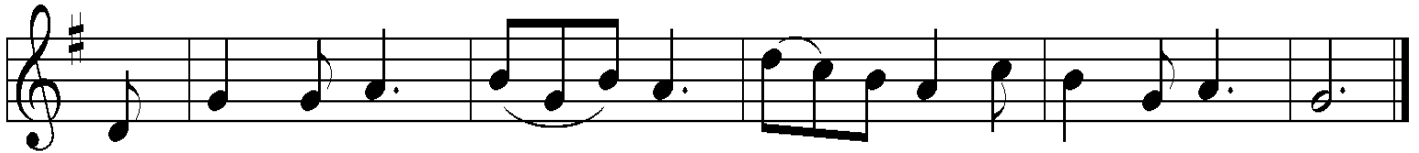
☞ Thank the Lord and sing his praise; tell ev-'ry-one what he has done.



Let ev-'ry-one who seeks the Lord re-joice and proud-ly bear his name.



He re-calls his prom-is-es and leads his peo-ple forth in joy



with shouts of thanks - giv - ing. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

Wellspring of joy, through this meal You've put gladness in our hearts.  
Satisfy the hunger still around us, and send us as joyful witnesses,  
that Your love may bring joy to the hearts of all people  
through Christ Jesus our risen Lord.

*Amen.*

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

*Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

Now may the God of life, who raised Christ Jesus from death,  
empower you by the Holy Spirit to walk in newness of life;  
and Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. *Amen.*

## SENDING HYMN: "What Comfort Can Our Worship Bring?"

*Sung to the tune of "Almighty God, Your Word is Cast" ELW 516*



***What comfort can our worship bring on bleak and empty days  
To those who cannot bear to sing when pain is missed in praise?***

***What sorrow can we dare to own? What anger, loss, and fears?  
Not just in joy is God made known, but also in our tears.***

***O God, hear every longing sigh as voices rise and strain  
And meet us in that honest cry where praise is voiced in pain.***

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## **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DISMISSAL:**

God has a plan.

***We're it!***

What's our part in God's plan?

***Sharing God's love in joyful service!***

Then let's go in peace, serve in joy, and live out the new life of our risen Lord!

***Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!***

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## Is “Rachel’s Day” Still Needed?

The original focus of Rachel’s Day was and still is shining a light on gun violence against children. Marian Wright Edelman, activist for the rights of children and founder of the Children’s Defense Fund, said, “It’s everywhere. Guns and violence are in every nook and cranny of America. Many children can get a gun quicker than they can get a book out of the library. That puts us all at risk.” She said this following the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Connecticut— one of two that week and one of the nine mass shootings in 2012...

Mass shootings are not the only exposure children have to gun violence, certainly, and so we still need a Rachel’s Day focus. Violence is embedded into many a child’s life. Twenty years ago, the emphasis was the loss of inner-city children to gang gun violence. Drugs, abuse, neglect, poor education, poor health care, and hunger also contributed to the death of children.

Today, children are also threatened with death by suicide, often a result of being bullied. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people, according to the United States Center for Disease Control. For every suicide among young people, there are at least 100 suicide attempts. More than 14 percent of high school students have considered suicide, and almost 7 percent have attempted it. Bulling victims are between two to nine times more likely to consider suicide than non-victims, according to studies by Yale University.

Ending violence seems a difficult challenge today because our children’s forms of play— violent online and video games, for example— create a dangerous environment and a formidable opponent for adults who want to protect them. But no group of children is safe until all children are safe...

