

### **Introduction to the day**

Mercy. Mercy. Mercy. Joseph lives it in Egypt. Jesus preaches it in the gospel. The Spirit guides us into merciful lives with the power of forgiveness to reconcile what is fractured and divided. Such merciful living is the baptismal blessing of having put on Christ. It is the gift of the life-giving Spirit. It is a reflection of God's glory revealed in Christ.

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus, make us instruments of your peace, that where there is hatred, we may sow love, where there is injury, pardon, and where there is despair, hope. Grant, O divine master, that we may seek to console, to understand, and to love in your name, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### **FIRST LESSON: Genesis 45:3-11, 15**

A reading from Genesis.

*Many years after being sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, Joseph reveals himself to them. Now the second-in-command in Egypt, Joseph reassures his brothers that God has used their evil intentions for good to preserve life during a devastating famine, and Joseph forgives them.*

### **PSALM: Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40**

The lowly shall possess the land; they will delight in abundance of peace. (*Ps. 37:12*)

### **SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50**

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

*In the Apostles' Creed, we speak of the "resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." Using the metaphor of a planted seed and the story of Adam, Paul preaches passionately about the mystery of following Christ's perfect life into eternity.*

### **GOSPEL: Luke 6:27-38**

*Jesus continues to address a crowd of his disciples. He invites his followers to shower radical love, blessing, forgiveness, generosity, and trust even on enemies and outsiders. Living in harmony with God's intent brings the reward of overflowing blessing.*

### **GOSPEL MESSAGE - Countercultural Love**

In today's gospel reading, Jesus offers us a vision of a different way of living, one rooted in God's endless mercy. People of God are to love others, do good, and share their possessions—in abundance, in extravagance, to the point that our generosity seems foolish by the world's standards.

This lavishness is possible only through the power of Jesus, who first heals us and invites us to taste and see God's mercy for ourselves. We witness this mercy in scripture through stories of God's profound love and compassion. We experience it as we join in song and prayer in worship, engaging in ancient practices that draw us beyond ourselves and closer to God and neighbor. We remember the mercy we've experienced in the waters of baptism and taste Christ's abundance in holy communion. We practice generosity in our offerings and share God's peace with our fellow worshipers with whom we are bound together, even though we might never have chosen them as neighbors.

With Christ in us, we are able to practice this abundant love today and tomorrow, in our worship and beyond, returning to the font and table again and again to be reminded of the love that dwells within us and surrounds us, making us bold in our love for others.

To try to practice this kind of countercultural love on our own would likely lead to discouragement. But we are given the gift of community—with one another, those who have come before us, and hope for the ones who will come after us. Together, we form one body in Christ, strengthened by God's Spirit. Together, we remind one another of God's promise of unending love and forgiveness and encourage each other to follow Jesus' example. And together, we focus our minds and hearts to catch glimpses of God's kingdom among us, even as we wait for the world Jesus envisions to be made complete on earth as it is in heaven.

## **THE PRAYERS OF INTECESSION**

With the Spirit of Christ shining upon us, let us boldly pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

Surprising God, you call us to love our enemies and to show kindness in the face of cruelty. Let our actions be a shining witness of your overwhelming grace for all. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

As animals hibernate and fields lay dormant, let them be a reminder that life and faith are not static but always changing and growing. May we, with all creation, trust that the ending of one thing promises life in a new way. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for leaders and policymakers who work to reduce violence in our nations, cities, and towns. Give your wisdom and discernment amid heated arguments and differing viewpoints. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the victims of abuse and violence. Provide safe shelter and new beginnings to those experiencing domestic violence and dangerous situations. Enfold with love all who seek your healing care especially Linda Boland, Sandra Gagnon, Shirley Glickman, Donna L. Hoffman, Claude Jeannotte, Cassie Jessup, Bill Lorbetskie, Glenda Panke, Barry Rogers, Marilyn Schneider, Danny Schultz, Doug Sell, Debbie Thom, Keith Weckwerth, Elaine Yourth, Harold Yourth, Stephanie Yourth, and those in long term care facilities and senior residences. In this moment of silence we name out loud those who need your healing touch. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Empower our faith communities to be signs of your gracious love. Bless the local ministries of parish nursing and caregiving, that they will be a voice for those in need in our communities. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for the enduring witness of those who have died before us. May their lives in you provide a witness of your everlasting grace. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We entrust our prayers to you, O God, in the sure and certain hope that your promise is revealed among the people. **Amen.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

## **BLESSING**

Almighty God, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen**

## **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**