

6. Prayers

Mentioning people and situations we want to pray for.

7. Closing Prayer

Gracious God, when the struggles of life hem us in on every side, open to us the freedom of your presence that can help us see beyond every restriction, beyond every limit that binds.

When we wake to yet another day of wonder and joy in the beauty of your creation, give us the heart to keep our needs simple, our desires soft, our wills adaptable, so that we never participate in the exploitation of the earth, which is the work of your hands,

Remember those whose minds are menaced by thoughts that worry and wound them, those whose hearts are broken because love has gone, or because the light they lived by has turned to darkness; those whose feet walk in circles, stopping only when they are tired, resting only to walk in circles again, those who feel discarded and disposable.

Jesus, put your hands where our prayers beckon.

May your kingdom come
in joy and generosity
in the small and the large,
the ordinary and the special,
and to you be the glory
now and always. Amen

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Myrtle

Myrtle is a shrub with evergreen leaves and small white flowers indigenous throughout Palestine. The fruit is a small black berry used in biblical times for rituals and celebrations. (Isaiah 41:19 and 55:13)



The myrtle tree with its dark green leaves and star-shaped flowers it is a symbol of peace, hope, innocence, abundance and balance. Its perfume is reputed to be more exquisite than roses.

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**Gospel-sharing
for Small Groups**
Fourth Sunday
of Lent 2024

1. Welcome and opening prayer

God in whom is peace
we praise you.

We praise the unexpected gift of peace
which steals softly into our frenzied
activity and gives us still spaces of
tranquillity.

We praise the hard-earned work of peace
which struggles through our anger and
bitterness
to nudge us into forgiveness and new
beginnings.

We praise the shining dream of peace
which beckons and inspires us
to confront violence and injustice
with words of hope and acts of
commitment.

We praise the mysterious peace which
lies beyond our imagination,
our efforts and our dreams -
your gift of peace to a longing world.

Jan Berry

2. Gospel text: John 3:14-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the
wilderness, so the Son of Man must be
lifted up, that everyone who believes may
have eternal life in him.

For God so loved the world that he gave his
one and only Son, what whoever believes in
him shall not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world
to condemn the world, but to save the
world through him. Whoever believes in

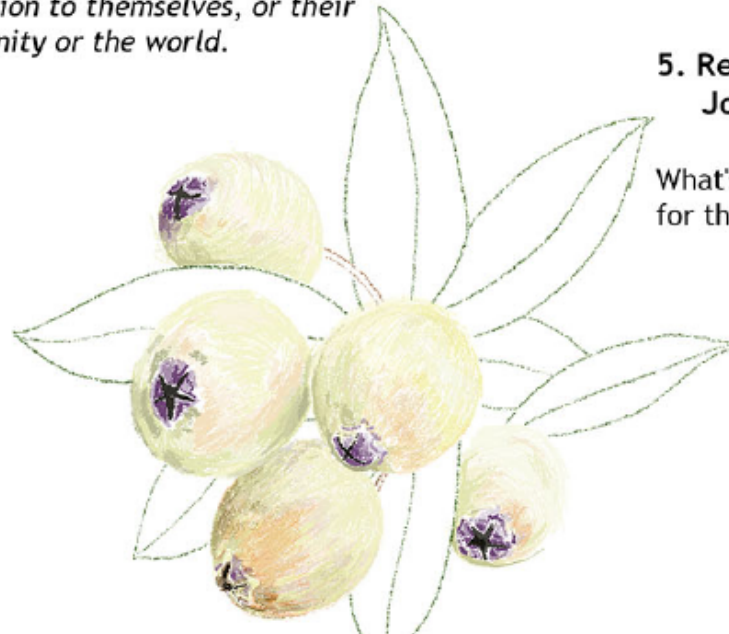
him is not condemned, but whoever does not
believe in him stands condemned already
because they have not believed in the name
of God's one and only Son.

This is the verdict: light has come into the
world, but people loved darkness instead of
light because their deeds were evil.
Everyone who does evil hates the light and
will not come into the light for fear that
their deeds will be exposed. But whoever
lives by the truth comes into the light. So
that it may be seen plainly that what they
have done has been done in
the sight of God.”

3. Quiet time...

*People can read over the text for themselves
and pick out words or short phrases that
strike them and say them out loud.*

*When everyone has had a chance to say their
word/phrase, they can then reflect silently
for a moment or two and then briefly say
why such a word/phrase struck them-
in relation to themselves, or their
community or the world.*



4. Background Notes for John 3:14-21

John records Jesus as using the familiar
image, well-known to Nicodemus, of Moses
lifting up the serpent in the
desert and the people being healed but
puts a new twist to it. While the
being 'lifted up' echoes all too closely the
reality of crucifixion, it can also be a
sign of glory and exaltation. In this way it is
indicating that Jesus' passion and death
for all its injustice and brutality, is a
mysterious revelation of God's love.

John is asserting the faith of his
community that in Jesus, all their dreams
and hopes have been addressed beyond
their wildest expectations, despite all
discouraging appearances.

The verdict: to live in the light,
to choose justice, compassion and trust
in God, believe in the truth of what Jesus
was about and live that truth 'in the light'.

5. Reflection Questions for John 3:14-21

What's your 'shining dream of peace'
for the world? Why?