

Fifth Sunday of Easter May 3, 2026

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Give us grace to love one another, to follow in the way of his commandments, and to share his risen life with all the world, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Gospel: John 14:1-14

[Jesus said to the disciples:] 1 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way to the place where I am going.” 5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” 6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

8 Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” 9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, but if you do not, then believe because of the works themselves. 12 Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

Sermon:

If we ask anything in Jesus name, he will do it. As often happens to many people in John’s Gospel, we also frequently get the wrong end of the stick. “fer instance”.....

We were visiting a home where the TV was airing a sermon from a glitzy evangelist who was telling the faithful that he believed the Lord wanted him to have a motorcycle. Was it sour grapes on my part to exit the room at that moment muttering under my breath that maybe the Lord could toss in a helmet and protective leather gear as part of the deal? The tv preacher said he prayed in Jesus' name—so does that a bike to appear in his driveway? By the way, does Jesus approve of Hondas, Ducattis or Harleys?

You might have seen the cartoon where a ravenous bear is chasing a rabbit...the rabbit prays "deliver me from evil" and the bear prays "bless this meal, O Lord"—Whose prayer does God answer? The ones with the words in Jesus' name?

The levity takes a darker turn when wars are waged and justified as God's plan—maybe we quote scripture, or the movie Pulp Fiction in hopes God will bring the result we want.

Nearly a quarter century ago, the US voted to declare war in Iraq after the planes crashed into the World Trade Centre. Predictably, the rhetoric was all about "God on our side". An artist from South America painted a work with scenes of war and a caption reading, "Not in MY name".

To pray in Jesus' name doesn't change God's mind. It changes ours. It changes our hearts too. When Jesus speaks to his followers, he reminds them that his death is near and that one in their midst would betray him. THEN he says "You all—all y'all, let not your heart be troubled". In other words, don't lose your collective sense of purpose. Carry on.

The venerable preacher Fred Craddock outlines three promises Jesus makes to his beleaguered community...one that seemed ready to collapse— Don't lose heart because...

1. Don't lose heart, all, y'all, because abiding places Jesus speaks of mean that God guarantees an unbreakable bond with us both now and beyond this life. That bond also holds for the world God so loves.

2. Don't lose heart, all y'all, because the way to God is sure and clear —God makes it so even when we get lost in double meanings about ways, places and paths.

3. Finally don't lose heart, all y'all, because the faithful relationship that God establishes and vouchsafes empowers us to carry on the work of Jesus.

These promises become the foundation for our prayers and the actions that come from them. To pray in Jesus' name means we follow this Good Shepherd—this one who says he is the Way, Truth and Life.

We trust and we learn to pray for things that are consistent with what Jesus teaches and how he lived his life.

In times of war we might prayerfully remember Jesus the night he was arrested telling Peter to drop his weapon.

In the face of injustice we might remember Jesus table tossing indignation about abuses of power.

In the face of need we might remember Jesus finding a way to feed the hungry, heal the sick, and welcome the outcast.

May we pray and may we prayerfully live in the name of Jesus...the one who embodies love for the world. Amen.