

## Order of Worship for May 2, 2021

### Prelude

P: Jesus Christ is risen!

**C: He is risen indeed, Alleluia!**

**Opening Hymn:** *“Fruitful Trees, the Spirit’s Sowing”* – Hymn #691

**Confession and Absolution:** p. 151

### Service of the Word

#### Introit

P: A little while, and you will see Me no longer;

**C: and again a little while, and you will see Me.**

P: I will extol you, my God and King,

**C: and bless Your name forever and ever.**

P: Every day I will bless You

**C: and praise Your name forever and ever.**

P: The LORD is gracious and merciful,

**C: slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

P: All your works shall give thanks to You, O LORD,

**C: and all Your saints shall bless You!**

P: My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,

**C: and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever.**

**ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: A little while, and you will see Me no longer;

**C: and again a little while, and you will see Me.**

**Kyrie (“Lord, Have Mercy”):** p. 152

**Hymn of Praise (“This is the Feast”):** p. 155

#### Salutation

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

#### Prayer of the Day

P: O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

**First Reading: Acts 8:26–40**

R: Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

*“Like a sheep He was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent so He opens not His mouth. In His humiliation justice was denied Him. Who can describe His generation? For His life is taken away from the earth.”*

And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**Epistle: 1 John 4:1–11**

R: Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**Alleluia and Verse:** p. 156

**Holy Gospel: John 15:1–8**

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 15th chapter

**C: Glory to You, O Lord (sung)**

P: [Jesus said:] “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of Mine that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples.”

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C: Praise to You, O Christ. (Sung)**

**Sermon Hymn:** “*Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen*” – **Hymn #474**

**Sermon:** “*Known by God*” – **Psalm 139**

Even with finals going on this week, many students are dealing with the hurdles they have to go over to get a job. They are told that it is vital for a good job interview or resume to show a prospective employer what makes you so special and unique that they should want to hire you. To do that you need to have a good idea as to who you are and what you want to do.

Other young people, as they near the end of their time in college, are planning to get married soon. So they meet with the minister or counselor to talk about their future life together. One of the most difficult parts of that counseling involves knowing who you are as an individual before knowing the person you intend to marry. One tool used in premarital counseling is a worksheet entitled, “Getting to Know Me.” It asks these four questions:

1. What are the specific ways I want others to see me?
2. How do others really see me?
3. How do I see myself?
4. What characteristics do I see in myself that make it more difficult for you to love me?

People who are used to understanding complex formulas in engineering and physics find themselves scratching their heads trying to answer those questions.

“Who am I?” That is a question our confirmands will be asked this morning. They are going to be asked to identify what their faith is. And they are doing this at a time in their lives when that question - “Who am I?” - seems to be running around in their heads a lot. As we all deal with the questions running through our minds, do we feel ready to answer questions about the most important part of our identity—who we are in the presence of God? Do we see ourselves as disciples of Christ Jesus?

As we change from one part of life to another we can be affected by what is called the “imposter syndrome.” Do you relate strongly, somewhat, or a little to these statements:

I believe the success I’ve had is a fluke.

Even when I do well, I don’t think I really deserve it.

I worry about feeling overwhelming shame if my incompetence is ever revealed.

I worry that people will find out I’m not as smart as they think I am.

I downplay my achievements.

It’s hard for me to accept compliments.

I feel uncomfortable with praise.

I compare myself to others.

I feel like failing is not an option.

I hesitate to brag about my accomplishments.

I don’t like drawing attention to my successes.

Feel like things are more of a struggle for me.

I feel like I’m just making it up as I go.

Success doesn’t come easy for me; I have to work at it.

When we are not sure who we are, it makes it uncomfortable to reveal that to others. We are afraid that they will discover our weakness; that we aren’t what people think we are. So how comfortable do we feel hearing these words from Psalm 139?

O LORD, You have searched me and You know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue, You know it completely, O LORD.

The secret fears we have, those things we are ashamed of, and the things we don’t like about ourselves which we try to hide or hope people don’t notice—God sees all of that.

Don’t think that those fears go away as you get older. In high school you have to think about college and what to do with the rest of your lives. When those plans change in college, more doubts about who you are enter when you begin work after college. Then you may have to deal with those doubts as you enter into a marriage, have children, age into mid-life, and prepare for retirement. When we aren’t sure who we are, we would just rather that people didn’t know us that well or notice us.

But God does. Listen to Psalm 139:

You hem me in behind and before; You have laid Your hand upon me. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there: if I make my bed in the depths, You are there.

Reality TV and movies have placed peoples’ everyday lives on display for everyone to see on the screen. Imagine our lives live on the internet. We live in a society that prizes privacy. As youth enter high school, there is a good chance that they would like more privacy in their own home. Think of how young people after high school move out of the house and get their

own place. Wouldn't it be nice to have your own room—your own private space? People build their houses with garages in the front to provide a “barrier” between the busy street and the house. Computers and the internet enable us to build relationships with people we don't have to see and who can't see us. We can control what they know about us.

But we can't control God. David says in Psalm 139:

If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,” even the darkness will not be dark to You; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to You.

Even if we aren't sure about ourselves, God knows us—completely!

Ever get caught with your hands in the cookie jar? Did you ever get caught cheating on a test, smoking in the boy's room, putting a dent in your dad's car because you drove too fast? In the presence of God we are caught, exposed. Even our most secret thoughts are made clear.

Guess what? God knows us. He knows everything about us. We can't hide. Nor do we have to. The God who knows all about us is also the God who loves us and cares for us despite our sin. David says in Psalm 139:

I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, my frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be.

God made you and me. A poster that used to be up in the church lounge read, “I am valuable. God doesn't make junk.” And the God who made us continues to love us. That is what we can see in Jesus. Last Sunday we heard Peter remind us, “Salvation is found in no one else (other than Jesus), for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Our epistle lessons this Easter season have come from John's first letter where he says. “If anyone sins, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins.” In Psalm 139 David says:

Your works are wonderful. I know them full well.

We may have doubts about who we are, but we can be absolutely certain who our God is. He is the God who made us, who knows us, and who died on the cross to save us.

God knows us. In the language of the Bible “to know” isn't just a matter of facts. You hope “to know” algebra in high school or calculus in college. But that is a matter of head knowledge and formulas. When the Bible says, “God knows us,” it means that God is totally committed to us. God knows everything factually about us far better than we do ourselves. But He also makes Himself intimate with us. That's what you learned about Holy Communion.

The almighty, all-knowing God comes to you and me in Jesus' supper, so we can get intimate with Him. We can "know" Him as he knows us.

The mess that riots cause in our country should make us aware of how important it is to have control in society. We may complain about government, authorities, and all of that. But look what happens apart from that control.

How great it is to know that God is always in charge. He knows us. And even when everything else seems so out of control in death, which is the one thing no one can stop, He is there for us. So we don't have to hide from God. Each day we can put our lives in His hands and say with David:

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.  
Amen.

**Nicene Creed** (inside back cover of hymnal)

**Prayer of the Church**

P: Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

### **Service of the Sacrament**

**Preface and Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy):** p. 160-161

**Prayer of Thanksgiving, Lord's Prayer and Words of our Lord, and Peace of the Lord:** p. 161-163

**Agnus Dei (Lamb of God):** p. 163

**Distribution Hymns:**

*"Father Welcomes"* – **Hymn #606**

*"O Blessed Spring"* – **Hymn #595**

**Song after Communion:** p. 164

**Prayer after Communion:** p.166

**Blessing:** p.166

**Recognition of Graduates**

**Closing Hymn:** *"On What Has Now Been Sown"* – **Hymn #921**

**Postlude**