

Ex 12:1-14; Ps 149; Ro 13:8-14; Mt 18:15-20

**Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Service of Holy Communion**

Moses walks up the Pharaoh and says "Let my people go!"
Pharaoh replies, "no way!" Moses says, "Yahweh!" (upjoke.com)

We are making the Exodus Journey in 2020. We have moved from the story of Moses' burning bush right to the night of the Passover in Egypt – as the Israelites share a holy meal. They are packed and ready to travel out of slavery into the Promised Land of milk and honey. Wait a minute, we skipped the ten plagues!

[Water to Blood: Ex. 7:14–24](#)[Frogs: Ex. 7:25–8:15](#)[Gnats: Ex. 8:16–19](#)[Flies: Ex. 8:20–32](#)[Pestilence of livestock: Ex. 9:1–7](#)[Boils: Ex. 9:8–12](#)[Thunderstorm of hail and fire: Ex. 9:13–35](#)[Locusts: Ex. 10:1–20](#)[Darkness for three days: Ex. 10:21–29](#)[Death of every firstborn: Ex 11:1-8](#) No need to memorize the list of ten ancient plagues this year – we have our own [plague](#) to deal with. 2020 is the year of corona.

Just a note on the ancient plagues: they correspond to ten of the gods (little "g") of Egypt. The tenth was Pharaoh himself, considered divine. When he cursed Moses, he defined the final plague: the death of all first-born in the nation. The Hebrews were protected from the angel of death by the blood of the lamb on the door posts and lintels of their houses. They ate the roasted lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs before they walked out of Egypt toward the Sinai.

Think back to the day the Lord spoke to Moses out of the burning bush. God declared:

I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. (Ex 6:5)

The Lord hears and cares about the groaning of His people. When our troubles seem to go on and on with no relief, we may start asking Him, "Why aren't You doing something about this misery? Why does it drag on and on?" Consider the prayers and petitions of the Israelites in Egypt. Their suffering was long and bitter. What about the people of Belarus – 26 years under the same repressive dictator, Alexander Lukashenko? What will become of the people of N Korea under Kim Jong-un like Kim Jong-il before him? Can we be part of the breakthrough of justice and rightness in places so far away? Would you pray – faithfully, consistently? Prayer is important.

Jesus tells His disciples:

Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. (Mt 18:18)

God told Moses that He remembers His covenant. Our prayers must be in line with God's covenants, God's Law, and in agreement with God's will. Let our prayers commemorate the "world of wonders God has made – God's miracles in every age – the mighty judgments God has done." Take every burden and every joy to the Lord in prayer. Be alert for God's presence – watch for the works God is doing.

The Lord Jesus continues:

"Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst." (vv 19-20)

When you and I pray for the Holy Spirit to bring order into the chaos of discrimination, violence and injustice, God

hears us. When your heart and my heart – our hearts – yearn for God’s goodness to be manifested in the world, God promises to make it so. Jesus said it, not once but twice.

In the 4th c AD Constantine fought his rival Maxentius for control of the Roman Empire. The two armies met at the Tiber River. The Emperor Constantine saw a vision of the symbol chi-rho, the first two letters of the Name of Christ in Greek. Before the historic and decisive battle, Constantine had his troops paint the symbol on their breastplates and shields. This was his first act of faith in Christ and was the prayer that changed the fate of the empire. The Battle of the Milvian Bridge was won, and Emperor Constantine later became a Jesus follower. Christianity was no longer forbidden. Faith in Christ grew to become the religion of Rome.

In WWII General Patton commanded his field marshal, Gen James O’Neill, to pray for the weather to clear over Belgium, so armor and air support could enter the field of Bastogne. This is the prayer O’Neill had printed on little cards for the soldiers to pray:

“Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness, to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for battle. Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee that, armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory, and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies and establish Thy justice among men and nations.”

The weather cleared, and the Battle of the Bulge was won.

You and I cannot make the corona virus disappear. No one can wish it away or deny that it has killed over 850 thousand people worldwide this year. We can pray for the battle to stop the spread of this plague. We can pray for the researchers now working to develop a safe, effective vaccine.

Your prayers – you calling upon the Lord are effective. God hears the cry of your heart. Pray, beloved people of God. Amen.