

## *First Reader:* **A READING FROM ACTS**

Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’

Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

*Reader:*           **The Word of the Lord.**

*People:*           **Thanks be to God.**

*Leader:* **Responding by whole verse:**

- 7 Bless our God, you peoples;  
make the voice of his praise to be heard;
- 8 Who holds our souls in life,  
and will not allow our feet to slip.**
- 9 For you, O God, have proved us;  
you have tried us just as silver is tried.
- 10 You brought us into the snare;  
you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.**
- 11 You let enemies ride over our heads;  
we went through fire and water;  
but you brought us out into a place of refreshment.
- 12 I will enter your house with burnt-offerings  
and will pay you my vows,  
which I promised with my lips  
and spoke with my mouth when I was in trouble.**
- 13 I will offer you sacrifices of fat beasts  
with the smoke of rams;  
I will give you oxen and goats.
- 14 Come and listen, all you who fear God,  
and I will tell you what he has done for me.**
- 15 I called out to him with my mouth,  
and his praise was on my tongue.
- 16 If I had found evil in my heart,  
the Lord would not have heard me;**
- 17 But in truth God has heard me;  
he has attended to the voice of my prayer.
- 18 Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer,  
nor withheld his love from me.**

Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you--not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

*Reader:*           The Word of the Lord.

*People:*           **Thanks be to God.**

## *Prayers of the People:*

☛ *Bishop Ryan then says to the Congregation:* Let us now pray for these persons who have renewed their commitment to Christ.

*Intercessor:* Deliver them, O Lord, from the way of sin and death.

*People:* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

*Intercessor:* Open their heart to your grace and truth.

*People:* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

*Intercessor:* Fill them with your holy and life-giving Spirit.

*People:* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

*Intercessor:* Keep them in the faith and communion of your holy Church.

*People:* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

*Intercessor:* Teach them to love others in the power of the Spirit.

*People:* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

*Intercessor:* Send them into the world in witness to your love.

*People:* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

*Intercessor:* Bring them to the fullness of your peace and glory.

*People:* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

*The Celebrant concludes, adding a Collect.*