



*Those gathered begin with the Sign of the Cross, saying:*

✠ Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart.

### **Psalm 54:3–8**

O God, by your name save me.

By your strength defend my cause.

O God, hear my prayer.

Listen to the words of my mouth.

Strangers have risen against me;

the ruthless seek my life;

they do not keep God before them

God is present as my helper;

the Lord sustains my life.

Turn back the evil upon my foes;

in your faithfulness, destroy them

Then I will offer you generous sacrifice

and give thanks to your name, LORD, for it is good.

### **Reading**

*John 8:31–38*

Jesus then said to those Jews who believed in him, “If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will become free’?” Jesus answered them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. A slave does not remain in a household forever, but a son always remains. So if a son frees you, then you will truly be free. I know that you are descendants of Abraham. But you are trying to kill me, because my word has no room among you. I tell you what I have seen in the Father’s presence; then do what you have heard from the Father.”

### **Reflection**

As we approach the Passion of Jesus Christ, the Gospel texts report the growing tension between Jesus and the religious leaders. Today’s reading describes a similar tension between Jesus and those who have come to believe in him. Jesus tells them that they will be truly free if they remain in his word. This freedom is different from the freedom they have known as descendants of Abraham. This is freedom from sin; it is the freedom that the Lord wins for us through his death. In these closing days of Lent our prayers are filled with gratitude for the gift of redemption from sin and death.

### **Prayers**

*others may be added*

With gratitude for the mercy of God we pray:

◆ Merciful Lord, hear our prayer.

That the world come to know the healing power of God’s love, we pray: ◆ That the Church be a shining example of reconciliation, we pray: ◆ That those who have strayed from the path of the Lord return to his embrace, we pray: ◆ That all those who seek forgiveness also be willing to forgive, we pray: ◆

*Gathering these and all unspoken prayers into one, we pray as Jesus taught us:*

*Our Father . . .*

O God of compassion,  
enlighten the hearts of those who seek reconciliation,  
and instill in us, your children,  
a firm desire to live in communion  
with all our brothers and sisters.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

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