



## ***Sunday July 14th, 2024***

### ***The Fig Tree Worship Resource***

#### ***Call to worship & Lighting the Candle***

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The earth is the LORD'S and all that is in it,  
the world, and those who live in it;  
for he has founded it on the seas,  
and established it on the rivers. (Ps 24: 1-2)

**Let us worship God with all people of the world.**

*Light the candle - Christ is with us.*

#### ***Acknowledging***

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*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander  
Christian Congress*

As we gather, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of these unceded land and waters. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.

#### ***Singing - Come O God TiS 181***

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OR: Love divine all loves excelling TiS 217

#### ***Prayer***

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*Naidoc week prayer  
from the Catholic Diocese of Cairns 2020*



God of all wonder,  
We pause in the busyness of our days to listen  
deeply to the wisdom of this land and those  
who belong to it.  
May our minds be open to dialogue,  
May our hearts be open to transformation and  
May our hands do the work of reconciliation.  
We ask that the Spirit accompany us on our  
journey of healing on these lands, seas and  
waterways;  
We also ask the Spirit of peace be with all those  
who are living a life of fear, dispossession and  
distress.

As we pray this prayer we also remember  
where:

we have been too busy to pause and  
reflect;  
we have not listened deeply to wisdom  
of the land  
and those who belong in it  
we have been closed to dialogue;  
we have not wanted transformation;  
we have seen no need for reconciliation...

We hear through the apostle Paul that your  
glorious grace has been freely bestowed upon us  
as we have been blessed in Christ.

For this inheritance that comes to us as gift we  
say: **thanks be to God. Amen.**

#### ***Passing the peace***

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May the Peace of God dwell with you:  
**and also with you.**

#### ***Listening***

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Read: Ephesians 1:3-14 &  
Mark 6:14-29

For these words of faith  
and for Jesus the Word  
**Thanks be to God.**

#### ***Reflecting - Rev. Arnie Wierenga***

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I find it hard to engage with the gospel reading  
this week. It's hardly an edifying story, gory in  
detail and abuse of power. I resist it like I resist  
the 24 hour news cycle, too full of gory detail  
and abuse of power. I want good news, not this  
stuff. When it comes to the news cycle I carefully  
curate what comes in, reading headlines to fence  
off stories of despair and pain. But here it is, the  
gospel of Mark with a story that cannot be  
dismissed as just a headline.



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It begins with Herod betraying himself with guilt. He seems tormented by what he has done, as though the ghost of John the Baptist has come back to haunt him. "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." Or maybe there is hope in John's return as though it somehow undoes what has been done.

The telling shows a world of corruption and power where those without power become momentary playthings to amuse those who've lost a sense of life's value. In this telling I feel enraged but also powerless. I think that's the trouble with the news cycle too. Enraged, but powerless. In this story I want Herod to be tortured by ghosts of the past. But this is not the Jesus way.

Jesus is becoming known. He is noticed for his holy work. He is becoming popular as one who speaks for justice, one who welcomes those pushed out, one who feeds the hungry, heals the sick, and releases the captive. It seems that Jesus is everything Herod is not.

And if this is torment, Herod is tormented because it is too close. The headline cannot be dismissed for the story is too real, one that exposes his fragile ego and need to please others.

These fifteen verses expose what human vulnerability and ultimate power can do. We see darkness that can strike fear into innocent hearts. What happens here is almost predictive of Jesus' fate at the hands of powerful corruption and injustice.

In this we also see a world of contrasts. As John's head is demanded, Herod is feasting: a banquet for courtiers, officers and leaders. The dancing is entertainment to please this gathering of powerful men. Herod trips over his vanity and need to please. Rev. Bill Loader describes this as a black eucharist where John's head on a platter is the height of its liturgy! Whatever we might make of that, it seems that Mark wants us to see Jesus as light in contrast to what is dark.

Jesus is becoming known because he shines light into the darkness. He feeds 5000 and then 4000, eucharists of hope. He cannot be stopped by death threats. Instead, he walks with purpose towards Jerusalem where power and injustice will crucify him. On the way he feeds, heals, welcomes and invites all, especially those excluded from banquets of privilege, especially those seen as nothing by the powers that be.

As Jesus shines the light for which he becomes known, we begin to see he shines light even into the dark places of Herod's world. As light shines, with it comes hope. John could not be stopped speaking truth and justice. Jesus could not be stopped sharing the love of God with us all.

As we make the Easter cry like those early disciples that 'Christ is risen', we join with all who know the way of Christ cannot be stopped by dark banquets or abusive powers. As Herod fears what the light exposes, so we claim in the risen One that even death cannot stop the light of Christ from shining in the darkness.

As the news cycle continues to bring us grim and gory stories of exploitative power and injustice, I wonder what is not being reported. Is the risen Jesus there as powers are challenged by those who follow Christ?

I believe so, and this is my hope: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.

#### ***Singing - Beauty for brokenness TiS 690***

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OR: Brother sister let me serve you TiS 650

OR: Inspired by love and anger TiS 674

OR: Lord hear my praying TiS 689



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#### ***Offering***

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As people of God  
we bring ourselves,  
all that we have and who we are.  
We ask your blessing on these offerings to be  
used in your kingdom. **Amen.**

#### ***Notices***

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July 15 is World Youth Skills Day.  
July 18 is Nelson Mandela International day.

#### ***Prayers for World & Community***

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Loving Lord, we come to you with our prayers,  
our concerns, anxieties and desires, knowing that  
you listen and can lighten our hearts.

We pray for the world, creation, flora, fauna and  
all who live in it. Give us the desire and ability to  
care for it.

We pray particularly for places where there is  
conflict and violence, and for all those who are  
involved, intentionally or as victims.

We pray for peace.

We pray for our country, particularly in Naidoc  
week. For a desire, a will for reconciliation, in our  
hearts and actions and those of our leaders at all  
levels of government, in our churches and  
organisations.

We pray for our church. For the Uniting Church  
National Assembly as it meets in Sydney; for all  
councils, big and small. May they seek your  
guidance in all their decisions.

We pray for our communities, all who work  
caring for others, all who seek work, all who do  
not have a place to live, enough food, or live in  
constant pain or despair.

We take a moment of silence to pray for all those  
we live and lift the deep desires of our hearts to  
you.

We pray together then as Jesus taught us:

#### ***The Lord's Prayer***

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Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory  
are yours, now and forever. Amen.

#### ***Singing - God of freedom TiS 657***

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OR: Jesus put this song into our heart TiS 670  
OR: O breath of life come sweeping through us TiS 409

#### ***Blessing***

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*By Francis Bodkin of the Bodkin-Andrews clan of the  
D'harawal Peoples*

May you always see the beauty of the Earth.  
May you always taste the sweetest fruit.  
May you always hear the laughter of the People.  
May you always feel the warmth of the Flame.  
May you always smell the perfume of the flowers.  
May your dreams always be happy ones.  
May your friends always be with you when you  
have need.  
May your stomach always be full.  
May you never feel hurt.

*By Uncle Vince Ross, Mutti Mutti elder and retired UCA  
minister*

May the God of creation warm your heart  
like the campfires of old,  
bring wisdom and peace as shown  
to the first peoples of this land,  
shake off the dust from the desert plains  
by the refreshing rains,  
followed by the glow and warmth  
of the sun.  
Let the light of God  
show us the right path and  
stand tall like the big River gums  
drawing life from  
the ever-flowing waters.

#### ***Blessing song - We are marching TiS 666***

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