

FESTIVAL OF NEW LIFE

SUNDAY 5 MAY 2024 - SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

The Festival of New Life is an initiative of the NZ Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogue, affirming the shared belief “in one baptism for the forgiveness of sins as confessed in the Nicene Creed.” It is an invitation, supported by the NZ Lutheran Church and the NZ Catholic Bishops Conference, for parishes on the 6th Sunday of Easter - the Sunday preceding the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – to focus on baptism as the seedbed from which Christians can develop a deeper appreciation of one another on their journey to wholeness.

We further affirm that “in baptism through water and the word, a person is immersed in Jesus Christ and journeys with Christ through his death and resurrection to a new life.”

The following is offered to assist your celebration:

Readings of the 6th Sunday of Easter (Year B)

ACTS 10: 25-26, 34-35, 44-48 – Baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit enlightening all people regardless of language, race or culture.

1 JOHN 4: 7-10 – Let us love one another... God is love.

JOHN 15: 9-17 – As the Father has loved me... This is my commandment...

Homily Suggestions:

The Festival of New Life – as this initiative comes out of ecumenical dialogue, the emphasis should be on Christian unity: recognising our differences, but celebrating our togetherness and hastening our unity.

Jesus: I am the Resurrection and Life. I am the Light.

- Note the significance of light for life. Explore the scriptural contrast between light and darkness – that LIGHT was the first result of God’s creative Word – “*Let there be...*”
- The ‘light’ AND the ‘life’ that came to the disciples with the resurrection of Jesus; their self-centredness, their jealousy, their fear, their competitiveness, had held them in darkness...
- The physical presence of Jesus did not fully ‘convert’ them. It took the resurrection to do this. It is the same for us –

- The baptism ritual plays this out in symbol – the water that destroys but also gives life; and, to the baptised: *“You have been enlightened by Christ...”*
- To live out the commandment of Jesus requires an understanding and commitment to his words, *“...as I have loved you!”*
- God is love – in God there is no darkness, only light where love flourishes
- Baptism is the common thread between Christians. It gives new life - *“You have become a new creation and have clothed yourself in Christ.”* This joyful reality is the stuff festivals are made of. Ours is a Festival of New Life.

CREED: perhaps repeat the Easter Vigil practice of renewal of Baptismal Promises.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL – suggested petitions:

On this day Catholics and Lutherans celebrate their joint statement, “Baptised Together in Christ”. Baptism is the starting point for the seeds of Christian unity to grow. (pause) May we deepen our appreciation of this foundation sacrament and the new life it brings. (pause) We pray to the Lord. (E te Ariki)

For the formal dialogues of Catholics with Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists and Lutherans. (pause) Empowered by the new commandment of Jesus and his commission to “go out and bear fruit”, help us to explore and celebrate the faith we have in common rather than focus on what divides us. (pause) We pray to the Lord. (E te Ariki)

Or

For the formal dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics taking place in our country. (pause) Empowered by You who are “Love”, and the commission of Jesus to “go out and bear fruit,” may we explore and celebrate what we have in common rather than what divides us. (pause) We pray to the Lord. (E te Ariki)

With thanks:– Fr James Lyons, on behalf of the NZ Lutheran/RC Dialogue