

Liturgical Resources for Alabaré Sunday

Overview

This paper:

- outlines the purpose of Alabaré Sunday
- suggests biblical texts
- offers liturgical resources which are infused with phrases from the readings
- suggests suitable songs and hymns
- comments on the Isaiah reading in connection with the work of Alabaré
- provides talk outline for the reading from Acts.

1. What is Alabaré Sunday?

Alabaré Sunday is an opportunity to celebrate the work of Alabaré and the partnership between church and charity in a shared ministry to support those on the margins of society. Alabaré Sunday may be celebrated at any time of the year and complements Homeless Sunday, marked during January each year.

2. Biblical Texts

Isaiah 58. 6-7

Psalms 13, 146

Acts 8. 26-40

Matthew 25. 42-45

3. Liturgical resources

Invitation to Confession

Let us once again turn around and confess our sins before God, remaining confident in the welcome of her/his warm embrace.

Kyrie Confession

I was hungry and you did not give me a drink,
Thirsty, and you did not give me a drink.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

I was a stranger and you did not welcome me,
Naked, and you did not clothe me.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

I was sick and you did not call in to see me,
In prison and you did not visit me.

Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect

Loving God, in your house there is room for everyone.
Help us as we strive for a world where everyone has a home that truly meets their needs.
Give us the grace to welcome strangers and refugees.
Give us the insight to see where inequality hurts.
Fill us with the courage to do our part.
Save us from being overwhelmed by the scale of the housing crisis
And show us, O Lord, where to begin.
We pray this in the name of Jesus, our saviour and redeemer. Amen.

(source: Housing Justice, amended)

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, Alleluia.

‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me’.

Alleluia

Intercessions

Response

To those who are oppressed: **bring the blessing of your liberty**

Petitions

Loving God, we remember those affected by natural disaster and war. We particularly remember those who are on the move. Please walk with them and those who support them.

To those who are oppressed: **bring the blessing of your liberty**

Loving God, we remember our political leaders. Give us the courage to speak with them so that they can bring the needs of the most vulnerable to the attention of those who make decisions.

To those who are oppressed: **bring the blessing of your liberty**

Loving God, help us to live lightly upon the earth and share her resources wisely.

To those who are oppressed: **bring the blessing of your liberty**

Loving God, may we share God's welcome with all, and have a special care for those who are hungry, thirsty or without a home.

To those who are oppressed: **bring the blessing of your liberty**

Loving God, we pray for all oppressed by addiction of any kind. May they know the liberation that you alone bring.

To those who are oppressed: **bring the blessing of your liberty**

Loving God, may we be open to all who ask for help, knowing that through them we serve you.

To those who are oppressed: **bring the blessing of your liberty**

Introductions to the Peace

In encountering one another we encounter God. Therefore, let us together ensure that all are welcome in this place for we are standing on holy ground.

The Peace of the Lord be always with you

And also with you.

Prayer of invitation to Communion

This is the Table of the Lord. We gather around it and share in a foretaste of the heavenly banquet when all we be fed and known by name. All are welcome.

Post Communion

We have shared in eating the bread of heaven and in drinking the wine of the kingdom. As we leave this place, may we care for the thirsty, the hungry and those in need of shelter. We ask this in the name of Jesus our Lord, Amen.

Blessing

May you meet God in those who seek your help, and the blessing...

4. Hymn/Song Choices

Graham Kendrick's 'Beauty for brokenness'

John Bell's 'Will you come and follow me'

Lord, who left the Highest Heaven

Words: Copyright Bishop Timothy Dudley Smith.

Suggested tune: Irby (Once in Royal David's City)

Copyright: O U P - available under CCLI licence

Lord, who left the highest heaven
For a homeless human birth
And, a child within a stable,
Came to share the life of earth,

With your grace and mercy bless us
All who suffer homelessness.
Lord, who sought by cloak of darkness
Refuge under foreign skies
From the swords of Herod's soldiers,
Ravaged homes, and parents' cries,
May your grace and mercy rest
On the homeless and oppressed.

Lord, who lived secure and settled,
Safe within the Father's plan,
And in wisdom, stature, favour
Growing up from boy to man,
With your grace and mercy bless
All who strive for holiness.

Lord, who leaving home and kindred,
Followed still as duty led,
Sky the roof and earth the pillow
For the Prince of Glory's head,
With your grace and mercy bless
Sacrifice for righteousness.

Lord, who in your cross and passion
Hung beneath a darkened sky,
Yet whose thoughts were for your mother,
And a thief condemned to die.
May your grace and mercy rest
On the helpless and distressed.

Lord, who rose to life triumphant
With our whole salvation won,
Risen, glorified, ascended,
All the Father's purpose done,
May your grace, all conflict past,
Bring your children home at last.

5. Commentary on the Bible reading: *Isaiah 58*

Verse 6

'[...] to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke'.

Alabaré supports adults who have faced oppression through abuse. We have a home dedicated to supporting women who have need a safe place. Whilst resident the women may speak with the chaplain. A number attend the artistic sessions at a local church café. As part of their journey towards independent living some of the women participate in sessions of creative reflection. Using images cut from magazines they create a collage that is in three sections: past, present and future. This takes many weeks and often leads to really worthwhile conversation with the person supporting them.

Alabaré also supports many who are overcoming addictive behaviour. We support people who are moving away from lives of alcohol and drug addiction. In one location the chaplain leads a weekly bible study that resonates with the *Twelve Steps*. Connections with the local churches helps several clients each year to enter into a community life and for some an exploration or reconnection with Christian faith. Elsewhere clients participate in the courses and support offered by CAP (Christian Against Poverty). This helps to address debt and the issues that lead to it.

Verse 7

'Is it not to share your bread with the hungry [...]

Four times each week Alabaré Place in Salisbury has a 'drop in' facility for those who are living on the city's streets. Beautiful food is made available by a local bakery and warm lunches are cooked by staff.

'[...] and bring the homeless poor into your house [...]

Alabaré provides homes for people who are homeless. This may be in conjunction with the local authority for those who are street homeless, overcoming addiction, or young people leaving care. Each person may be with Alabaré for up to two years, sometimes longer, before they move towards independent living, with a flat of their own or they return to a family home. Whilst people are resident they are encouraged to interact with others in the home, and to shape their shared life. The Alabaré volunteers may assist residents in keeping the garden attractive, or build community through hosting a craft or musical activity.

Other homes such as those for veterans, are funded in other ways. In Pontypridd the veterans are often invited to a themed meal, eg Indian curry, Italian pizza prepared by the chaplain Pierre, who is a former Royal Naval chef. The veterans have a relaxing evening, in good company with excellent food. During the time together the chaplain will often provide space for those present to share something of their story or hopes for the future.

'[...] when you see the naked to cover them [...]

It is not unusual to receive a phone call from colleagues at the Law Courts Chaplaincy team asking for help with someone. We cannot always find a bed, but we often offer clothing and the means to be warmer if the person has to sleep in the open air.

'[...] and not to hide yourself from your own kin'.

Being alongside those seeking support, listening, and being open is the work of a whole network of Alabaré Christian Chaplains. This role requires humility and an awareness of one's own vulnerability. The chaplains visit the homes and services regularly building relationships and developing trust. They offer to pray with those who want this and are often a bridge for those seeking to engage more deeply with local community, including the faith communities.

6. Talk Outline for Acts 8

Text: Acts 8: 26-40

Theme: the margins.

The lens of marginality shapes the talk. I define the meaning of the description 'the margins', I then move on to investigating the reading from Acts 8, and finally connect these with the work of Alabaré.

Section One: Introducing the Concept

1. Ruling the margin on the page

Boundaries: belonging and not belonging in communities.

A person may be central at times and on the boundary at other times eg priest.

2. Marginality and understandings of the church:

Church as *community*-unusual as place where all can belong-but challenging to live this out

Church as *building*-can be one of the places where we experience both earthly and heavenly dimensions –Word, Sacraments, Beauty in artistic offering, one another

3. The margins as a place for growth:

A space to try things out

The time between endings and new beginnings

Working with feelings, seeing new perspectives and potential direction

4. Margins: understanding of this concept can be enriched by exploring the ideas connected with *borderlands* and *liminality*

Section Two: The Reading Acts 8. 26-40

Applying the lens of marginality provides an interesting way of reading the text. The structure of the text is crucial and I identify five sections. The text is chiasmic and this places an emphasis on section three. Section one and five mirror one another as do two and four. In the central section the Ethiopian receives support from Philip in his exploration of the text from Isaiah.

Section One Acts 8. 26-28

There is a journey from marginality, to being accompanied.

1. The Ethiopian was on the margins:
 - journeying-between and between
 - ethnicity
 - sexual status
 - lived a distance away from the 'center' (Jerusalem)
 - A Gentile who had converted to Judaism
- Expertise around the material ie financial

Stage Two Acts 8. 29-30a

2. Philip, who reminds us of Elijah comes alongside

Stage Three Acts 8. 30b-35

3. The Ethiopian invites the prophet to explore the scriptures with him (cf Emmaus). He asks a key question, 'Do you understand what you are reading?'

Stage four Acts 8. 32-38

4. The text from Isaiah is about marginality. Philip (by implication) explores it as a framework to makes sense of Jesus' marginality and act of self-giving love.
5. This opportunity leads to a new life direction symbolized by baptism and entering into the community of Christ's followers. A powerful belonging as an equal.

Stage Five Acts 8. 39-40

6. Philip continues his proclamation elsewhere (Azotus and heading for Caesarea). The Ethiopian continues home.

Section Three: Alabaré Christian Care and Support

1. Overview of the Charity

For this information it is worthwhile going to the Alabaré website our <https://www.Alabaré.co.uk/about>. Here you will find crucial information about the charity and short *YouTube* clips that can be used.

2. The vision for the process of working with clients in Alabaré: from marginality to abundant life

- The client is moving from marginality and seeking support
- They connect with Alabaré. Staff come alongside.
- Alabaré key worker is invited in to actively support. Together there is exploration of the key questions being asked and issues being faced eg addiction, spirituality, financial challenges, reconciliation
- New decisions are made as the client moves towards independent living
- The client lives independently

3. This vision has parallels with the structure of the reading from Acts 8. The reading is chiasmic in structure.

- We hear of the Ethiopian who is on the margins of society
- He is seeking understanding and support in this exploration of Jewish belief. Philip comes alongside.
- The central point is when the Ethiopian seeks support in his understanding scripture from Philip. They work together.
- The Ethiopian makes the decision to be baptized, giving his life new direction and belonging.

Philip goes on to Azotus and Caesarea and the Ethiopian