A Service of Healing

The Martyrs of Memphis:
Constance, Thecla, Ruth, Frances,
Charles Parsons, and Louis Schuyler
1878

September 9, 2026

6:00 p.m.

Trinity Episcopal Church
1893
Houston • Texas

The Reverend Hannah E. Atkins Romero, Rector
The Reverend Maria Teresa Bautista-Berrios, Associate Rector
The Reverend Marcia Sadberry, Priest Assisting

Tian Qin, Organist
Paul Mortilla, Choirmaster
April Sloan-Hubert, Co-Director of the Trinity Jazz Ensemble
Pelayo Parlade, Co-Director of the Trinity Jazz Ensemble

Making God's Presence Real
By Sharing Christ's Life-Changing Lov

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The Word of God

Presider The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.
People **And also with you.**
Presider Let us pray.

After a period of silence, the Minister then says the following Collects

Gracious God, we commend to your loving care all who suffer, especially those who come here seeking your healing grace for themselves and for others. Give them patience and hope in their distress; strengthen and uphold them in mind and body; and grant, by your intervention, that all your people may be made whole according to your desire, through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

We give you thanks and praise, O God of compassion, for the heroic witness of the Martyrs of Memphis, who, in a time of plague and pestilence, were steadfast in their care for the sick and dying, and loved not their own lives, even unto death; Inspire in us a like love and commitment to those in need, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

THE FIRST LESSON

Jeremiah 18:1-11

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: "Come, go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words." So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.

Then the word of the Lord came to me: Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? says the Lord. Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it. And at another moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, but if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will change my mind about the good that I had intended to do to it. Now, therefore, say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus says the Lord: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.

Reader The Word of the Lord.
People **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 17: 6-10 *Exaudi, Domine*

6 I call upon you, O God, for you will answer me; *
incline your ear to me and hear my words.
7 Show me your marvelous loving-kindness, *
O Savior of those who take refuge at your right hand
from those who rise up against them.
8 Keep me as the apple of your eye; *
hide me under the shadow of your wings,
9 From the wicked who assault me, *
from my deadly enemies who surround me.
10 They have closed their heart to pity, *
and their mouth speaks proud things.

THE SECOND LESSON

2 Corinthians 1:3–5

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ.

Reader The Word of the Lord.
People Thanks be to God.

THE GOSPEL

John 12:24–28

Jesus said, "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

Reader The Word of the Lord.
People Thanks be to God.

A Litany of Healing

The Celebrant introduces the Litany with this bidding

Let us name before God those for whom we offer our prayers.

The People audibly name those for whom they are interceding. A Person appointed then leads the Litany

God the Father, your will for all people is health and salvation;

We praise you and thank you, O Lord.

God the Son, you came that we might have life, and might have it more abundantly;

We praise you and thank you, O Lord.

God the Holy Spirit, you make our bodies the temple of your presence;

We praise you and thank you, O Lord.

Holy Trinity, one God, in you we live and move and have our being;

We praise you and thank you, O Lord.

All you Holy Angels, Archangels, and bodiless powers of heaven;

Stand beside us to guide and guard us on our way.

Holy Mary, Mother of God;

Pray for us and the people of the world.

For all who grieve the death of family, friends, and citizens;

Give them courage and strength to meet the days ahead, O Lord, and the consolation of your love.

Pour out your healing grace on all who are sick, injured, or disabled, that they may be made whole;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Grant to all who seek your guidance, and to all who are afraid, anxious, or overwhelmed, a knowledge of your will and an awareness of your presence;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Give peace, courage, and hope to all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Restore to wholeness whatever is broken by human sin, in our lives, in our nation, and in the world;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Bless physicians, nurses, and all others who minister to the sick and suffering, keep them safe and healthy, and grant them wisdom and skill, sympathy, and patience;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Open our eyes to see that you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth and that our life and death are with each other;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Give us compassion for those in need, patience in this time of distress in our country, and love for our neighbors;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Let our hearts be not afraid;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

You are the Lord who does wonders:

You have declared your power among the peoples.

With you, O Lord, is the well of life:

And in your light we see light.

Let us pray:

A period of silence follows.

God of all power and love, we give thanks for your unfailing presence and the hope you provide in times of uncertainty and loss. Send your Holy Spirit to enkindle in us your holy fire. Revive us to live as Christ's body in the world: a people who pray, worship, learn, break bread, share life, heal neighbors, bear good news, seek justice, rest and grow in the Spirit. Wherever and however we gather, unite us in common prayer and send us in common mission, that we and the whole creation might be restored and renewed, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Confession of Sin

The Celebrant says

Let us confess our sins to God.

Silence may be kept.

Minister and People:

God of all mercy,
we confess that we have sinned against you, opposing your will in our lives.
We have denied your goodness in each other, in ourselves,
and in the world you have created.
We repent of the evil that enslaves us,
the evil we have done,
and the evil done on our behalf.
Forgive, restore, and strengthen us
through our Savior Jesus Christ,
that we may abide in your love
and serve only your will. Amen.

The Priest, stands and says

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. Amen.

Prayers for Healing

The minister may invite each person to give her or his name and any particular request for prayer. The minister then prays silently, then prays aloud using one of the following forms or similar words.

I lay my hands upon you in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, praying you will be strengthened and filled with God's grace, that you may know the healing power of the Spirit. Amen.

After all are anointed

May the God who goes before you through desert places by night and by day be your companion and guide; may your journey be with the saints; may the Holy Spirit be your strength, and Christ your clothing of light, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

May God the Father bless us, God the Son heal us, God the Holy Spirit give us strength. May God the holy and undivided Trinity guard our bodies, save our souls, and bring us safely to his heavenly country; where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Dismissal

Officiant	Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
People	**Amen.**

The Martyrs of Memphis

In August 1878, yellow fever invaded the city of Memphis, Tennessee, for the third time in ten years. By the month's end, the disease had become epidemic and a quarantine was ordered. While more than 25,000 citizens had fled in terror, nearly 20,000 more remained to face the pestilence. As cases multiplied, the death toll averaged 200 people per day. When the worst was over, ninety percent of the people who remained had contracted the fever and more than 5,000 people had died.

In that time of panic and flight, many brave men and women, both lay and ordained, remained at their posts of duty or came as volunteers to assist in spite of the terrible risk. Notable among these heroes were four Episcopal sisters from the Community of Saint Mary, and two of their clergy colleagues, all of whom died while tending to the sick. They have ever since been known as "The Martyrs of Memphis," as have those of other communions who ministered in Christ's name during this time of desolation.

The Sisters had come to Memphis in 1873, at Bishop Quintard's request, to found a school for girls adjacent to St. Mary's Cathedral. When the 1878 epidemic began, George C. Harris, the cathedral dean, and Sister Constance immediately organized relief work among the stricken. Helping were six of Constance's fellow Sisters of St. Mary, plus Sister Clare from St. Margaret's House, Boston, Massachusetts; the Reverend Charles C. Parsons, Rector of Grace and St. Lazarus Church, Memphis; and the Reverend Louis S. Schuyler, assistant at Holy Innocents, Hoboken, New Jersey. The cathedral group also included three physicians, two of whom were ordained Episcopal priests, the Sisters' two matrons, and several volunteer nurses from New York.

The cathedral buildings were located in the most infected region of Memphis. Here, amid sweltering heat and scenes of indescribable horror, these men and women of God gave relief to the sick, comfort to the dying, and homes to the many orphaned children. Only two of the workers escaped the fever. Among those who died were Sisters Constance, Thecla, Ruth, and Frances from the Community of Saint Mary, the Reverend Charles Parsons, and the Reverend Louis Schuyler. All six are buried at Elmwood Cemetery. The monument marking the joint grave of Fathers Parsons and Schuyler bears the inscription: "Greater Love Hath No Man." The high altar in St. Mary's Cathedral, Memphis, is a memorial to the four Sisters.

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