



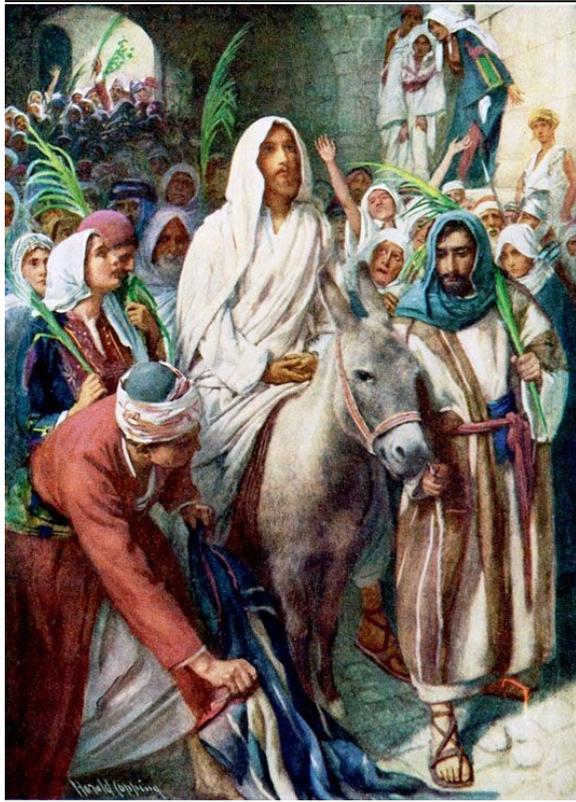
William Lamb
450th anniversary

ST JAMES' CHURCH, ISLINGTON N1 8PF

5th April 2020 PALM SUNDAY YrA 20/14

Jesus, during your ministry on earth you showed your power and caring by healing people of all ages and stations of life from physical, mental, and spiritual ailments. Be present now to people who need your loving touch because of COVID-19. May they feel your power of healing through the care of doctors and nurses. Take away the fear, anxiety and feelings of isolation from people receiving treatment or under quarantine. Give them a sense of purpose in keeping healthy and protecting others from exposure to the disease. Protect their families and friends and bring peace to all who love them; for the sake of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Collect: True and humble king, hailed by the crowd as Messiah: grant us the faith to know you and love you, that we may be found beside you on the way of the cross, which is the path of glory. Amen.



PALM SUNDAY With our streets and squares so very quiet at the moment we will have to use even more imagination than usual to recreate the arrival of Jesus into his own city of Jerusalem. To help, the streamed service today (see *St James' Facebook page and the link provided*) features a contemporary re-telling of the Gospel story, from the moment the disciples are told where to find a spare donkey, right through to Thursday's Last Supper and Jesus' death on Good Friday. In between each scene is a short meditation, designed to draw out bits of the story we might otherwise miss. There is no formal sermon this week but there are prayers to use either today or later in the week. Sadly we can't be in Church for either the Maundy evening Mass and three hour Vigil or for the Liturgy on Good Friday. Next year...



TODAY'S PALM SUNDAY reading of the Passion Story is on-line but if you would like a Bible chapter to think about during Holy Week can I suggest you read - as slowly as you can - St Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 2, verses 1-11. Paul invites us to have 'the same mind that was in Christ Jesus' which means allowing the Spirit of God time to direct our thinking. This year 'time' is perhaps the one thing we do have!

St James' Islington: discovering how to live like Jesus in the 21st century

ZOOM! From nowhere Zoom has suddenly become an integral part of our lives. I have had three major meetings using this useful app—and also got involved in something similar - 'House Party' - which enabled us to play silly games with Catriona in Leeds! All very clever. The first was a meeting of the Standing Committee which needed to make decision after the PCC had to be cancelled. We agreed to go ahead with the revamp of the heavily used Hall kitchen where the cupboard doors and drawer fronts are coming apart. We will put new fronts on the old carcasses, re-tile the walls and put in new worksurfaces. We also agreed to replace the Hall curtains which have been in place since 1995! The second meeting with the Wardens was to reflect on the two Objections to the Organ Project that were received last week. With the Diocesan legal staff working from home we don't know how slow this process will be but over the course of the next few months a huge amount of paperwork will need to be generated to justify the plans agreed by the PCC. The third session was a seminar with a student training for the priesthood. After Easter Ken Thompson is hoping to convene a session to discuss Rowan Williams' book 'Luminaires'.

STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL Thank you to the nine people who have returned their green pledge cards to Nieve Goodwin.

The deadline for returns is today but we will be anxious to receive the rest as soon as possible. Of course the shutting of both the Church and the Hall makes this easy to overlook but it is also the reason why the appeal is so urgent! Please help if you can.

Calendar and Daily Prayer themes

Sun 5 PALM SUNDAY	Barry, Hayley, Theo and Freddie Jenkins
Mon 6 DEL Holy Week	Grace and Elrose Joseph; Miranda Jules
Tues 7 Tuesday in Holy Week	Roy, Eva, Jerome and Zuri Kasella
Wed 8 Wednesday in Holy Week	Charlotte, Josh and Olivia Kennedy
Thurs 9 MAUNDY THURSDAY	Philip Kingston; Kingsley Lewis
Fri 10 GOOD FRIDAY	Beryl Lloyd; Kurt, Julia and Florence Maile
Sat 11 HOLY SATURDAY	McBrien families; Paula, Gianni and Giandre
Sun 12 EASTER DAY	Bill Murphy; Jade Nicholson, Charlie and Henry

PRAYER BOARD/NOTICES Requests for prayer welcome

BIRTHDAY Happy Returns today to Giandre Morrison, 12 today; on Tuesday to reader and coffee maker Eva Kasella; on Wednesday to Richard Dennison whose art works are due to go up on the walls of Church ready for our re-opening; on Thursday to Joseph Allen who will be 20 and on Saturday to Lisa Ahmet-Baker and to Catriona Burniston. Happy days all.

SICK Robert Addington, Annie Bryan, Chou Seng Joo, Rosemary Evans, Emily Grainger, Eve Holtom, Kris Hyde, Hayley Jenkins, John, Klenan, Kingsley Lewis, John Scott, Charlie Sharpe, Rene, Vera Taggart, Melanie Toogood, Angela Vinnicombe.

MEMORIALS 7th: Roy Young (2013); 8th: Doris Wight, Heidi Trimbo; 11th Norman Cape (2001).



INTERNATIONAL CHURCH LINKS US: Fr Travis and Suzanne Smith, Angleton, Texas; Japan: Fr Sebastian Naniwa, working in Hiroshima.

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE We are delighted that Nazanin Zaghari-Radcliffe's time out of Evin jail has been extended and that there are signs that she may even be granted some form of amnesty. Sadly we have still heard nothing about



Kylie Moore-Gilbert (left), a British-Australian academic, who seems to have been a persistent thorn in the flesh of the authorities. We also pray for two other British-Iranian dual nationals, AnooSheh Ashoori, a business man sentenced to twelve years and Aras Amiri, an Iranian employee of the British Council and student of philosophy at Kingston Uni.



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A SERVICE OF THE WORD

for Palm Sunday 2020

as streamed from
St James' Vicarage,
Arlington Square N1

SERVICE OF THE WORD FOR PALM SUNDAY 2020

The Passion Story

1st reading: The King rides in Jesus was close to Jerusalem now. He wanted to be in Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. Jesus spoke to two of his disciples. "Go ahead to the next village. You will find a donkey tied up there. It has never been ridden before. Untie it and bring it to me. If anyone asks what you are doing, tell them I sent you." The two men brought the donkey to Jesus. Then they threw their coats across the donkey's back and helped Jesus to get on.

People were crowding into Jerusalem. As soon as they heard Jesus was coming, they came out to meet him. Some of them spread their coats on the road in front of him. Others cut down palm branches. 'Here comes our King!

I have often wondered what was that donkey was doing there? Whatever had happened, it was certainly in the right place at the right time, ready to play its part in the great events of Palm Sunday.

And although the crowd didn't know it, Jesus was in the right place at the right time too – and so were they. Each had their part in this complicated drama in which it would look like Jesus was being cornered by the Chief Priests and taken away against his will. The truth of course was rather different. The chants from the crowd were right; Jesus was their king and he knew precisely what he was doing. The script had been written long, long ago.

Can we feel the hand of God encouraging and guiding us – even in the middle of this Coronavirus when things feel such a mess? Can we believe that he has a plan and that he will see us through to better times?

We adore you, O Christ and we bless you;
because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

2nd reading: Jesus clears out the money changers So Jesus rode into the city like a king - but a king who came in peace! His destination was the Temple, but when he saw the men selling pigeons and the money-changers haggling over the special coins used in the Temple, he became very angry. The exchange rate was outrageous and they were cheating the poor, hand over fist, as they came to worship. Jesus cried out: "My Temple is a place of prayer but you have made it into a robber's den." Then he overturned all the tables with the coins piled on top, and drove out all the stall-holders with the belt he wore around his waist. The place was in uproar! The priests who were there watched what was happening and said: "This man must be done away with. But how can we do that? We are afraid of what the people will say."

Is it ever right to get angry, really angry? Here Jesus is faced with the worst kind of dishonesty where the poor were being ruthlessly exploited – right there in the Temple precincts themselves. It was not fair and he couldn't stop being angry.

Do we get angry about the things that really matter? Do we care about those – near or far - who are homeless, destitute, suicidal, tortured, abused or unloved? Do these things make us angry? Or do we just shrug our shoulders and look the other way? Perhaps God would prefer us to show a bit more passion about injustice – like Jesus did. Religion for him meant action – even if that meant getting angry.

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3rd reading: The Betrayal Two days before the festival of Passover, Judas Iscariot went to see the Chief Priests. He had begun to have second thoughts about Jesus. He was impatient and wanted to see Jesus overthrow the Romans. Now he knew that this was not going to happen. Judas was ready to betray Jesus. “I will lead you to him when there are no crowds about,” he told the priests. And for this information they paid him thirty pieces of silver.

“Where shall we meet for the Passover meal?” asked the disciples on the morning of the festival. It was time to get things ready. Jesus replied, “Go into the city. There you will see a man carrying a jar of water. Follow him to his house. There is an upstairs room where we can all have our meal together.”

Second thoughts. Judas, carried away by the excitement of being a friend of Jesus, then realises that their aims are quite different. The most ardent supporter becomes the most disillusioned former associate. And, having been an insider, the most dangerous.

We are all familiar with ‘fairweather friends’ and know how painful it is when they disappear when we really need them. Would people describe us as flaky, only good when life is going well? Have we ever let someone down badly? Can God count on our faithful support through thick and thin?

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4th Reading: Washing the disciples feet That evening, together in the Upper Room, just before they sat down to eat, Jesus took a towel, poured some water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet. They were shocked. “This is a job for the servants!” Jesus explained, “You must be willing to serve one another, just as I have served you.”

Jesus seemed sad. He knew he was not going to be with them very much longer. He was going to die. The friends could see that something was wrong. But then Jesus took them by surprise, “One of you is going to betray me”. The disciples were stunned. “What does he mean? Surely no one here is going to harm Jesus?” Then John who was next to him, whispered, “Which one of us is it?”

Jesus replied, “The one I give this piece of bread to, dipped in the sauce.” Then he gave the bread to Judas and said, “Go and do what you have to do.”

So Judas went out into the dark night.

It was pretty strange then; it would be unheard of now: for a host to wash the feet of their dinner guests. We can try to make it seem acceptable by turning it into a piece of Church ritual. But it doesn't really work. It just seems odd. We are too private. Even in normal times we don't do much physical touching in public.

Yet this action of Jesus is not about social etiquette and what is polite. It is about forcing us to feel these events in our bodies not just in our heads. It is the way God shows us Jesus' humility – how he will be stripped and whipped, spat at and finally tortured on the Cross. It is about flesh and blood and pain beyond our comprehension. It is about the kind of service that sacrifices what we want for the good of other people. Love is not some kind of intellectual exercise. True love is physical and demands everything from us.

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5th Reading: The Last Supper Jesus talked a lot that evening, and his friends would never forget his words. He told them that he loved them - so much that he was going to die for them. “But do not worry; I won't leave you on your own. God will send his Spirit to be with you and help you always. I am going back to God, to get a place ready for you. Then I will come and take you to be with me. Do not worry - and do not be afraid.”

Then Jesus took a loaf of bread, thanked God and shared it with them all. “This is my body. I am going to be broken, just like this bread. Remember me. I will be dying for you.” Then he took a cup of wine, gave thanks to God and they all drank from it. “This is my blood, poured out for you all. My death will seal a new peace between God and his people.”

When the meal was over, they left the upper room and walked to an orchard of olive trees called Gethsemane.

We spend our lives trying to find the right words for each occasion. We write an email, we write a sympathy card, we write a major document at work, we write a prayer. So often the words don't quite match what we really want to say.

So how could Jesus express his deepest desires at the Last Supper – to people who had no idea how the next twenty-four hours would finish? All he could do was work with metaphors big enough for us to wrestle with for the whole of our lives. What is this bread; what is this saving cup? How do these gifts strip away all divisions and make us one with God - and how do they reassure us that we have nothing to fear?

I have no idea. All I know is that broken bread and wine outpoured are the ways God chose to make “I in you and you in me” a reality in my life. They are the phrases that need to be embedded in our hearts as we cope with all the events unfolding in Gethsamane.

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6th Reading: In the garden Just as they reached the Garden, Jesus turned to his friends and said, "In just a few hours, you will all run away and leave me."

Peter was first to reply, "No, Lord that could never happen. I will never leave you." But Jesus turned to him and said, "Before the cock crows, at dawn tomorrow, you will have said three times that you do not know me." Peter couldn't believe what he was hearing. "I would die first!" he said. And all of Jesus' disciples said the same.

Jesus then divided the group into two. He took Peter, James and John into the centre of the garden. The others sat down to wait. "Come with me and keep watch," said Jesus. He moved away among the olive trees and fell to his knees.

Then Jesus began to pray, "Father, if it is possible, save me from this death. But only if that is what you want." As he said this, he could hear voices. People were coming, with burning torches in their hands.

The Temple guards and the chief priests, led by Judas, had come to arrest Jesus. Judas said to the soldiers. "The man I kiss is the one you want". When they saw the signal, the guards closed in. Jesus did not try to escape.

But Peter, now wide awake, drew his sword. He cut off the right ear of the High Priest's servant. "Put your sword away", said Jesus. And he touched the servant's ear and healed it. "How did he do that?" the crowd asked.

Then Jesus turned to the chief priests. "Why have you come against me with swords and clubs as if I were a criminal?" The priests had no reply. They just stood aside as the soldiers marched Jesus off. And every one of Jesus' friends left him and ran away.

As usual Peter acts before he thinks. In the darkness and in the confusion he lashes out with the sword he is carrying – but only manages to wound a young servant boy who was no threat to any of them.

In the short conversation that follows we can feel how Jesus is actually more frustrated with Peter than he is with the armed gang who have come to arrest him. And quietly and without fuss he heals the boy's ear as if nothing had happened.

What his prayer in the garden had done was to make him perfectly calm. We can understand now that healing the servant's ear was just a symbol. This journey would heal the world because Jesus was prepared to submit to the ordeal in front of him.

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7th Reading: In the house of Caiaphas the soldiers then took Jesus to the High Priest's house. There was a fire in the centre of the courtyard and the guards stood round it. Peter joined them. A servant girl walked past and saw him. "You were with Jesus of Nazareth", she said. Peter denied it. He moved away. But she said to the others, "He was definitely one of Jesus' followers." "No, you are wrong. I am no friend of his." said Peter.

A little while later, a group heard Peter's north country accent. "You come from Galilee. You must know Jesus." Sweating with fear Peter answered, "I swear, I have never met him,"

Just then, a cock crowed, and Peter remembered what Jesus had said. He broke down and cried.

Inside the house, Jesus was being tried by the Jewish Council. The High Priest asked him, on oath, if he was the King, the Son of God? "I am, and you will see me at God's side, coming with the clouds of heaven." At that the High Priest tore at his clothes: "You have heard what the prisoner said. We don't need any more witnesses. He claims to be equal with God and that is blasphemy. Do you find him guilty or not guilty?" "Guilty! Guilty! Guilty!" they roared. But they were not allowed to execute Jesus without the permission of the Romans. So, as the sun was rising, they took Jesus to the palace of Pontius Pilate.

Inside and outside the High Priest's house, trumped up charges are being laid and cheap words bandied about. Everyone knew what the outcome would be. No one escaped these sorts of trials.

Does it matter how we get to our destination so long as we get the right outcome? Does it matter what we say? Who cares if we are weak, lazy and dishonest, opportunistic and impatient?

As the early morning sun begins to rise, all this squalid background 'noise' gives way to Jesus' meeting with the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. And the time for Jesus to stand in the light and declare: only the truth matters. Only the truth will set you free.

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8th Reading: Sentenced to death Jesus stood before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. The Jewish priests accused him of claiming power that belonged to the Roman Empire because they knew that Pilate would not sentence a man to death for a religious crime like blasphemy. The crowd shouted, "He claimed to be a king". Although Pilate questioned Jesus closely he still could not find any reason to put him to death. Jesus had done nothing wrong. Then Pilate remembered that there was a custom that the Roman governor could release a prisoner at Passover, so he said, "I have not found this man guilty. Shall I set Jesus free?"

But the crowd shouted even more loudly, "Kill Jesus! Crucify him! Free Barabbas instead." Now Barabbas was a murderer.

They made such an uproar with their shouting that at last Pilate gave in. He knew it was wrong. But he was afraid the people would riot and get him into trouble with the Emperor. "I am not responsible for this man's death. This is your fault."

Then he had Jesus flogged before handing him over to the soldiers to be crucified. Crucifixion was the terrible, slow death the Romans reserved for criminals. The soldiers took Jesus away. They dressed him up in a purple robe, fixed a cruel crown of thorns on his head and shouted abuse at him. They spat in his face.

Then they took back the robe and led him through the city streets to a place outside the city walls called Golgotha, which was used both as a rubbish dump and as a place of execution.

How strange. With all that power at his disposal, even Pilate is trapped. He wants to let Jesus go – and yet he fears the crowd. They will use any sign of weakness to pull him down. He offers them a way out of their spiteful case against Jesus but they will not take it. But ultimately the power is not with Pilate and it is not with the crowd either. Even here the power lies with God whose plan is being uncovered, step by painful step.

We think we know what we are doing. We think we can achieve it on our own. This story is proof that however things look, God's will is being done - on earth as it is in heaven.

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9th Reading: The Cross Jesus was weak from the flogging, but they made him carry the heavy wooden beam of the cross till he stumbled and fell. Then they ordered one of the crowd - a man called Simon, from Cyrene - to carry it for him. At Golgotha they nailed Jesus' hands and feet to the cross. They nailed a notice above his head too: "This is Jesus, King of the Jews."

The hot sun beat down and Jesus hung there, in agony. But he did not hate his torturers. Instead he prayed for them, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing." The large crowd continued to jeer at him, "If you really are the Son of God, save yourself and come down from the Cross."

Two thieves were crucified with Jesus, one on either side. The first thief swore at him. But the second said, "We deserve to die but this man has done nothing wrong. Remember me, Jesus, when you come into your Kingdom." Jesus replied, "I promise you this: today you will be with me in Paradise." Jesus' mother and some of his friends stood near. Jesus spoke first to John: "Take my mother to your own home and look after her for me." To his mother he said, "Treat him as your son."

At midday a shadow passed across the whole sky, and for three hours it was very dark. At three o'clock Jesus whispered, "O God, why have you left me here to die?" Using the last of his energy he gave one final cry: "It is finished. Then he died.

At that moment the curtain of the Temple split from top to bottom and the earth shook beneath the soldiers' feet. They had been playing dice for Jesus' clothes. Now they were really scared. But one said, "Truly this man was the Son of God".

To make sure that Jesus was dead, one of the soldiers pushed his spear into Jesus' side and out came blood and water.

Can you hear - in the middle of all the brutality, the cynicism and the sudden darkness in the sky - the human emotions of those who were witnessing these events: the appeal of the repentant thief and the reassurance in Jesus' answer; the tenderness with which he entrusts his mother to the care of St John.

There too the cry of a Son who felt abandoned, and finally the extraordinary testimony of one of the execution party.

This is no easy story. Much of it is sickening; it turns our stomachs, not least when we realise how many of those same weaknesses are to be found in our own lives. And all we can do now is wait – wait to see how God can transform this situation – and allow hope to spring from the ground where, at the moment, only spilt blood and water can be seen...

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Reflection

Fergal Keane, one of today's great broadcasters, read a short poem earlier this week on Radio 4. The poem was written by John Donoghue: priest, poet, theologian and great observer of the natural world, who died tragically young in 2008. This is taken from a collection called *Benedictus*, 'To bless the space between us'. I wish I had Fergal's gentle Irish lilt in sharing it with you now.

*This is the time to be slow,
lie low to the wall
until the bitter weather passes.
Try, as best you can, not to let
the wire brush of doubt
scrape from your heart
all sense of yourself
and your hesitant light.
If you remain generous,
time will come good;
and you will find your feet
again on fresh pastures of promise,
where the air will be kind
and blushed with beginning.*

The Prayers

For the darkness of waiting
of not knowing what is to come;
of staying ready and quiet and attentive,
we praise you O God:
for the darkness and the light are both alike to you.

For the challenge of staying silent,
for the pain of having nothing to say
and for the greater guilt
of not being able to find the right words to help other people:
we praise you O God:
for the darkness and the light are both alike to you.

Intercessions

For the insecurity within every relationship
of knowing when to surrender our own wills
for the common good;
of finding ways to let go of our self-protection
and to stop looking for rewards for what we do:
we praise you O God:
for the darkness and the light are both alike to you.

For the dilemmas of choosing
how and when to give and when to withhold,
the choices of words and how to bring change;
for the vacuum that comes from not knowing
if our risks will succeed
and how what we have set in motion
will be received in the hearts of those we serve:
we praise you O God:
for the darkness and the light are both alike to you.

For the uncertainty intrinsic to hope,
for the courage needed to reveal you
to a world that longs for peace;
for the wrestling and the labouring
for wholeness and justice and freedom
we praise you O God:
for the darkness and the light are both alike to you.

(Adapted from Janet Morley's Litany of Waiting)

Lord God, whose blessed Son our Saviour
gave his back to the smiters
and did not hide his face from shame:
give us grace to endure the sufferings of this present time
with sure confidence in the glory that shall be revealed;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(Common Worship; Collect for Lent 4)

I believe in the sun even when it does not shine.
I believe in love even when I do not feel it.
I believe in God even when he is silent.

(A Jewish Prayer discovered in Cologne after the Second World War)

As we stand with Christ in his suffering:

we pray for all those who still make Jerusalem a battleground: for Jews and Palestinians and for all seeking political solutions in the Middle East; for those suffering in Syria, in Iran and in Somalia:

we pray for all these affected by the Coronavirus, here and throughout the world. We give thanks for all those caring for the sick and for the dying; we pray that each of us may do all we can to use social isolation as our contribution to containing the spread of this pandemic:

we pray during this Holy Week for all Christian communities unable to meet as congregations, that they may still experience a rich union in Christ and may be renewed in their commitment to pray for one another:

we pray for all feeling isolated and lonely, that they may find support and encouragement:

we pray for those weighed down by financial and work-related problems; for those who manage workplaces, for those being laid off and for the self-employed whose livelihoods are curtailed by the present shut-down:

we pray for all those who are tempted to give up the way of the cross and for all called to support them.

we pray that we, and all who have died in faith, may find the love and mercy that only Christ can bring, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(Common Worship: Intercessions for Palm Sunday, adapted)

As Jesus taught us, so we pray:

**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 today 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,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Thanks be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the blessings and benefits which you have given to me,
for the all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
O most merciful Redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. **Amen.**

(Prayer of St Richard of Chichester)

Blessing

May God give us light to guide us,
courage to support us
and love to unite us,
now and for evermore;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be with us, now
and throughout this coming week. **Amen.**