

Prayers & Reflections for the week commencing Sunday 14th February

The Sunday next before Lent

Holy God,
you know the disorder of our sinful lives:
set straight our crooked hearts,
and bend our wills to love your goodness and your glory
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Psalm 50

- 1 The Lord, the most mighty God, has spoken •
and called the world from the rising of the sun to its setting.
- 2 Out of Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth; •
our God comes and will not keep silence.
- 3 Consuming fire goes out before him •
and a mighty tempest stirs about him.
- 4 He calls the heaven above, •
and the earth, that he may judge his people:
- 5 'Gather to me my faithful, •
who have sealed my covenant with sacrifice.'
- 6 Let the heavens declare his righteousness, •
for God himself is judge.

Reflection

February 14th is, of course, St Valentine's Day, a feast day celebrated more outside the church than in it. As in the case of many of the ancient Christian saints, there are multiple narratives about the life and death of St Valentine. Contradictory as they may be, every single one speaks of an ordinary person transformed by an encounter with the divine or God, and this encounter affirmed his faith so profoundly that he was ready to give his life for what he believed in.

We sometimes talk of 'thin' spaces, these are the places in our lives where we experience the touch of the divine. It may be a moment when you are engaged in a spiritual or religious activity, it may be an encounter in nature when you are touched by the beauty of God's creation. Or the moment may be more intimate and personal when you are overwhelmed by God's love reflected in your love for another.

These 'thin' spaces are times when we are reorientated to and affirmed in our status as children of God – they can be life-changing moments, think of St Paul on the road to Damascus. They are moments when we are enabled to reflect on the glory of God's face. As we cherish these moments and recognise these encounters with God, we too can be transformed and become a transformative presence.

Prayers for ourselves and for others ...

Teach us your ways, Lord, and help us to follow the right paths so that in all things we may be true examples of your love, kindness and consideration.

We pray for the Church: that the spiritual life of each church community, and especially our own, may be nurtured and grow, so that we may have confidence to reach out increasingly to the particular needs of our neighbourhood.

Lord hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray that God's will may prevail in the way we use our world's resources, our intelligence, our knowledge and our power.

We pray for all whose lives are full of fear, dislocation and loss of hope, especially for those who live in the midst of war, oppression or natural disaster; pray that world leaders and the leaders of individual nations may have courage and integrity and act justly for the good of all.

Lord hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray for all who work in prisons, hospitals, schools, business or industry, and for those who work among the homeless and the very poor.

We pray for those with whom we live and work and worship; that we may use every opportunity to care for each other and grow in patience and understanding.

Lord hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

Healing God, whose Son, Jesus Christ, understood people's fear and pain before they spoke of them, surround the frightened with your tenderness; give strength to those in pain; hold the weak in your arms of love and give hope and patience to those who are recovering from illness.

In a few moments silence we bring to God those in need and known to us and remember those who have no one to pray for them ...

Lord hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

Eternal God, we pray that you will console the bereaved and all who are in sorrow or alone. And we remember those who have died, that they may have rest in that place where there is no pain or grief but life eternal.

Lord hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

God of all, you have told us that you will ask much of those to whom much is given; may we who enjoy so rich an inheritance work together fruitfully in our prayers and our labours and share with all your people the gifts we so plentifully enjoy.

Merciful Father
**accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

Loving God,
you fill all things with a fullness and hope that we can never comprehend.
Thank you for leading us into a time where more of reality is being unveiled for us all to see.
We pray that you will take away our natural temptation for cynicism, denial, fear and despair.
Help us have the courage to awaken to greater truth, greater humility,
and greater care for one another.
May we place our hope in what matters and what lasts,
trusting in your eternal presence and love.
Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our suffering world.
Knowing, good God, you are hearing us better than we are speaking,
we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God. Amen.

Spiritual Communion

One who is unable to receive Communion physically may make a spiritual communion and be certain that Christ comes to them in this way as surely as in communion.

Blessed be God,
by whose grace creation is renewed,
by whose love heaven is opened,
by whose mercy we offer our sacrifice of praise.
Blessed be God for ever.

Come to my heart, Lord Jesus.

Jesus, may all that is you flow into me.
May your body and blood be my food and drink.
May your passion and death be my strength and life.
Jesus, with you by my side enough has been given.
May the shelter I seek be the shadow of your cross.
Let me not run from the love which you offer
but hold me safe from the forces of evil.
On each of my dyings shed your light and your love.
Keep calling to me until that day comes
when, with your saints, I may praise you for ever. Amen.

Blessing

Go in peace,
to bear witness to the love of God.
and may God the Creator go on creating in us,
Jesus our Saviour walk before us in each new day
and the Spirit dance with life within us.
Amen.