

**Easter Three- 26th April 2020**

How to use these prayers

Please work through the prayers at your own pace. It may take you thirty minutes it may only take five.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

During the season of Easter the lectionary tells us that we must have the reading from Acts. The Acts readings will prepare the way for us right up to the celebration of the ‘birthday’ of the church on Pentecost. Of course many of us are used to focussing our sermons on the Gospel readings, and this week in particular, it would seem churlish not to: it is the reading of the road to Emmaus and all the riches that we find there. But it is worth the build up to Acts, so do have a read and reflection on that reading too.

Gathering Before God

Make sure you are sitting comfortably. Light a candle if you have one; any candle will do.

Breathe slowly and deeply.

I am in the presence of the Living God, Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Risen Christ,
you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope:
strengthen us to proclaim your risen life
and fill us with your peace,
to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

Preparation

*As you get ready to read and reflect on Scripture, prepare yourself by handing over to God your cares and concerns. This may not mean they disappear completely (the instruction of Jesus, ‘Do not worry’ is one of the hardest to obey!) but we find comfort at the cross. As well as fears and failures, we can offer to God our hopes and expectations.*

*You can either find a picture of the cross to look at, or an actual cross you may have in your house, or picture the cross in your mind.*

*Then say the following words. If there is more than one of you, you could say them as responses, if you are on your own, say them all.*

Voice 1: All our problems?

**Voice 2: We send to the cross of Christ**

Voice 1: All our sins?

**Voice 2: We send to the cross of Christ**

Voice 1: All the devil's works?

**Voice 2: We send to the cross of Christ**

Voice 1: All our hopes?

**Voice 2: We set on the risen Christ.**

Reflection

Breathe slowly and deeply.

Ask God to speak to you through the passage that you are about to read.

Bible Readings: Acts 2v14a, 36-41 and Luke 24.13-35

Reflection: **Dramatic retelling of Luke 24:13-35, an Ignation-type relfection**

I had to get out of Jerusalem; I needed to get away from all this talk about Jesus. On every street corner, every trader’s stall, in the Temple courts, every person who was there for the Passover: all they wanted to talk about was the latest messiah who had been humiliated and killed. It wasn’t just strangers, lots of my own friends had got caught up in following Jesus - including Cleopas.

When Cleopas asked me to walk back with him to Emmaus I refused. Even staying in Jerusalem for an extra night and listening to strangers talking about Jesus would be better that walking for hours with Cleopas and his friend. Every step of the way you could be assured that Cleopas would moan about how sure he had been, and how much he had believed in Jesus, how he had hoped in him.

I told him, right at the beginning that it wouldn’t go anywhere: that the Romans were here to stay, that Israel would never be saved as long as there was a Roman Emperor around.

Cleopas and his friend had gone on ahead and I hung back in Jerusalem. When I finally set off the road was packed. Shoulder to shoulder with pilgrims heading out of Jerusalem back to their homes. In this slow moving flood who should I see swimming against the tide and making their way back to the city? Cleopas and his friend.

Cleopas had only just left, what was he doing heading back? And why was he running as fast as the crowds would allow? More bizarrely, why was he smiling? Had he finally gotten over his frankly annoying listless attitude? For days he had been maudlin, ever since his Jesus messiah had been crucified. I should have been more helpful and sympathetic to him in his mourning. It *was* sad that Cleopas had practically given his whole life over to this Jesus, and for nothing. But I had told him not get caught up with the latest controversial rabbi who was claiming to be the messiah. There were scores of people assuring anyone who would listen they were the great hope for all Israel; what made Jesus different?

Cleopas was now running back to Jerusalem, and this time with a big smile on his face, like something has changed. When he saw me he bounded up to me and gave me a big hug.

“You’ve cheered up.” I said, “Where are you going?”

“To Jerusalem.”

I was about to ask him why when he almost shouted at me, “I’ve seen Jesus: he’s alive!”

Well you can imagine what I thought. Last time anyone had seen Jesus he was hanging on a cross. People don’t usually survive that kind of ordeal, especially not when some Roman soldier spears your side just to make sure you are dead.

I looked at Cleopas and tried my best to look concerned, rather than giving him a look that said he was going mad, which clearly he was. “Cleopas, he died. It’s over.”

“He did die, but now he’s alive!”

Then he went on to recount this story of how he was walking back to Emmaus and on the way this random man had started walking with Cleopas and his friend. Well this random man knew that Cleopas and his friend were in a bad mood, so he asked them what was up.

As Cleopas was excitedly telling me this part of his story, I began to feel sorry for this strange man: asking Cleopas why he was upset was a sure fire way to get a long lecture on Jesus, messiahs, the hope for Israel, and the imminent downfall of the Roman Empire – the same Roman Empire that was as strong as it had ever been and ruled the whole world.

As Cleopas continued, he told me this was exactly what he said to this stranger: Jesus this and Jesus that, before saying that Jesus died.

Now at this point in Cleopas’ story I was a bit nervous. It is not a good time to tell people that you are a follower of Jesus – it is the kind of thing that might get you in trouble; I have kept that quiet and am now moving on, but Cleopas clearly doesn’t want to let go. He also doesn’t care that someone might report him to the Romans or the Temple authorities.

As the story of Cleopas and the stranger on the road continued, the stranger goes ahead and tells them that this *was all part of the plan*. Imagine that! Jesus gets nailed to the cross and we are supposed to think that this was meant to happen, and was the kind of thing that a Messiah should do.

The stranger went on to talk of the scriptures and pointing out where it says that the messiah must die; and this stranger really knows his stuff and, according to Cleopas, it makes a lot of sense.

Myself and everyone else has heard that someone had stolen Jesus’ body, but now Cleopas has started to believe that that wasn’t the case, and that the rumour of an angel and all that other stuff might mean something significant – something like Jesus is not dead after all.

 So Cleopas and his friend ask the stranger to have a meal with them, and then…after all that time and conversation, the stranger says the blessing before the meal. Cleopas tells me, at that exact moment - having just had a really long conversation with the bloke on the road, but only at that precise point - Cleopas and his friend see that the stranger is Jesus.

And then, according to Cleopas, Jesus disappears.

Full of this story of Cleopas’ I finally moved on from being annoyed by him and start to feel sorry for him. Cleopas has clearly lost it. And now he is going back to Jerusalem to tell them all about it – and he wants to know if I want to go.

Of course I don’t. I have done my Passover thing and want to get home.

Funny thing is the way that he spoke about Jesus, made me kind of want to believe him. I know I am a bit cynical about all this stuff, but I want to believe in a messiah, and although it is a bit random the messiah dying and all that, it would really annoy the Romans if they couldn’t kill this guy like they killed all the others. So I gently and sympathetically told Cleopas that I hoped he was right and that I would see him soon.

I asked him to walk back home with me, but Cleopas said he was home: he had found home and belonging, and meaning and purpose on the road to Emmaus, but Emmaus was not home, heaven was his home.

Prayers

We pray to Jesus who is present with us to eternity.

Jesus, light of the world,

bring the light and peace of your gospel to the nations …

Jesus, Lord of life,

in your mercy, hear us.

Jesus, bread of life,

give food to the hungry …

and nourish us all with your word.

Jesus, Lord of life,

in your mercy, hear us.

Jesus, our way, our truth, our life,

be with us and all who follow you in the way …

Deepen our appreciation of your truth

and fill us with your life.

Jesus, Lord of life,

in your mercy, hear us.

Jesus, Good Shepherd who gave your life for the sheep,

recover the straggler,

bind up the injured,

strengthen the sick

and lead the healthy and strong to new pastures.

Jesus, Lord of life,

in your mercy, hear us.

Jesus, the resurrection and the life,

we give you thanks for all who have lived and believed in you …

Raise us with them to eternal life.

Jesus, Lord of life,

in your mercy, hear us,

accept our prayers, and be with us always.

Amen.

A prayer concerning the Coronavirus

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.Amen*From the Church of England website*

An act of spiritual Communion

My Jesus,
I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment
receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen.

***Taken from*** <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/devotions/act-of-spiritual-communion-339>

The 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.** A**nd 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.**

With the power that raised Jesus from the dead at work within you,

go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia.

**In the name of Christ. Amen. Alleluia, alleluia.**