

PRAYERS AND LITURGIES FOR LENT, HOLY WEEK, EASTER 2009

The key readings that lie behind these prayers and liturgies, are indicated at the beginning of each section. This material may be freely used in worship or re-produced in orders of service provided “Ann Siddall, Stillpoint Spirituality Centre” is acknowledged as the source.

Ash Wednesday

Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21:

Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them .. that your alms may be done in secretwhenever you fast do not look dismal ... your Father who sees in secret will reward you ...

Isaiah 58: 1-12

You serve your own interest on your fast day and oppress all your workers ... a day to humble oneself ... the fast I choose – to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke; to share your bread with the hungry, bring the homeless into your house, cover the naked and not hide from your own kin.

A prayer of letting go

O God, help us to use this season of Lent
to examine our attachments,
and to sense where You invite us
to live more simply and deeply.

Shine the light of Your love
into the private corners of our lives
where we have acquired so much clutter
that it has begun to restrict our freedom.

Grant us the strength to free ourselves
from appetites and needs that drive us
into taking, having and wanting
more than we need or have time for.

Teach us that in letting go
we become free, rather than deprived,
generous rather than covetous,
and spacious rather than restricted.

We offer You our Lenten observance,

and today we place our feet
on the road to Easter, and walk
the Way that You have walked before us. AMEN

First Sunday in Lent

Mark 1: 9-15

In those days J came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan ...
You are my Son, the beloved, with you I am well pleased ...
And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness ... tempted by Satan, with
the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Psalm 25:1-10 Make me to know your ways O Lord, teach me your paths, Lead me in
truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation, for you I wait all day long.

Call to worship

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John.
On this day we come from many different suburbs - to remember his story,
to offer our worship and to give witness to our faith.

Gather us in, O God.

Leaving the security of home, family and daily work
Jesus began a brave new journey,
may we be willing to embrace new paths and new ways.

Gather us in, and invite us to venture out, O God.

Knowing that Jesus would have begun this journey
with human fears and apprehensions,
we find the freedom to admit that we are not always courageous.

Gather us in and give us courage, O God.

Jesus remained open to the Spirit all the way,
so as we gather to hear the familiar stories of Lent and Easter,
may we be willing to hear them address us in new ways,

Gather us in and grant to us receptive hearts and minds, O God.

Prayers of intercession

We pray today for all who are walking a hard journey:

for those whose daily paths encounter barbed wire and guns;
for those who did not want to leave home but were forced to;
for those who set out today in search of food and water;
for those whose journey is shattered by economic hardship;
for those whose journey is marred by pain or despair,

and for those who faithfully journey alongside them;
for those who are making a move and beginning again;
for those who are clinging on to something that has ended;
for those who are being bullied, and for those who are bullying;
for those who have just taken their first breath, and
for those who today will take their last.

May this Lenten journey, with its stories
about the hard places of Jesus' experience,
give strength and courage to all
whose journey is far from easy.
And may it inspire us to risk Christ's Way of love
as we share the journey with other travelers.
We make this prayer in his name. AMEN

Third Sunday in Lent

John 2: 13-22

Jesus cleanses the temple ... Stop making my Father's house a marketplace ... In will raise it up in three days.

A prayer of confession

Jesus, cleanser of temples and souls,
at this mid point in the Lenten journey,
look deep within our hearts and our lives,
and clear away all that holds us back.

May our minds, spirits and bodies
be a Temple that is open to Your presence:
and may our words and our actions
be transparent to Your love and truth.

We pray that this church community,
will be purified in its life and mission,
so that all that we do in and from here
may reveal Your Gospel to others.

In a moment of silence we sit before You,
and name those things for which
we seek Your cleansing and healing,
so that we may be more faithful disciples.

Silence

Words of assurance

Friends of Jesus, we are made clean

by the words he has spoken to us.
There is room in our lives and in our community
for the Holy One to dwell. Thanks be to God.
AMEN

Fourth Sunday in Lent

John 3: 14-21

For God so loved the world – did not send to condemn but in order that the world might be saved through him. But those who do what is true come to the light ...

Call to worship

Friends of God, believe this –
God loved the world,
God loves the world,
we are the beloved!

May the truth of this great love story,
shine through our worship today,
and renew our sense of calling.

So come, with your tiredness,
your frustrations and your discouragements;
come with your doubts, your fears,
and your longings;
come, to discover yet again
how Jesus reveals God's love and mercy.

Come, in friendship to God
and to each other,
and in friendship to the world,
to listen for God's Word to us,
to offer our prayers,
and to renew our calling.

Friends of God,
let us worship!

Fifth Sunday in Lent

John 12: 20-33

Greeks at the Passover Festival, to Philip "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and died it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit ... where I am there will be my servant also.

Ephesians 2: 1-10

From death to life

But God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus ...

Unless a grain of wheat falls

Redeeming God,
on these autumn days it is easy to see
how what was once so alive and fruitful
now falls to the ground and dies.
The seasons of the earth mirror
a reality we tend to resist.
May be wise in finding our way
through life's many endings.

In the ending of death,
grant us the freedom to grieve,
and to honour what has been.

In the endings of broken relationships,
save us from bitterness, and
move us towards wholeness.

In the endings that are forced upon us,
may we have the strength to survive,
and the discernment to find the next step.

In the endings we have chosen,
but that others may not understand,
help us to act with love and compassion.

In the endings that are invited of us,
may we have the courage to let go,
and to relinquish graciously.

And in our remembering of Jesus' words
about a grain of wheat falling to the earth,
may we always be attentive
to the hope of new life.

AMEN.

Sixth Sunday in Lent

Mark 11: 1-11

Jesus went into the temple and when he had looked around at everything ...

John 12: 12-16 Same story: Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.

...

Mark 15: 1-

Jesus the true vine

Abide in me as I abide in you

... apart from me you can do nothing ...

Call to worship

The story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem,
tells us that after his celebrated arrival.
He went into the Temple
and looked around at everything.

As we gather here for worship today
may it be with a sense that Jesus
has walked in too, and is looking around.

May our eyes be open to see Him,
may our hearts be ready to be seen by Him,
may our worship be worthy of His presence,
and may we be transformed
so that we see the world through His eyes.
AMEN.

Palm Sunday prayer

It is relatively easy for us
to roster someone
to go and gather palm leaves
to spread in the church today.

And we can easily find music
and a few good words
to help us to remember
and re-enact Palm Sunday.

But what if You arrived
inviting us to really lay down
something important to us
to acknowledge Your arrival?

What if we knew the imminence
of the danger that accompanies You,

or sensed that the authorities
were watching us as we worship?

How then, Jesus, would we meet You today.
and what would we spread before You?
And how would we regard humility
from the One we hope will save the world?

Palm Sunday Jesus, help us to see
how and where You enter our world today,
and what You ask us to lay at your feet,
and how we may welcome You in.
AMEN

Holy Week:

John 12 and 13

Mary anoints Jesus' feet and wipes them with her hair.

Criticism from Judas

Jesus washes the disciple's feet (chapter 13): Lord, not only my feet but also my hands
and my head.

Do you know what I have done to you? ... I your Lord and Teacher have washed your
feet so you also ought to wash one another's feet: if you know these things, you are
blessed if you do them.

Broken

Broken – the jar of precious perfume,
broken - the promises of loyalty,
broken – the adulation of the crowds,
broken – the Passover bread,
broken – the dreams of disciples,
and Jesus is left alone
to face his death sentence.

Broken – in body and spirit,
broken – and crying out in anguish,
broken – the dream of the Kingdom,
broken – and far from home,
broken – and giving up his life,
and Jesus dies before soldiers,
and a few weeping friends.

Broken – the veil of the Temple,
broken – the power of sin and death,
broken – the power that oppresses,

broken – the sealed entrance to the tomb,
from all life's broken places
life rises up again and sings Alleluia.

The season turns again

As another summer fades into autumn,
and we are left with dry paddocks
and yellowed parklands;
as we look for the rains
that will announce a new season,
may our faces turn towards You,
God of our salvation.

For as Lent turns to Easter,
so our spirits will sing and rejoice,
in remembering our reason to celebrate:
and whether we have sun or cloud,
rain or the long hard drought,
we will not abandon the hope
that everything turns and changes.

Hallelujah! Amen.

Prayers of intercession

This Good Friday we join our voices
to the words of Jesus on the cross,
and the cry of all who are abandoned,
“My God, why have you forsaken me?”

Before we race in quickly
with the triumphant answer,
or the desire to set things right,
we need to stand alongside
this ancient cry of dereliction.

So today we place ourselves
with all those who cry out
for food and justice, for work and healing,
for hope and love, for faith and for meaning:
we hear their pain and the pain of Jesus Christ.

And because we know

that in two days we will be back
celebrating and singing,
do not let us deny the suffering
of Christ and of this world.

Today we cry out about:
(world and local situations may be named here)
O God, our God, we cry out to You
do not forsake us.
AMEN.

Easter Sunday

John 20: 1-18
Mary coming to the Tomb ... I do not know where they have laid him ...
Mary goes and announces to the disciples, I have seen the Lord!

A call to worship

Think of a moment when someone
that you least expected to see
suddenly stands before you.

A moment when something you'd lost
is found again and you
can scarcely believe your eyes.

Think of a moment when your fear
was suddenly proved unfounded
and you were surprised by joy.

This morning is such a moment.
We resign ourselves to the worst,
and suddenly life turns around.

So come this Easter morning,
to be shaken from your conviction
that nothing can change your situation.

Come if you look at the world
and feel overwhelmed by its chaos,
or disillusioned by its promises.

On this morning we remember
how Mary went to anoint a corpse,
and was greeted by a Saviour.

Come to worship prepared
to see your life and the world
through new eyes.

For Christ is risen,
he is risen indeed. Hallelujah!