

# No Longer My Own Lenten Meditations



The inspiration for the Lenten Meditations this year is the **Grail Prayer**. Each week, one part of the prayer will be offered as a focus for the Scripture readings, prayerful meditation and reflection.

### **Prayer 1**

*Lord Jesus, I give you my hands to do your work.*

Help me to open my hands in readiness to serve you, to let go of those things which I hold so tightly but which hinder my ability to do your work. May I reach out in love, to hold the hands of the poor and needy. Amen

### **Prayer 2 – The First Week of Lent**

*I give you my feet to go your way.*

Loving God, teach me to walk with you, confident that, though I do not know the way, you will guide my footsteps to my journey's end. Amen

### **Prayer 3 – The Second Week of Lent**

*I give you my eyes to see as you do.*

Forgive me, Lord, when I view the world through the lens of my own selfish desires, greed and intolerance. Help me to fix my eyes upon Jesus and so help others to discover afresh the light of Christ. Amen

### **Prayer 4 – The Third Week of Lent**

*I give you my tongue to speak your words*

Lord Jesus Christ, may I follow you so faithfully, so that my whole being speaks of you and for you, to the glory of your name. Amen

### **Prayer 5 – The Fourth Week of Lent**

*I give you my mind that you may think in me*

Fill my mind, O Lord, with all that is pure and holy, that I may become an instrument of peace and joy to a sad and hurting world. Amen

### **Prayer 6 – The Fifth Week of Lent**

*I give you my spirit that you may pray in me*

Spirit of God, pray in me so that all I offer and all that I am may reach up to you and out to others in joyous praise and selfless service. Teach, equip, guide and inspire me, this and every day. Amen

### **Prayer 7 – Holy Week**

*Above all, I give you my heart that you may love in me your Father and all people.*

Lord, may my only desire be that you dwell in my heart and may I know the gift of your sacrificial love as a deep reality in my life. Amen

## I GIVE YOU MY HANDS TO DO YOUR WORK

### Ash Wednesday, February 17th

**Read:** Psalm 24:3-4

*Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his Saviour.*

**Reflect:** The beginning of Lent offers the opportunity for making a new start. The author, Neale Donald Walsch writes, ‘You cannot hold onto the old, all the while declaring that you want something new.’ We need to open our hands to release all those things in our lives that are unworthy, disobedient and unloving. Having done this prayerfully, asking God’s forgiveness, we become as new and fresh, ready to begin again with clean hands and a pure heart.

**Prayer 1**

### Thursday after Ash Wednesday, February 18th

**Read:** Deuteronomy 15:7-11

*Therefore I command you to be open-handed towards your brothers and towards the needy in your land.*

**Reflect:** It was touching to hear a story on television of a couple who had very few material resources of their own. They had made it their life’s work to gather up furniture and clothing discarded by this comparatively affluent society in which we live, restore it and then offer it to those who found themselves in difficult circumstances. Some of the recipients spoke of how life-changing these gifts had been, offering them hope for new beginnings.

**Prayer 1**

### Friday after Ash Wednesday, February 19th

**Read:** Isaiah 35

*Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, do not fear.”*

A touch of humour lightened a school assembly when the above words from Isaiah 35 were read out, and a Maths teacher, of whom many of us were terrified, actually joined in a burst of laughter. The reason being that her recently broken leg was encased in plaster and, unusually for her, she had needed to rely on help from others. It served to teach me that even those who appear strong, will go through difficult times. Richard Rohr, writes in 'Eager to Love', "*If suffering is whenever we are not in control, then you see why some form of suffering is absolutely necessary to teach us how to live beyond the illusion of control and to give the control back to God.*"

**Prayer 1**

### **Saturday after Ash Wednesday, February 20th**

**Read:** Mark 8:22-26

*He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village.*

**Reflect:** A woman once told me how she had always been utterly terrified of going to the dentist. There came a point, however, when she was unable to avoid the encounter any longer. Arriving at the dental practice, she found she was completely paralysed by fear and unable to climb the stairs to the surgery. Upon hearing of her state of mind, the dentist quietly came to her and with words of gentle encouragement, he held out his hand and led her up the stairs to receive the dental treatment she so desperately needed.

Jesus, too, held out his hand to the blind man and offered healing, just as he holds his hand out to us. Are we willing to put our hands in his?

**Prayer 1**

### **I GIVE YOU MY FEET TO GO YOUR WAY**

#### **First Sunday of Lent, February 21st**

**Read:** Psalm 119:105

*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*

**Reflect:** Walking as a young child through thick, yellowy-grey, impenetrable smog with my parents after an evening visit to friends, I was always anxious that we would be lost. However, I put my faith in

my father's ability to find the right way home and he never failed to do just that.

Psalm 119:105 teaches us that we need to put the same childlike confidence in the word of God, for it will always direct us along the right paths and lead us ever closer to him.

**Prayer 2**

### **Monday of the First Week of Lent, February 22nd**

**Read:** Deuteronomy 10:12-13

*And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul...*

**Reflect:** Those who have endeavoured to walk some part or all of a long distance path, will know the folly of seeking to discover a short cut or a better route than the one which is waymarked. It almost invariably leads the walker into difficulties! Those who planned and mapped out the prescribed route had eliminated hazards, blind-alleys and unnecessary detours. God knows that the way he has shown us, the way of loving him with all our hearts and souls, is for our own good.

**Prayer 2**

### **Tuesday of the First Week of Lent, February 23rd**

**Read:** Isaiah 52:7

*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"*

**Reflect:** I question the theory promoted by newspaper editors and television moguls that only bad news sells! It is so good to read or hear something that is a cause for celebration. Maybe we each need to consider more carefully our responsibility to take the Good News of Jesus Christ to such a sad, hurting and war-torn world.

**Prayer 2**

## **Wednesday of the First Week of Lent, February 24th**

**Read:** Luke 1: 76-79

*And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High.....to guide our feet into the path of peace.*

**Reflect:** When visiting Sri Lanka, I stood gazing up at Sigiriya, a 200 metre high, massive rock and archaeological site, and quickly realised that if I was to climb to the top to explore, I would need someone to guide me. Help was quickly forthcoming, and both the arduous climb and the destination were well worth the effort.

When we embark on our spiritual journey, we need a guide to direct and encourage us, for the way will not always be apparent or easy. Jesus is that guide and will accompany us every step of the way if we invite him.

**Prayer 2**

## **Thursday of the First Week of Lent, February 25th**

**Read:** Matthew 14:22-33

*Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came towards Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"*

**Reflect:** Feeling desperately lonely, separated from my family on Christmas Day during that same visit to Sri Lanka, mentioned yesterday, I wrote the following words:

*But in this deep loneliness, comes strength from within,*

*Deep down in my heart, stirs strength in my soul.*

*For I meet with the One who sustains, calls and leads me*

*Who beckons and says, "Child, keep walking my way."*

**Prayer 2**

## **Friday of the First Week of Lent, February 26th**

**Read:** John 13:1-17

*"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet."*

**Reflect:** During November 2015, the group of pilgrims visiting Lichfield Cathedral, took part in the pilgrimage ritual of foot washing at the Pedalavium. One pilgrim wrote of her experience, *“The washing of feet was something I’d not experienced before and I found it strangely moving: following in the footsteps of ancient tradition. It was a cleansing and purifying moment in more than a physical sense.”* I would add that it is also a humbling experience, reminding us that Jesus calls us to serve him in a spirit of true humility.

**Prayer 2**

### **Saturday of the First Week of Lent, February 27th**

**Read:** John 8:12

Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

**Reflect:** ‘The Light of the World’ is the title of a famous picture by Holman Hunt painted in 1854. It portrays Christ, thorn-crowned, and carrying a lantern, knocking at a closed door. When the artist showed the picture to some friends, one pointed out what seemed an omission. “You have put no handle on the door,” he said to Holman Hunt. The artist replied, “We must open to the Light –the handle is on the inside.”

Which way do our feet lead us? Towards the light or to the darkness?

**Prayer 2**

## **I GIVE YOU MY EYES TO SEE AS YOU DO**

### **Sunday of the Second Week of Lent, February 28th**

**Read:** Numbers 15:37-41

*Speak to the sons of Israel, and bid them make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put upon the tassel of each corner a cord of blue, and it shall be to you a tassel to look upon and remember all the commandments of the Lord, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to go after wantonly.*

**Reflect:** In the hymn, ‘*O Jesus I have promised,*’ the words, ‘*I see the sights that dazzle,*’ are a reminder that we are just as readily led astray by the lure of the desire to acquire, to have, to control and to keep, as the people of Israel were. Do we have an equivalent today of the blue tassels that are our reminder to guard our eyes from being drawn to gaze upon the things that are detrimental to our well-being and spiritual health?

**Prayer 3**

### **Monday of the Second Week of Lent, March 1st**

**Read:** Psalm 119:18

*Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.*

**Reflect:** In the folds of a dusty book on a loose slip of paper, the following words were written:

*So fear not, my friend,*

*The darkness is gentler than you think.*

*Be grateful for the manifold dreams of creation*

*And the many ways of the unnumbered peoples.*

*Be grateful for life as you live it*

*And may a wonderful light*

*Always guide you on the unfolding road.*

Resolve this day to see afresh the wonderful works of God’s creation and the good gifts he bestows upon us.

**Prayer 3**

### **Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent, March 2nd**

**Read:** Proverbs 3:7-8

*Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil.*

*It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.*

**Reflect:** A recent television series, ‘The Secret Lives of 3, 4, 5 and 6 Year Olds,’ has recorded scenes in which a temptation such as a delicious chocolate cake has been left unattended by the teacher. The only instruction has been that the children must not touch it. The camera has recorded every longing look and inevitably the moments

when the majority of the children have succumbed to the desire to taste forbidden fruit (or cake!)

Are we so very different? Have we acquired the wisdom to see the world through the eyes of our Lord?

### Prayer 3

#### Wednesday of the Second Week of Lent, March 3rd

**Read:** Matthew 6:22

*The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light.*

**Reflect:** 'When we look into the heart, may our eyes have the kindness and reverence of candlelight.' These are some words from a prayer entitled, 'For Light' from the book 'Benedictus' by John O'Donohue. I have a lamp by which I work, called a daylight lamp. The light is harsh, illuminating every minute speck of dust. Candlelight is such a contrast; it does not deny the presence of the dust, but casts a gentle, warm, forgiving glow. Not unlike the light of Christ, really. If we perceive our inner being through his eyes we sense his gentle, warm, forgiving, glow illuminating and making us whole.

### Prayer 3

#### Thursday of the Second Week of Lent, March 4th

**Read:** John 4:34-38

*I tell you, lift up your eyes and see how the fields are already white for harvest.*

**Reflect:** How seriously do we regard these words and acknowledge that they apply to each one of us? Or do we find it easier or more comfortable to believe that the work of mission, the 'reaping of the harvest' is the work of those who are ordained or called to be missionaries? Sadly, very many of us, keep our eyes averted from such work. However, as I see it, there are many ways through which the harvest is reaped: through prayer, through loving service, through constancy in friendship, through living out the things we profess we believe. It may help to reflect today on the people in your life who

opened your eyes to the love of Christ and what it was in them that inspired you.

### Prayer 3

#### Friday of the Second Week of Lent, March 5th

**Read:** Ephesians 1:17-19

St. Paul prays, *'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you...'*

**Reflect:** There is a little book called 'The Velveteen Rabbit' written by Margery Williams. It was written for children but nevertheless conveys certain wisdom and some important truths that are not difficult to translate into Christian thinking. *'What is REAL?' asked the rabbit one day..... 'Real isn't how you are made,' said the skin horse. 'It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become REAL.'*

### Prayer 3

#### Saturday of the Second Week of Lent, March 6th

**Read:** Hebrews 12:1-2

*Let us fix our eyes upon Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'*

**Reflect:** It is tempting to quote the words of the hymn written by Helen H. Lemmell, the chorus of which begins, *'Turn your eyes upon Jesus,'* and continues by saying that if we do, *'the things of earth will grow strangely dim.'* However, in some ways these sentiments seem contrary to Christ's call to us to open our eyes to the needs of the world, the sufferings of our neighbours, and to be labourers for the harvest. With our eyes fixed firmly on Jesus we can live in the assurance that we will have the strength to fulfil the sacrifices and challenges he calls us to fulfil, and know the fullness of his joy.

### Prayer 3

## I GIVE YOU MY TONGUE TO SPEAK YOUR WORDS

### Sunday of the Third Week of Lent, March 7th

**Read:** Psalm 71:23-24

*My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you – I, whom you have redeemed.*

**Reflect:** It is very easy to slip into the way of negative thoughts and words. Recently, I set myself a challenge that proved to be more difficult than I had at first imagined! *‘If you can’t say something positive, say nothing at all.’* I was astounded at how quickly the disparaging thought converted into a scathing or dismissive comment and how rarely I echoed the practice of *the Psalmist*. *Why not try it for a day as part of your Lenten discipline?*

**Prayer 4**

### Monday of the Third Week of Lent, March 8th

**Read:** Psalm 119:171-172

*May my lips overflow with praise, for you teach me your decrees. May my tongue sing of your word, for all your commands are righteous.*

**Reflect:** It seems sad, in a way, that the discipline that was encouraged in Sunday Schools years ago of memorising Bible texts, has given way to instant reference of facts on computer games and mobile phones. Not only did learning portions of Scripture by heart exercise the memory, but it provided ready access to a vocabulary of praise and thanksgiving, so uplifting in all the seasons of our lives, but especially when life is proving difficult.

**Prayer 4**

### Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent, March 9th

**Read:** Proverbs 10:19-21

*When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.*

**Reflect:** Billy Graham once said, 'A real Christian is a person who can give his pet parrot to the town gossip!'

A further quote on gossip offers this thought, "'When this pen flows too freely,' run the instructions given with a fountain pen, 'it is a sign that it is nearly empty, and should be filled.' The caution would seem to apply to human beings. Gossip, slander, idle chatter, all testify to the emptiness of the mind and are a damaging sign."

We all need to heed the words from Proverbs 10:19, 'He who holds his tongue is wise.'

#### **Prayer 4**

### **Wednesday of the Third Week of Lent, March 10th**

**Read:** Luke 4:18-19

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*

**Reflect:** These words spoken by Jesus in the synagogue at the outset of his public ministry, very clearly define the purpose of his role. It further underlines for us that following in his footsteps we are called at all times to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel.

#### **Prayer 4**

### **Thursday of the Third Week of Lent, March 11th**

**Read:** Matthew 6:5-15

*But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you. And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think they will be heard for their many words.*

**Reflect:** Jesus's teaching on prayer is reflected in some words from Francois Fenelon, a 17th century French archbishop, theologian, poet and writer. He wrote, 'How can you expect God to speak in that gentle and inward voice which melts the soul, when you are making so

much noise with your rapid reflections? Be silent, and God will speak again.'

#### Prayer 4

#### Friday of the Third Week of Lent, March 12th

**Read:** John 14:23-27

*All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

**Reflect:** Corrie Ten Boom, not only did amazing work in World War 2, in helping Jews to escape from the Nazis, but was also a gifted and powerful teacher. She was able to explain difficult concepts in understandable terms. This is how she expressed the work of the Holy Spirit. *'I have a glove here in my hand. The glove cannot do anything by itself, but when my hand is in it, it can do many things. True, it is not the glove, but my hand that acts. We are like gloves. It is the Holy Spirit in us who is the hand, who does the job. We have to make room for the hand so that every finger is filled.'*

#### Prayer 4

#### Saturday of the Third Week of Lent, March 13th

**Read:** 28:16-20

*Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you..."*

**Reflect:** Saint Francis de Sales once said, "The test of a preacher is that his congregation goes away saying, not, 'What a lovely sermon!' but 'I will do something.'" These words are a real challenge not only to all who preach, but to us all, that the things we say encourage others to act in positive, loving, thoughtful and caring ways.

#### Prayer 4

## I GIVE YOU MY MIND THAT YOU MAY THINK IN ME

### Sunday of the Fourth Week of Lent, March 14th

**Read:** 1 Chronicles 28:9

*And you my son, Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts.*

**Reflect:** A willing mind! Just pause for a few moments to think honestly about which calls on time, energy and resources create a willing response. And are these things that gratify personal needs and desires, or do they fulfil, however difficult, the will of God?

**Prayer 5**

### Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent, March 15th

**Read:** Psalm 26:2-3

*Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth.*

**Reflect:** One of the disciplines of Lent is repentance and confession, something, if approached with integrity, is never easy. Michael Mitton, in his book, 'A Heart to Listen' offers some words which suggest that this discipline opens a door to healing and wholeness. He says, '*Seldom is the human spirit given the honour of the listening ear; but the gift of God is to awaken the heart.*'

**Prayer 5**

### Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent, March 16th

**Read:** Psalm 139:17

*How precious are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them.*

**Reflect:** Psalm 139 will be a familiar one to those who have experienced going on retreat, as it is frequently suggested as a resource for meditation. It rarely fails to lead the retreatant on a journey deeper into their own soul and to discover more of the heart and mind of God. It may well be helpful to make a space in the

busyness of today to read the whole Psalm and to dwell on any words that seem particularly important for you. Through this time of prayer it may be that God will 'awaken your heart' and mind afresh to his thoughts.

## Prayer 5

### Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent, March 17th

**Read:** John 17: 20-26

*I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.*

**Reflect:** Do you remember the part that Simon of Cyrene played as Jesus struggled to carry the Cross. In Graham Tomlin's book 'Looking Through the Cross,' he writes, '*Simon of Cyrene's close brush with the cross appears to have had such a profound effect on him that he was never quite the same again. The whole landscape and direction of his life had changed so that he is now a new person, with a new significance and focus for his life. His unintentional identification with the cross of Jesus had transformed him and his family into something different, with a new direction, purpose and identity.*' Is that how it is for you since Jesus made himself known to you?

## Prayer 5

### Thursday of the Fourth Week of Lent, March 18th

**Read:** Romans 12:2

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*

**Reflect:** I often reflect upon the writings of Henri Nouwen, a man of deep faith, who frequently expressed the difficulties he experienced because of the unrealistic expectations he placed upon himself and others. After a particularly unsettling period of deep depression he embarked on a new way of life with the L'Arche Community, where he was assigned to look after a severely disabled young adult called Adam. Adam, unable to fend for himself in any way or to

communicate through speech, was to teach Henri the real meaning of the love of Christ. Henri's thinking, indeed his whole life was transformed.

**Prayer 5**

**Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent, March 19th**

**Read:** Ephesians 4:22-24

*You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

**Reflect:** Take time today to be honest before God and with yourself. What difference has it made being a Christian? Do you actively seek to leave behind the person you once were, or has it made very little difference?

**Prayer 5**

**Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent, March 12th**

**Read:** Hebrews 4:12-13

*Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

**Reflect:** We have offered the prayer this week that our minds will be filled with all that is pure and holy. In today's world where we are constantly bombarded with pictures, news, articles, Face-book and Twitter entries, much of which is less than edifying, it is all too easy to fill our minds with things that are far from pure and holy. Actively seek to reject, avoid or make a stand against such influences.

**Prayer 5**

**I GIVE YOU MY SPIRIT THAT YOU MAY PRAY IN ME**

**Sunday of the Fifth Week of Lent, March 21st**

**Read:** Psalm 51:10-12

*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

**Reflect:** Brother Lawrence renowned for his prayerfulness even when at work on such mundane tasks as peeling potatoes, said that the most excellent method of going to God was that of doing ordinary work without any idea of pleasing others, but purely for the love of God. He demonstrated the virtue of practising what he preached and offered everything he did with a willing spirit.

## Prayer 6

### Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent, March 22nd

**Read:** Psalm 42:1-2

*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?*

**Reflect:** In recent years, much has been published about the health benefits of drinking plenty of water in order to hydrate our bodies and to maintain the proper balance of our systems. It seems that the Psalmist saw the parallel benefits of quenching our spiritual thirst through prayer. When we neglect our prayer life, we begin to thirst for God in the depths of our soul and may become spiritually listless and downcast. Heed the words at the end of Psalm 42 and, *'put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my saviour and my God.'*

## Prayer 6

### Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent, March 23rd

**Read:** Isaiah 44:3

*For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.*

**Reflect:** There are times in the pursuit of the spiritual life when prayer becomes difficult; we feel that God is far away and not listening to us. This is often referred to as 'dryness' in prayer. Isaiah writes of the

promise of God to water the thirsty land of Israel, to revive that which is wilting and in danger of dying. It is his promise to us too. I remember during a very arid period in my own prayer life, sitting alone in a favourite spot on Holy Island, loudly singing as a prayer, the chorus that begins, 'As the deer pants for the water,' pleading with God to respond within my spirit. In his own good time, he surely did.

## Prayer 6

### Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent, March 24th

**Read:** Ezekiel 36: 26-27

*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.*

**Reflect:** On a Lenten retreat I was using a book called '15 Days of Prayer with St. Benedict, in which the author, Andre Gozier, writes, '...in our spiritual life, we attempt to remove those parts of our person that prevent a full relationship of love with God. We try to strip away the selfishness and fear that hinder our ability to live and love as God wills. But this hindrance, just as any other in our lives, can be overcome by God's grace.'

## Prayer 6

### Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent, March 25th

**Read:** John 6:63

*The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.*

**Reflect:** Stephen Cherry in his book, 'Barefoot Prayers' offers this prayer: 'So make in us a heart that cares;

*That sees, feels, holds, bleeds,  
And rages in concert with others.*

*Make in us a heart that  
Hurts and heals, that shares  
And saves the suffering from the loneliness of natural life.*

*Take from us the heart of stone  
The heart of flesh.  
Give us the heart of grace.*

## **Prayer 6**

### **Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent, March 26th**

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

*Praise be to the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves received from God.*

**Reflect:** Today's reading underlines a very important part of our spiritual life and Christian ministry. In order to effectively minister to others we must at all times have the love, compassion and strength which can only come from God our Father, when his Spirit prays within us in response to our prayers to him.

## **Prayer 6**

### **Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent, March 27th**

**Read:** Ephesians 3:14-21

*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.*

**Reflect:** Our prayer this week asks that God will teach, equip, guide and inspire us in order that we might reach out to others in joyous praise and selfless service. Easy to say, easy to write, but only if we maintain the discipline of our prayer lives will we be able to sustain and offer this ministry to those in need in a truly God-given way.

**ABOVE ALL, I GIVE YOU MY HEART THAT YOU MAY LOVE IN ME YOUR  
FATHER AND ALL PEOPLE**

### **Palm Sunday, March 28th**

**Read:** Matthew 21:1-11

*"Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"*

**Reflect:** Many of us still have vivid memories of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. She travelled through the streets of London in the golden state coach, drawn by immaculately groomed horses. Everything was planned and executed in the grandest, most lavish fashion possible. The crowds cheered and waved their flags. What a contrast in Jerusalem when Jesus, our Saviour and Lord, the King of Kings, arrived riding on a humble donkey. The crowds cheered and waved their palm leaves. How fickle were that crowd. How fickle are we? How steadfast our Lord, who offered his heart, his life for our salvation.

### Prayer 7

#### Monday of Holy Week, March 29th

**Read:** Deuteronomy 6: 4-6

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

**Reflect:** It is often painful for some people to recall how infrequently they were offered outward expressions of affection and love during their growing years. Thankfully, for many, many children today it is almost commonplace to hear the words, 'I love you,' offered to them at all times. In fact, I sometimes feel the pendulum has swung so far in the opposite direction, that those important tokens of tenderness and deep affection can be said carelessly and without any real thought for their true meaning. The words from Deuteronomy urge us to love God with every fibre of our being and with the utmost sincerity.

### Prayer 7

#### Tuesday of Holy Week, March 30th

**Read:** Luke 12:32-34

*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

**Reflect:** I have often told the tale of how, at what was to be a very significant service for me, I chose the hymn, 'Take my life, and let it be.' The fourth verse begins, 'Take my silver and my gold, not a mite

*would I withhold.'* The minister leading the service introduced it with the words, "The older I get, the more difficult I find it to sing those words." It is only as I have grown older that I have begun to really understand the significance of his words. Jesus called his disciples and us, as did his follower St. Francis of Assisi in the 13th Century, to a radical simplification of our lives. Reflect, today, on where your treasure is. Richard Rohr describes Saint Francis, who clearly knew where his treasure lay, as *'standing barefoot on earth and yet touching the heavens.'*

## Prayer 7

### Wednesday of Holy Week, March 31st

**Read:** John 12:1-8

*Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.*

**Reflect:** Many years ago I was preparing to lead a retreat based on the above words, entitled, 'Taken, Broken and Blessed.' I asked a friend for her help and inspiration in creating a visual representation of the jar of nard. True friend that she is, she found an appropriate vessel and then spent many hours slowly and patiently melting candle wax to look like spilled nard. The result was amazing and drew many retreatants thereafter, into a deep awareness of the significance of this story. Somehow, for me, there was something extra, too. It was as if the prayer, care and patience that my friend had poured into that task filled my life with the fragrance of love.

## Prayer 7

### Maundy Thursday, April 1st

**Read:** Luke 22:39-43

*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.*

**Reflect:** Following the last supper he was to share with his disciples on earth, Jesus went out with them to the Mount of Olives to pray.

Inside the Basilica of the Agony, on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives there is a rock in front of the main altar upon which it is said that Jesus prayed and sweated blood the night before his arrest. Whether or not it is the actual rock, there is something so moving kneeling beside it, touching it and recalling Jesus's anguish and yet the relinquishing of his will to the will of his Father, for us...for me.

**Prayer 7**

### **Good Friday, April 2nd**

**Read:** Luke 23:39-43

*Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."*

**Reflect:** Even in his extreme agony, Jesus cared enough to respond to the plea of the criminal beside him, to assure him that he, too, would be received into paradise. He holds out the same assurance to us. Kneel before the cross today and offer him the love of your whole heart in humble thanksgiving for his sacrifice.

**Prayer 7**

### **Holy Saturday, April 3rd**

**Read:** Luke 23:50-56

*Joseph of Arimathea, 'Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no-one had yet been laid.'*

**Reflect:** Amidst the milling crowds in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, there was one moment filled with utter pathos, emotion and outpoured love as we stood before Michelangelo's marble sculpture of Mary cradling the dead body of her beloved son. We can scarcely imagine the depths of her grief, the piercing of her heart, the anguish that he should have died such a cruel, ignominious death. As we reflect on this it is all too easy to forget the quiet actions of Joseph, who demonstrated his care for Christ in thoughtful and sacrificial ways. We might take time to consider today the ways in which we offer the love of our hearts to Jesus.

## Prayer 7

### Easter Sunday, April 4th

**Read:** John 20:10-15

*Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher.)*

**Reflect:** On this most joyous of days may you hear his voice calling you by name. How will you respond? By offering your heart, your whole self?

## Prayer 7



# THE CHURCH UNION

The Church Union, founded in 1933, brings us into a direct relationship with the many heroes of the Catholic Revival in the Church of England, which started with the Oxford Movement in the 1830's and 1840's.

In those days, Catholic Christians in this land were mocked and humiliated and subjected to violence. What impressed the bystander and un-committed was the firmness of faith, constancy of purpose and unshakable devotion to our Lord Jesus.

Nothing much has changed today except the mockery and violence has now become indifference and ignorance. So we need a new breed of giants, people who will question those aspects of life which are contrary to God's will for us as revealed in the Scriptures. We need people who will devote themselves to Jesus Christ through Word and Sacrament and, if necessary, be prepared to suffer for the Faith.

At The Church Union, we believe that the transformation of society depends on lives which glorify the Father in true worship and holy living. We seek to build up the body of Christ by means of effective Christian formation and education; to evangelise and proclaim the Gospel; to support clergy in their distinctive ministry and to encourage all the baptised in faithful witness and joyful service of the Lord.

The current work of the Church Union includes:

- Production of the Together newspaper and Together Online newsletter.
- Sponsorship of four lectures each year; focusing on the themes of Anglo-Catholic history; theology, evangelism and devotional life.
- Publishing the Church Observer plus journal.
- Foundations - a free to download lectionary based resource from children and young people.
- Catechetical resources for Anglican Catholics.
- Training in how to use digital media.

You can find out more about our work by visiting [www.churchunion.co.uk](http://www.churchunion.co.uk), or find us on Facebook and Twitter.

Why not support us in our vital work by becoming a member of The Church Union? You can find membership details on our website, or at the back of this publication.

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