

# **Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone**



**Prayers and Reflections  
for use at home**

**Sunday 28 February 2021**

**Lent 2**

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. Our journey through Lent continues. In today's Gospel Reading, Jesus asks us *if* we have the courage to say "Yes" to him in every aspect of our life. Jesus was willing to give everything - including his life - to win over the nation's leaders, and thus, draw them into the Kingdom. It is an invitation to take a close look at how we follow Jesus in our daily lives, and be changed by what is revealed to us.

As you journey on towards the Cross, may you find that you are following in Jesus' footsteps and learning from his example.

God bless,

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O let me see thy foot-marks,  
and in them plant mine own;  
my hope to follow duly  
is in thy strength alone:  
O guide me, call me, draw me,  
uphold me to the end;  
and then in heav'n receive me,  
my Saviour and my friend.

*John Ernest Bode (1816-1874)*

### **A Prayer for Lent**

Almighty God,  
by the prayer and discipline of Lent  
may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings,  
and by following in his Way  
come to share in his glory;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## Prayers and Reflections for use at home

### Saying “Yes” to God means...

#### PREPARING OURSELVES

*Take a moment to be still in God’s presence, and feel his love.*

*If you are indoors, you may wish to light a candle as a sign of God’s love, and his presence, here, in your room. You may also wish to have a cross in your palm, or on the table, and a bowl of water ready for the time of confession.*

Father, as I sit and wait in silence,  
I place myself into your hands.  
Whatever you may do, I thank you:  
I am ready for all, I accept all.  
Let your will be done in me,  
and through me. **Amen.**

*cf. Charles de Foucauld*

#### LETTING GO

*If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets, with things that you wish you had not said, done or been, or times when you wish you had followed God’s guidance, offer them to him in the silence of your heart. And, when you are ready, reflect on the opening words of our hymn.*

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,  
forgive our foolish ways!  
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind,  
in purer lives thy service find,  
in deeper reverence praise,  
in deeper reverence praise.



*If you wish, dip your finger into a bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your palm.*

*Feel God’s forgiveness. God welcomes you back into his loving presence, to spend time with him. Abide in his love. Receive of his strength.*

## PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

### (The Collect)

*Across our villages and the worldwide Church,  
this prayer is being said today. Add your voice to this earthly circle  
of prayer to our loving Father.*

Almighty God,  
you show to those who are in error the light of your truth,  
that they may return to the way of righteousness:  
grant to all those who are admitted  
into the fellowship of Christ's religion,  
that they may reject those things  
that are contrary to their profession,  
and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same;  
through our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

*Our prayer for today reminds me of one of my recent walks by the brook  
which separates Mears Ashby from Sywell village. It was during the icy  
spell and, though still water logged, the ground was frozen firm. Even so,  
I had to pick and choose my way carefully as it was very boggy in places  
due to the streams of water running off of the fields. I had to keep on  
looking ahead to plan my route through. Life as a Christian can be like  
this as we are called to tread carefully and thoughtfully through life. To  
choose - at each stage, each step of our life - to be loving and caring, to  
be gracious and self-giving, to follow in Jesus' footsteps. It is live  
mindfully, sensing the opportunities that lie before us to bless those  
closest to us, as well as strangers too. Pause to ponder the past week,  
when have you felt yourself following in the way of Jesus? Can you see  
any times when you could have taken a better path? Offer these up to  
God's gracious and healing love.*

To be a saint does not mean never to sin.  
It means to start again with humility and joy  
after each fall.

*Dom Helder Camara*

## LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

### **Follow me! Or, go home!**

Then Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

*Mark 8:31-38*

### **Setting the scene**

*Jesus is about to head south to Jerusalem. He is started to plan his entry into the city and how it will show to the Jewish authorities that he has won the hearts and minds of the people. He will offer them the choice: accept me for who I am and come follow me or continue to hold onto the status quo. For both sides, there will be a lot at stake. For the Jewish leaders, if they say "Yes" to Jesus being the one - the Messiah - their King, the Roman government will see this as a threat to their rule and this is likely to have dire consequences. Alternatively, if they choose to say "No!" to keep the peace and save the temple and their positions, Jesus will have made his last journey to Jerusalem. He knew that this was the possible, and even the probable, outcome of his entry into the city. Yet - he chose to spare nothing in his desire to win their hearts and minds, and to gain their acceptance of the cost of God's salvation.*

*And this is why, Jesus offers his team and his followers a choice - come, follow me into the city where death awaits, or save yourselves but lose the kingdom. It is his rallying call as he rides into battle for the nation, knowing that the odds are stacked against him.*

*Picture the scene. Imagine yourself there. Perhaps as one of the twelve, or one of the many people who have come to listen to Jesus. How would you have felt as Jesus calls you to put your life on the line or go home?*

*Excited... inspired... energised... ready to go where he will go?*

*Frightened... scared... anxious... this is asking too much?*

*Confused... shocked... uncertain... this is not what you had expected?*

*Angry... furious... annoyed... you did not sign up for this?*

*It was a huge step to say "Yes" to Jesus in this moment and follow him south to the city of Jerusalem. And yet - all of the twelve disciples sign up for this fate-filled journey, and many of his other followers too. Jesus was not on his own when he entered the city, his team and his followers were there too and the crowds came out to welcome him in. And, the Jewish leaders were there - disapproving of this welcome - as Jesus had expected when he made his 'make or break' offer to his disciples.*

As Jesus rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying,

*'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!*

*Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!'*

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.' He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'

*Luke 19:36-40*

*Seeing his team - even the one who would hand him over to the Romans - say "Yes! (or, perhaps, "Yes?") to him must have been such an uplifting and moving moment for Jesus. To know that they would be with him, following in his footsteps, as he walked towards the confrontation and the Cross would have strengthened and heartened him. 'I can do this.'*

## Saying “Yes” to Jesus

*Each one of us, in our own way, have said “Yes” to Jesus, to following him and living by his loving and self-giving example. Like his team, we have each faced our own ‘make or break’ moments in our lives when we have had to choose between doing the right thing or the safe thing. Usually, though, our decisions are less challenging or life changing, and are the choice between giving more of ourselves than we feel comfortable doing, or missing out on this chance to show God’s and our own love.*

*Contemplate the choices that you face in your everyday life. Do you sense God’s Spirit nudging you to be more Jesus-like in how you choose to live... what you say or do... or don’t say or don’t do? How might you follow him more closely - deeply - lovingly?*

### A Prayer for Guidance

O Jesus, I have promised  
to serve thee to the end;  
be thou for ever near me,  
my Master and my friend:  
I shall not fear the battle  
if thou art by my side,  
nor wander from the pathway  
if thou wilt be my guide.

*John Ernest Bode (1816-1874)*



*In this country, it is rare to suffer persecution for being a Christian. Yet, life as a follower of Jesus is not without its difficulties. Going to church - praying - reading the Bible - can give rise to comments and criticism from those closest to us (as well as strangers). Offer your own challenges up to God and seek his guidance and strength.*

## OUR PRAYERS

*Feel free to use one or more of these prayers, and to add your own.*

Heavenly Father, thank you for your Son’s invitation to follow him, to take the way he offers through life. Today, I renew my “Yes” to serving him each and every day of my life. Give me the grace to be loving, self-giving and generous with my time and all that you have given to me. Grant me the strength to stay close to him in tough times.

Father, hear my prayer.

Father, in some parts of our world, to say “Yes” to Jesus is to place your life at risk. Yet - despite all the violence and threats, Christians in these countries stay firm in their faith and seek to live as Jesus calls them to live. Lord, be with those who are not free to worship you on Sundays. Keep them safe as they offer their hearts, and their lives, to your service. I pray for...

Father, hear my prayer.

Father, when life is challenging and filled with sickness and sadness, it can be difficult to be positive all the time. Lord, be with those who have been told that they have days, weeks or months to live, and all who care for them. Grant them the hope of life beyond death. And, comfort those whose suffering is on my heart. I lift up to you...

Father, hear my prayer.

*Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings, praise and thanksgivings.*

## **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.  
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.**

## **PRAYER OF BLESSING**

*A closing prayer of blessing for this week.*

Lord, bless and guide me,  
whatever I do, whether at home or outside.  
Go before me, watch over me,  
and keep me, and my loved ones, safe in your love. **Amen.**