

St Raphael's Congregation Stay-at-home Prayers for Sunday, 29th March 2020

This order of service combines a recognisable liturgical shape with readings and prayers for Sunday, 29th March 2020 – the fifth Sunday in Lent. Within it, there is space to read the reflection provided elsewhere on this website for this Sunday, although resources from other Christian websites might also be introduced.

All the texts are from – or adapted from – Common Worship © The Archbishops' Council.

Joining with others in prayer

The fifth Sunday in Lent marks the beginning of Passiontide, as we turn our focus towards the events of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. As Jesus's path took him ever closer to the Cross, he found himself increasingly distanced from others – even those closest to him. Consequently, he takes to himself our own sense of anxiety and isolation in these worrying times.

We pause for a moment, opening ourselves to God's presence and protection, before praying:

Christ be with us: Christ within us;
Christ before us: Christ behind us;
Christ on our right: Christ on our left;
Christ above us: Christ beneath us;
Christ around us: now and ever. Amen.



Our time of Confession

During Passiontide especially, the Gospel calls us to turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ. As we offer ourselves to him in penitence and faith, may we renew our confidence and trust in his mercy.

We again pause, perhaps recalling specific times when we have ignored or isolated others, before praying:

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit: Lord, have mercy.
You bring pardon and peace to the sinner: Christ, have mercy.
You bring light to those in darkness: Lord, have mercy.

May our Lord Jesus Christ, present with us in his risen power, enter our bodies and spirits to take from us all that hinders and isolates us, and fill us with his healing and peace. Amen.

The Collect often directs us towards essential themes within the day's lessons/readings. On this occasion, today's Post-Communion prayer is especially relevant, reminding us of Christ's example to consider those around us in all situations:

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters we do also for you: give us the will to be the servant of others as you were the servant of all, and gave up your life and died for us, but are alive and reign, now and for ever. Amen.

Our Bible lessons/readings

In our Sunday services, we are used to listening to the lessons/readings without necessarily having the text in front of us. The advantage of having only the written text is that we can set the pace at which we read it – and can pause or re-read any words and phrase which particularly inspire us. Both lessons/readings are set for today: Psalm 130 is both a plea for redemption and an acknowledgment of hope, while the death and raising of Lazarus reminds us that life out of death is Jesus's gift at its most dramatic.

Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?

But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;
my soul waits for the Lord
more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the Lord!

For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is great power to redeem.

It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.



John 11. 1-45

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it, he said, 'This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?' Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.' After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.' Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, 'The Teacher is here and is calling for you.' And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus began to

weep. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

There is a reflection on this Sunday's lessons/readings elsewhere on this website, and this could be read now.

Our time of prayer

As with the lessons/readings, we are used to someone leading our intercessions in church without necessarily having the text in front of us. Again, choose the pace at which you read these prayers – you might even like to speak them aloud. Take your time, and feel free to add the names of people who come to mind as you read. These prayers are deliberately short, allowing us to pause after each petition, and imagine the people we are remembering joining in the refrain.

We have especially been asked to remember in our prayers:

All key workers – for strength to carry on during the current emergency
Jeanette Ambrose – recovering after a fall
Charles Backhouse – in critical care with coronavirus
Doris Lister – moved to 24-hour nursing care and isolated from her family

Melvyn Thorpe and Diana Dell – who have died recently – plus their family and friends

Holy God, in whom we live and move and have our being, we make our prayer to you saying,

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Grant to all who seek you the assurance of your presence, your power and your peace.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Grant your healing grace to all who are sick, that they may be made whole in body, mind and spirit.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Grant to all who minister to the suffering wisdom and skill, sympathy and patience.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Sustain and support the anxious and fearful and lift up all who are brought low.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Grant to those who die your pardon and peace.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

O Lord our God, accept the fervent prayers of your people; in the multitude of your mercies look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help; for you are gracious, O lover of souls, and to you we give glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

And we join in the prayer Jesus taught us:

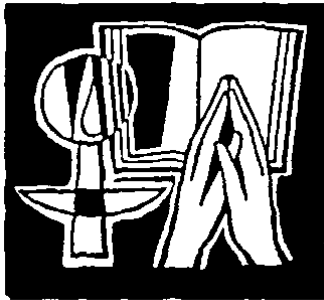
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Normally, we share the Peace of Christ with the people we gather with in church by taking their hand. Imagine this taking place now, before the whole church community joins in saying this Lenten prayer,



Holy God, our lives are laid open before you: rescue us from the chaos of sin and through the death of your Son bring us healing and make us whole in Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are normally leave church with the invitation to 'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord'. As we have been advised to stay at home wherever possible, we therefore conclude this time of worship with a prayer for our homes and all who live there.



Visit, Lord, we pray, this place and drive far from it all the snares of the enemy. Let your holy angels dwell here to keep us in peace, and may your blessing be upon it – and upon us – evermore; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.