

Sunday 21st February 21

Lent 1

Lent offers forty days to explore the spiritual self. Fair to say this year's Lent presents an enormous challenge. For it touches on eleven months and counting, wandering in the framework of God's meaning, purpose and responsibility. In which Christ's invite to be the "salt of the earth and the light of world" {*Matt.5:13-14*} is a daunting agenda.

Our first service in Lent reflects understanding on our nature of temptations within Christ's nature of temptations. If you wish please turn on your tea light.



We pray

Almighty God,
Whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness,
and was tempted, as we are,
give us grace to discipline ourselves
in obedience to your Spirit:
trusting you who moulds our bodies
and shapes our lives.
Take from us our unrest,
that sets us looking towards the cross.

In the unity of the Holy Spirit

One God, now and for ever.

Amen

With weary and vulnerable hearts, we come to God as one from whom no secrets are hidden.

Living God, we confess our faults and admit our frailty; we own our brokenness and recognise the ways we wound our lives, the lives of others and the life of the world. By your abundant grace forgive us, renew us in mind and in spirit and enable us to grow in love. Move among us and give us life; with the spirit of freedom that sustains us in joyful and faithful witness.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray for forgiveness. Amen

[Norman Shanks, based on prayers from the Iona Abbey Worship Book]

May the God of love and power forgive us,
heal and strengthen us by His Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ the Lord.

Amen

Reading versus from Psalm 25

Prayer for guidance and deliverance.

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul;
O my God, in you I trust;

Let me not be put to shame;
let not my enemies triumph over me.

Make me to know your ways, O LORD,
and teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I have hoped all the day long.

Remember, Lord, your compassion and love,
For they are from everlasting.

Glory to the Father and to the Son

And to the Holy Spirit;

As it was in the beginning is now

And shall be for ever

Amen.

In a world threatened by a hostile virus the Psalmist echoes our deepest fears.
Pain, uncertainties, abandonment. Invading enemies. Through these words we
can feel the sense of knowing God will come to the rescue.

Affirmation of Faith

When the bow is in the clouds I [God] will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on earth.

{Genesis 9:16}

We affirm our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
Who lives in our hearts through faith
and fills us with His love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit:
Who strengthens us from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father Son and Holy Spirit
Amen**

Hymn

Father, I place into your hands
the things I can't do,
Father, I place into your hands
the times that I've been through.
Father, I place into your hands
the way that I should go,
for I know I always can trust you.

Father, I place into your hands
my friends and family.
Father, I place into your hands
the things that trouble me.
Father, I place into your hands
the person I would be,
for I know I always can trust you.

Father, we love to seek your face,
we love to hear your voice.
Father, we love to sing your praise
and in your name rejoice.
Father, we love to walk with you
and in your presence rest,
For we know we always can trust you.

Father, I want to be with you
and do the things you do.
Father, I want to speak the words
That you are speaking too.
Father, I want to love the ones
that you will draw to you.
For I know that I am one with you.

{Jenny Hewer.b.1945}

There is no place that God would rather be, than with us.

Reading Matthew 4:1—7 The Temptation of Jesus

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

“‘He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test. Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will fall down and worship me.’”

Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”



Talk

“Be good; don’t do anything I wouldn’t do”

As we find ourselves at this junction of time, space and circumstance, we have the devil on one shoulder. Whispering half-truths, half lies. Making every effort to submerge us deeper into his / her identity. Christ on the other shoulder, striving to move us deeper into His identity telling us how to be salt and light.

It's hard to think of one without the other. One day in honour of our King, we are stripping palm branches from the trees, throwing off our cloaks. Shouting, "Hosanna" A few days later we are behaving very differently. "Crucify"

We only have to look around us and see the amount of selfishness, mindless hatred, dishonesty, vandalism, violence and more. Yes, when our defences are down, very tired, it is easy to be caught off guard. Hopefully not serious, but even so, a slight slip of the tongue with the unintentional inappropriate comment can cause hurt.

We know from Leviticus we are to bear conflict, criticism, enmity, persecution and suffering. {2:13} In times of prolonged stress, we must not underestimate our enemy. We can easily compromise our spirit.

Unquiet sleep. Broken dreams. Days of bitter decisions.

Days roll into weeks. Weeks into months.

Every "attack" becomes harder to ward off.

Christ's experience being bombarded by the devil shows us how to invest our time wisely. Encouraging us into the solitude of opportunity. Allows us to return to the space of awareness of Christ's nature in His temptations. Then, in this place we are more able to delve into the shallow of the self. To contemplate our suffering endurance. The endurance of our character through contemplating the value of our devotion to God.

We are all unique and must be ourselves in our petitions. Which direction is our story being pushed? If we discover discrepancies, where does that come from? How can we change our story to become more identified with Christ?

Think of Matthew's version of The Lord's Prayer "do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one {6 13}. This is not that Christ leads us into temptation or we will never be tempted. Rather Christ wishing to see the intentions of our hearts.

Somewhere in all this agony we have the ability to hear Christ's affirmation. "Well done" Hear it. Hold it. We all need to receive praise.

Pray your personal petition. Ask to be given what you need to be strong to prevent your faith from faltering. There is no turning back. Just a dusty road ahead. Christ beckoning us to look beyond our wilderness.

See the saving vision of two symbolic lines. Prompting, comforting and yes, challenging.



Arms outstretched. Inviting us to participate in Christ's nature with the hope of contemplation on the cross.

To see the beauty in the ashes of life.

Nothing more, nothing less.

Shhh! Someone lingers in the garden of humanity- is that you, is it me? Shhhh!

Then comes the affirmation we long to hear from Christ.

What a blessed contrast you make to the rulers in Jerusalem. You come with no power at all. Except for one remarkable characteristic – no self at all.

That is enough, your entire being yourself.

Your acts of love so completely focused upon me that not a dram of worldly benefit was gained thereby. I marvel at you for your gestures.

The act is all there is of you, since humility has reduced you to this single thing alone, you are the rare beauty of rich love with faithful meaning

As my passion story unfolds in your Lenten journey

Thank you for being an angel's love monument of hope for my people

Having heard these words, we cry no more in silence

But alive we rejoice over and over shouting from the roof tops

I love you Lord Jesus - I do.

Amen

Prayers

We come to the Father to pray for the world, His people and ourselves.

We pray for places with national divisions. For our own government. Help them to respond with vision of unity and peace. We lift to you those stumbling in their darkness from conflicts, wars and corruption.

Silence

May Your light shine as a sign of hope.

We pray for the church throughout the world. Give to those entrusted with building Your kingdom, the living stones of your teachings. May your church grow through your vision that breaks through barriers.

Silence

May Your light shine as a sign of hope.

We pray for those in need of our prayers. Those persecuted for their faith and loyalty. Refugees in camps facing appalling conditions. The homeless in our community here in Watton. For all wandering aimlessly.

Silence

May Your light be a sign of hope.

We lift those unwell in mind body and spirit. In the quiet of our hearts, we pray For those we have named and those known only to you, bring comfort.

Silence

May Your light be a sign of hope

We give thanksgiving for those who have died in faith. Especially our friends in St Mary's and Watton community. May their souls rest in peace and rise in glory. Give to us a share of Your grace that we too follow the path of faith.

Silence

May your light be a sign of hope.

As we journey through our own wilderness that turns us upside down and inside out.

Help our hearts to be open that transforms the poverty of our nature.

Help us find the way to the truth that recognises humility.

In the silence we bring our own brokenness.



We bring our prayers as one saying the words our Saviour has taught us.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come;
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory, are yours
now and for ever.
Amen

Closing Prayer [Hymn Take my life] {Francis Havergal 1836-1879}

In the shadows of life, may we dwell in Christ's presence

Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.
Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.

**Take my silver and my gold:
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my will, and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.
Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself, and I will be,
Ever, only, all for Thee.**

Blessing

The blessing of Almighty God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Be with us all and those we love
and those we find difficult to love
Today and in all our tomorrows.
Amen

Dismissal

Go to love and serve the Lord
Thanks be to Christ
Amen