

Gathering prayer :

As we come together to worship our Lord,
let's turn our hearts to him:
Lord Jesus, you are our friend and our teacher;
you are our guide and our Saviour;
you are our Lord, so we come to praise you and
thank you, with all your people. **Amen.**

Hymn:

For all the saints, who from their labours rest;
who to the world by faith their Lord confessed,
your name, O Jesus, be for ever blessed:
Alleluia, alleluia!

You were their rock, their fortress, and their
might;
you, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight,
and in the darkness their unfailing light.
Alleluia, alleluia!

But look! there breaks a yet more glorious day;
saints all-triumphant rise in bright array
the king of glory passes on his way!
Alleluia, alleluia!

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest
shore
through gates of pearl, ascending, they adore
the Father, Son and Spirit evermore:
Alleluia, alleluia!

Jubilate Hymns version of 'For all the saints, who from their labours rest', William
Walsham How (1823 - 1897) © Jubilate Hymns Ltd

Breathing Prayer

As we bring ourselves to stillness, let's relax &
close our eyes and breathe normally. This is a
breathing prayer based on the fruits of the Spirit,
in which we allow the natural rhythm of our
breathing be part of our praying, letting go of self
and letting God come into our hearts and minds.
So as we breathe out, we bring before God times
when we have been unloving and hateful
and as we breathe in, we ask God to replace that
hate with love;
We breathe out all our worries and we breathe
in God's joy;
We breathe out our stress and anxieties, our
fears and we breathe in God's peace;
We breathe out our impatience and irritation
with others and we breathe in God's patience;
We breathe out our unkindness and pettiness
And we breathe in the Spirit's kindness;
We breathe out our anger and we breathe in
Jesus' goodness;

We breathe out our selfishness, our fickleness,
and we breathe in God's endless faithfulness;
We breathe out our harshness and hardness of
heart and we breathe in Jesus' gentleness;
We breathe out our recklessness and bad habits
And we breathe in the Spirit's self-control
We breathe out all our wrongdoing and we
breathe in God's forgiveness and the fresh start
that he gives us through His Son Jesus Christ, in
the power of His Holy Spirit.

Loving Father, thank you that we can come to
you just as we are, knowing that you love us and
want the best for us.

Forgive us when we ignore you, when we don't
love you with all our heart, soul, mind & strength;
When we fail to love each other as you love us,
Forgive us and renew us, Lord, and send us out as
new creations made in your image,
To love and serve you and each other
We ask in the name of Jesus, your Son & our
Saviour, Amen.

Reading : Matthew 5:1-12 (NIVUK)

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on
a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came
to him, and he began to teach them.

He said:

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the
kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be
comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the
earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown
mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see
God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be
called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of
righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of
heaven.

'Blessed are you when people insult you,
persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil
against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad,
because great is your reward in heaven, for in the
same way they persecuted the prophets who
were before you.

Reflection

This week includes several "special" days, marked
by Christians & non-Christians.

Tuesday was All Hallows Eve, Hallowe'en as it's better known, celebrated by many children with "trick or treating" and by others with a "light party".

Wednesday was All Saints Day, formerly known as "All Hallows Day", from "hallowed", an ancient word meaning "holy" (as in "Hallowed be Thy name" in The Lord's Prayer), when we give thanks for the "saints" who've gone before us whose lives of Christian faith have been an inspiration to us.

Thursday was All Souls Day, when we remember those we've loved and lost.

Today marks the saving of Parliament from a plot to blow it up, often celebrated with firework displays of colour and light in the darkness.

The hymn above celebrates the lives of Christians through the ages who have lived through all kinds of struggles & threats, yet remained strong in their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and in the love of God our Father.

If you were asked "What is a saint?" I wonder what would your answer be?

Does "saint" perhaps conjure up for you images of people dressed in white robes in heaven worshipping God?

In the 3 centuries after Jesus died, a "saint" was understood to be a martyr, someone who'd died for their faith, and several such saints are celebrated in the month of November: St Martin (11th), St Cecilia (22nd), St Catherine (25th) and St Andrew (30th), all of whom were killed because they refused to renounce their faith in Jesus.

On a recent visit to Wales I was reminded how many churches are built on ancient sites of worship, dedicated to Welsh and Celtic saints from the 5th & 6th centuries, whose names aren't easy to pronounce but whose life stories include miraculous healings and visions they performed and experienced.

Many places in the UK are linked with local saints famed for their acts of faith, and their stories are inspiring but they can also be slightly off-putting when we don't feel we can match that kind of holiness.

It's good to remember that miracles come in many forms: some are public acts of great wonder, but many are small actions done quietly & humbly by those who don't seek attention but

just want to make a difference to the life of someone else and give the glory to God.

And attitudes to saintliness have changed over time, so now it's accepted that you don't have to be dead to be a saint! People who have lived in modern times, like Mother Teresa, are considered to be saintly and we use phrases in our everyday lives like "S/he's a real saint".

The psalmists and epistle writers like St Paul often refer to saints as living people, the ordinary people of God, who try to follow his ways of justice, peace & love.

And in this passage from Matthew, (the so-called Beatitudes) Jesus describes some of the attributes of those who might be described as "saints."

I remember a story about a little girl whose Sunday school teacher was telling her about the stained glass windows in the church she attended. She explained that the one made of red glass was dedicated to St Matthew, the one made of blue glass was dedicated to St Mark; the one in yellow glass was dedicated to St Luke and the one in green to St John. When the teacher asked the child whether she knew what a saint was, she said "It's someone who lets the light of God shine through them."

That's a pretty good definition of a saint in my book, and one that we can all try to achieve.

Jesus said "Let your light shine before others" – in other words, let God's light of love shine through you - a bit like a stained glass window perhaps?

St Augustine apparently summed up the way of Jesus like this: "Love God and do as you like". Which I guess is another way of saying that if we love God, then doing what we like means doing what God likes, and that includes loving our neighbours as ourselves.

Letting God's love shine through us can sometimes be a challenge – as someone once said: "If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate."

We're all saints in the making, learning to forgive instead of bearing a grudge, learning to bless instead of curse those who hurt us, choosing love instead of hatred, choosing kindness in the face of hostility, learning to love other people the way

Jesus loves us. We're all works in progress as saints and in lots of little ways in our daily lives and encounters with each other and with strangers, we are learning to be people who let the light of God shine through them.

And the good news is that we're not left alone to do that in our own strength, because God in Jesus has given us the gift of his Holy Spirit to guide and empower and enable us to grow in godliness and saintliness, as we become more like Jesus.

I'd like to end by sharing with you an alternative version of the beatitudes which is written for children - some might call it simplistic, but I think there's a beauty in simplicity which helps us to see the real truths hidden within it, which remind us of God's desire to help us to be the people he created us to be.

"One day when Jesus was with a large crowd of people, he began to lead his friends up a mountain. He wanted to talk to them. He wanted to help them to understand how God wanted them to behave. Jesus said:

When you know that you need God very much, God will bless you and make you happy by giving you a place in his kingdom.

When you are sad because you have lost something or someone special, God will bless you and help to make things feel better.

When you are happy with what you've got, God will bless you and give you more.

When you really, really want the good and right things to happen, God will bless you and do good things for you.

When you are kind and caring towards others, God will bless you and show you how much he cares for you.

When you behave in the right way, God will bless you and you will know that he is with you.

When you show love and peace towards others, God will bless you and call you his children.

When you feel that people are against you, God will bless you and bring you closer to him.

Many people have received God's special reward. That reward is also for you.

Let's Pray:

Loving living Lord,

Thank you for the glimpses you give us of heaven in unexpected places and people. Keep us alive to your presence always, and give us your heart of love & compassion for all, and the strength to live

in humility and grace, following the examples of the saints who have gone before us, as we seek to be your saints here on earth, letting the light of your love shine through us.

We ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, our Friend and our Redeemer. Amen

Hymn [STF 505]

*More like you, Jesus, more like you,
fill my heart with your desire
to make me more like you.*

*More like you, Jesus, more like you,
touch my lips with holy fire
and make me more like you.*

Lord, you are my mercy,
Lord, you are my grace,
all my deepest sins have
forever been erased.
Draw me in your presence,
lead me in your ways,
I long to bring you glory
in righteousness and praise.

Lord, you are compassion,
and never-ending love,
for you have redeemed me
by your precious blood.
Create in me a clean heart,
a spirit that is new,
the joy of my salvation
is only found in you.

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Prayers – Thanksgiving & Intercessions

Loving Living God,

For those who've gone before us:
apostles & evangelists, prophets & patriarchs, the
followers of the way, who have witnessed to your
truth.

For all the saints who have gone before us:
we give you thanks & praise.

For those who've gone before us:
the collators of Scripture, the translators &
printers, the smugglers & scholars, who have
witnessed to your Word.

For all the saints who have gone before us:
we give you thanks & praise.

For those who have gone before us:
the church leaders, hermits & visionaries,
monarchs & politicians, who have shaped your
Church.

For all the saints who have gone before us:
we give you thanks.

For those who have gone before us:
the reformers & theologians, hymn writers &
preachers, pilgrims & pioneers,
who have witnessed to your calling.
For all the saints who have gone before us:
we give you thanks & praise.

For those who have gone before us.
those who've kept their faith alive illegally, who
have been persecuted for their beliefs,
those who have been martyred, who have
witnessed to your love.
For all the saints who have gone before us:
we give you thanks & praise.

For the saints of our day and age:
those who take a stand for civil rights, who speak
out against injustice,
who live out their compassion for others,
whose life of faith is an inspiration to us.
For all the saints who live among us:
we give you thanks & praise.

For all the saints who are yet to come:
who will witness to your love,
who will pass on the faith we share,
who will inspire future generations to believe in
you.
For the saints to come:
we give you thanks & praise. Amen

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we pray for your church throughout the world:
for those beginning their journey with you and
those who've been your followers for many
years; for everyone who wants to share the
good news of your transforming love and
resurrection promise of new life to all.
Fill us all afresh with your Holy Spirit, so that we
are bold to share the story of your way of love
and grace with all people.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for your world: for leaders of nations
and all whose words and actions affect others;
and for those who are affected by their decisions;
In these troubled times give them wisdom and
compassion; Fill their hearts with humility and
generosity of spirit and a desire for justice,
healing and peace for the good of all people,
Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for those in need: those fleeing war and
conflict or natural disaster, those struggling to
find the basic necessities of life, those who are
sick in heart, body, soul or mind,

And we lift to you those we know personally
whose needs are on our hearts today
Help them all to experience your healing
presence filling, surrounding and holding them
and those who care for them
Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Lord, remember in your love all those who have
died. We thank you for those who shared with us
the good news of who you are & how much you
long to be in a personal relationship with every
one of your children. May they rest in peace and
rise in glory.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
Be all else but naught to me, save that Thou art;
Be Thou my best thought in the day & the night,
Both waking and sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my wisdom, be Thou my true word,
Be Thou ever with me, and I with Thee, Lord;
Be Thou my great Father, thy child let me be;
Be Thou in me dwelling, and I one with Thee.

Be Thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
Be Thou my whole armour, be Thou my true
might;
Be Thou my soul's shelter, be Thou my strong
tower:
O raise Thou me heavenward, great Power of my
power.

Riches I need not, nor man's empty praise:
Be Thou mine inheritance now and always;
Be Thou and Thou only the first in my heart:
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure Thou art.

High King of heaven, Thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be Thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish, 8th century, translated Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880-1931)

Blessing

May God give us grace to follow the saints
in humility, righteousness, peace, and gracious
living.
And may the blessing of the God of hope,
our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,
go with us and remain with us, always.
Amen.