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## LENT 4B

10th March 2024

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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## Opening Prayers

Use the following words to help centre yourself in the moment. Say them out loud, or speak them in your mind:

*Jesus, open my heart*

Prepare yourself to hear God's word in a new way

*Jesus, open my heart*

Listen for God's voice, calling you to serve others and love radically

*Jesus, open my heart*

Hold the joys, regrets and frustrations from the week, and look ahead to the opportunities next week will bring

*Jesus, open my heart*

Hold the people you share your life with, and the challenges that come with relationships and friendships

*Jesus, open my heart*

Rest a moment in the quiet.

Amen.

**You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar**

**Reading:** John 3:14-21 – [Click for reading](#)

## Responding to the readings

This Mothering Sunday, let us remind ourselves of God the parent. God's presence in your life gives you absolute assurance of forgiveness, restoration and hope. With God, you have a relationship that should inspire you in how you relate to those you share this world with.

Parenting and parental figures can take countless forms: family; teachers; those who care and are cared for; guardians; siblings; friends. There is such joy in being able to say that we have people in our lives who worry about us, care for us, nag us a little now and then, check in on us, provide for us, and give us a soft place to land when the world gets too much. I would argue there is even greater joy in being that person for someone else, whether we are related by blood or not.

There is such power in knowing that you don't have to be terrified of making mistakes. By having life in all its fullness, you will stumble. You know that you will hurt people, forget important things and act carelessly. Having this powerful relationship with God, and (in turn) people around you who embody that spirit of unconditional love, is a reminder that there is always hope. When you make a mistake, all we need to do is have the humility to acknowledge that, and you find ourselves running into the outstretched arms of a God who welcomes you home with a party.

Today's gospel reading includes a verse that is often used to summarise the whole of the Christian gospel: John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

This verse is an invitation into relationship with God, through Christ Jesus. And that relationship changes our relationship with the other people in our lives, with ourselves, and with the whole of creation.

So, may you strive to create relationships with those around you. Whether those relationships are with parents, children, students, grandchildren, friends or colleagues, may you recognise the life-changing power they have for you. May you remember that a relationship based on forgiveness and renewal is not the same as one based on shame. May you practice the unconditional, forgiving, renewing, understanding, patient love of a parent, and may you cherish the people in your life from whom you receive that love.

Pause for a moment to give thanks that you are part of a global community of people who worship a God whose love for each and every one of us – whether we are in that community or not – is so immeasurably vast as to give the gift of Jesus, who made us that we might have eternal life. You may wish to pray a prayer of thanks that God so rich in grace, mercy and love, that each of us can be inspired to share as much of it as we can with the world around us and the people you meet this week.

### **Hymn:**

421 STF – Empty, broken, here I stand, Kyrie Eleison – [YouTube](#)

440 STF – Amazing grace – how sweet the sound – [YouTube](#)

### **Blessing**

Take a breath, and look around you. Try to hold this space in your heart and mind so that, as you head out into this week, you might know the Spirit of God travelling with you as you go about your day-to-day activities.

Take the memory of this moment and these people with you into a world in need.  
Amen.

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## **Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week Ahead**

### **Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March**

- Thank you Lord, for you are a God of abundant blessings,
- Thank you for all you have given to me.
- I pause for a moment to return something of those blessings to you and to your service.
- Lord, put my life to use in building a world of justice, joy and peace, in Jesus' name, Amen.

## **Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March**

- On this day in 1989 Tim Berners-Lee submitted his proposal for an information management system, which eventually became the world wide web, the internet. Today, we pray for all who work in digital spaces – all who are responsible for making social media, websites and other digital tools safe for all who use them. May sense and safety reign over capitalism and exploitation in key decision making, we pray.

## **Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March**

- Loving Jesus, you take my confusing tangle of thoughts, worries and questions. You take the feeling that overwhelm which can sometimes come with experiencing and witnessing so much sorrow, discomfort, conflict and need.
- May I feel you taking a seat beside me  
Sharing in the pain, sorrow and discomfort  
Weeping and raging with me this day. Amen.

## **Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March**

- Justice-seeking God, today we pray for peace.  
It can seem difficult to know how to pray for peace when we know there is still much violence and conflict in our world, but we bring all that to you today, knowing that the world is not 'as you would have it.'
- Come, Prince of Peace, come to a broken world in need, we pray.
- Amen.

## **Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March**

- Today, the Ides of March, marks the day that in 44BC, Julius Caesar was assassinated by a group of senators in Rome. We know that political violence and intimidation continues today in many places around the world and you may choose to pray for safety for officials to do their duty in peace and with justice. You may even wish to look up recent outbreaks of civil unrest around the world and pray specifically for the countries and places affected.

## **Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March**

- Hear the invitation to be still this Saturday. To hold a moment of quiet and reflect on the week just gone, to 'check in' with yourself and how you are doing, and to listen to the still small voice of God.
- Perhaps try to position yourself where you can see a tree or bush or some flowers, and just hold the stillness as you watch and pray.
- Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.