**Archbishop John Wilson**

So today, we’re opening our church – St. George’s Cathedral, here in Southwark, after this period of lockdown. We’re opening it just for a limited time.

And here in the cathedral, we’ve got all the important social distancing measures in place. We’ve got all the signs in place. We’ve got the sanitisers at the entrance and the exit. We’ve got separate doors to come in and out. We’ll have stewards on-hand. So everything’s ready to welcome people. And I think that’s the most important aspect – we want to offer a sense of welcome – whoever you are.

If you need to come and first of all just find time and quiet in a sacred place, then the cathedral is open for you. If, perhaps, you want to come and pray – and maybe you’ve not prayed for a while or you’ve got out of the habit of praying – then let me offer you just some simple words of encouragement.

The first thing is to imagine your prayer as talking from your heart about the things that matter to you, to your best friend. And when you come into the church, find a quiet space. All the benches have been properly laid out, some of them put together to enable social distancing, but you can find a quiet space to sit or to kneel.

Simply close your eyes and in silence, just say to yourself, Lord God, I believe you are here.

And I open my heart to you now. And then just speak from your heart. Speak to God, tell Him the things that are on your mind. Maybe the things that first are worrying you – the things that have been a real concern during this time of lockdown. Maybe about your family, maybe about your work, maybe about our city, our world. Just speak to Him from your heart, tell him anything that’s worrying you. Share it with him. And know that He’s listening.

Then perhaps think about the particular people that you want to give thanks for, the particular events that you want to give thanks for during this time of lockdown. Who’s been there for you? Who sustained you? Who’s really helped you? You want to say, “Lord, thank you that that person was there – that that experience was there”. Just let these things tumble out from your heart – don’t overthink them, just speak. And know He listens. Because He loves you.

Perhaps if you get to the point where you think you’ve said everything that you’ve got to say, just be with your eyes closed. And if you know the Our Father, just pray it quietly, slowly, savouring each word.

If you don’t know the Our Father, take a simple phrase. Like “Heavenly Father, give me your love”. And repeat it. “Heavenly Father, guide me moving forward”. And repeat it. “Heavenly Father, protect those who I love”. And repeat it.

Prayer at its best is when it’s simple. So speak to your heart, to the God who loves you and allow Him to reassure you with His peace.