

PARISH OF BLESSED JAMES BELL

*Serving St Benedict's, St Mary's & St Oswald's
Warrington*



Celebrating Sunday at Home

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
'Day for Life' - 21 June 2020

Preparation

It can be helpful to prepare a little space as a focus for your prayer. Perhaps light a candle or tea light and place it next to a crucifix or icon. You might like to include the Scriptures and some flowers as well.

Song

Perhaps choose a song or piece of music from YouTube or a CD to begin your time of prayer. Some suggestions for today:

All that is hidden (Farrell)
Be not afraid
Do not be afraid
Lead kindly light
Let nothing trouble you (Farrell)
O Lord, hear my prayer
On eagle's wings
Walk with me, O my Lord
Will you come and follow me

Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

Greeting

Let us praise the Lord Jesus Christ,
who is present among us and in his Word,
and who keeps us united in love.

R. Bless the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 68

- 1 It is for you that I suffer taunts,
that shame covers my face,
that I have become a stranger to my brothers,
an alien to my own mother's sons.
I burn with zeal for your house
and taunts against you fall on me.**
- 2 This is my prayer to you,
my prayer for your favour.
In your great love, answer me, O God,**

**with your help that never fails:
Lord, answer, for your love is kind;
in your compassion, turn towards me.**

- 3 The poor when they see it will be glad
and God-seeking hearts will revive;
for the Lord listens to the needy
and does not spurn his servants in their chains.
Let the heavens and the earth give him praise,
the sea and all its living creatures.**

Gospel Acclamation

Sing the 'Alleluia' together using a version you all know well.

Gospel

(Matthew 10: 26-33)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
R. Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus instructed the Twelve as follows: 'Do not be afraid. For everything that is now covered will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight; what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the housetops.

'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. So there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than hundreds of sparrows.

'So if anyone declares himself for me in the presence of men, I will declare myself for him in the presence of my Father in heaven. But the one who disowns me in the presence of men, I will disown in the presence of my Father in heaven.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



Reflection by Fr Chris Thomas

Just recently I met a woman who is a recovering alcoholic. She shared something of her story with me.

Her name was June and she had held a very high-powered job as a senior social worker. She described the pressure that she was under to hit targets, manage staff and work transparently. Her career mattered more to her than anything else and the relationship she was in suffered and eventually broke down. Her life was spiralling out of control. What began as a reward for a hard day's work, a glass of wine, slowly took over her life. She told me that she would keep alcohol in her

desk drawer just to get through the day. Eventually she was discovered and sacked. She lost her home and ended up on the streets selling herself to buy the drink her body craved. One day she was drinking cider in Piccadilly, London, when a former client recognised her. June had been very good to this woman when she was in need and the woman remembered. She took her home with her and allowed her to stay for nearly two years until June was able to get herself somewhere to live and maintain it.

June was amazed at her kindness and it turned her world around. She was filled with hope that life could be different. She went along to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, which she said was the hardest thing she had ever had to do. It took several years before she managed to hand things over to a higher power. When she did, she found a hope within her that had never left her. It was a hope in the God she had discovered. Hope became a reality in her as it has to in all of us particularly at this time. That woman's action in rescuing June was for me a real image of who God is, a God who is love and compassion and mercy, a God whose justice is to give us what we don't really deserve, love and more love, a God who is willing to go to any lengths for us. It also reminded me that each of us is called to be like that woman and to be willing to proclaim the Good News whatever the cost may be to ourselves.

When you read Matthew's Gospel, you discover in it an invitation to radically follow Jesus because of love. It is in this Gospel that we have the beatitudes and the invitation not to judge, but to love our enemies and do good to those who hurt us. These are hugely radical demands. Then in chapter 10 of the Gospel Jesus sends out the 72 to preach and teach this way of living, reminding them that as they do this there might well be some persecution. It is in this context that Matthew has Jesus say to the disciples, not to be afraid because every hair on their heads has been counted and they are worth more than hundreds of sparrows. It is Matthew's reminder to the disciples, and therefore to each one of us, that there is no need to be afraid of anything because of God's loving intimate care of us.

I think it's so hard for most of us to believe in a God whose justice is in fact unconditional love. We're much more comfortable with an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, much more comfortable with having to earn love. We don't know what to do with a God who breaks the rules and loves everyone without exception. We certainly don't know what to do with the invitation for us to do the same for others. Matthew's Jesus invites us to open our hearts to this God and then to follow, knowing that we can trust God with our lives, whatever may be thrown at us. If God has counted every hair on our heads, as the Gospel told us, then surely we can dare to believe that God will always be there for us in the midst of our fear and anxiety, giving us strength to live the radical call to follow. There is no need to be afraid of that call and where it may lead us. We are loved beyond our wildest imaginings by God. We are worth more than hundreds of sparrows.

Silent Reflection

Poem

Let Your God Love You

**Be silent.
Be still.
Alone.
Empty
Before your God.
Say nothing.
Ask nothing.
Be silent.
Be still.
Let your God look upon you.
That is all.
God knows.
God understands.
God loves you
With an enormous love,
And only wants
To look upon you
With that love.
Quiet.
Still.
Be.
Let your God
Love you.**

By Edwina Gateley

Bidding Prayers

There are some Bidding Prayers on the Parish Website for today, or you may like to make your own prayers as an individual or group.

The Lord's Prayer

Blessing

May the Lord bless us, keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

R. Amen.



*"You are worth more than hundreds of sparrows"
(Matthew 10: 31)*

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