

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

My soul give thanks to the Lord,
all my being bless his holy name.
My soul give thanks to the Lord
and never forget his blessings.

Psalms

Didn't you realise that you were God's temple and that the Spirit
of God was living among you?

Second Reading

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you;
in this way you will be children of your Father in heaven. *Gospel*

Father, keep before us the wisdom and love
you have revealed in your Son.
Help us to be like him in word and deed.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you'd like to reflect further:
Lev. 19: 1-2, 17-18; Psalm 102 (103); 1 Cor. 3: 16-23; Matthew 5: 38-48



The Lord is
compassion
and love

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
Year A
19th February 2023

The Lord is Compassion and Love

We live in times when many of our conversations exaggerate
difference and division. But the scripture for this Sunday proclaims a
radical message of love that overcomes hatred, and a compassion
that heals and unifies.

Paul's letter to the Corinthians (**Second Reading**) teaches that the
Spirit of God is within us. Together, we are a temple of God
proclaiming God's wisdom. This wisdom challenges human notions
of tribalism that can ultimately lead to division and hatred, when we
see 'others' as our enemies.

Moses (**First Reading**) is commanded to profess God's wisdom by
telling the people that holiness is based on love and forgiveness:
'You must love your neighbour as yourself.'

In the **Gospel**, Jesus reveals the full expression of the wisdom of
God's Law of Love: 'love your enemies'. We are called to respond
with radical non-violence to all forms of hatred and division.

The **Psalms** that sits at the centre of this week's scripture is a
beautiful song of gratitude to a God full of forgiveness, who is slow
to anger and abounding in compassion and love.

This week, may the words of this song of love sing out through all
that we do and say. Let us pray that we will have the
grace to move beyond divisive 'them-and-us' ways of
thinking and relating. In God we are all One, bound
together with compassion and love.



Opening Prayer

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that, always pondering spiritual things,
we may carry out in both word and deed
that which is pleasing to you.

Psalm 102 (103)

R/. The Lord is compassion and love.

My soul, give thanks to the Lord
All my being, bless his holy name.
My soul, give thanks to the Lord
and never forget all his blessings.

It is he who forgives all your guilt,
who heals every one of your ills,
who redeems your life from the grave,
who crowns you with love and compassion.

The Lord is compassion and love,
slow to anger and rich in mercy.
He does not treat us according to our sins
nor repay us according to our faults.

As far as the east is from the west
so far does he remove our sins.
As a father has compassion on his children,
the Lord has pity on those who fear him.

I invite my body and mind to settle and become still as I bring myself before the Lord to pray.

Slowly, and with reverence, I read the words of the Psalm, pausing after each line to repeat that deep truth: *'The Lord is compassion and love'*. Like a steady drip of quenching water on dry land, I let the words wash over and refresh me.

I may choose to centre my prayer on these profound words alone, sitting with them in stillness and silence, allowing God's wisdom to seep deep within my being.

Or there may be other words and lines in the psalm where I am drawn to focus my prayer.

For what am I deeply grateful? Where have I experienced the Lord's blessings, forgiveness and compassion?

I speak to the Lord with love and gratitude about all that has arisen within me during this time of prayer.

Gospel Matthew 5: 38–48

Jesus said to his disciples: "You have learnt how it was said: Eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I say this to you: offer the wicked no resistance. On the contrary, if anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer them the other as well; if someone takes you to law and would have your tunic, let them have your cloak as well. And if anyone orders you to go one mile, go two miles with them. Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away.

"You have learnt how it was said: You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be children of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on the bad as well as the good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest alike. For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit? Even the tax collectors do as much, do they not? And if you save your greetings for your brothers and sisters, are you doing anything exceptional? Even pagans do as much, do they not? You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Once I have prepared myself for prayer, I turn to this Gospel passage. Slowly, and with pauses for reflection, I read the text several times.

Using my imagination, I picture myself sitting amongst the people, hearing Jesus share his radical teaching on love.

How does Jesus look as he speaks?

What are his facial expressions ... his tone of voice?

How do I imagine he communicates compassionate authority through bodily posture and actions?

Although these words may be very familiar and important to me, I try to imagine how I would feel if I was hearing this message for the first time.

I reflect on the divisions, hatred and animosity of our own times.

Who are the people that I dislike, and view and treat as my enemy?

How might I respond differently towards them in the light of this teaching?

Imagining that I remain sitting alongside Jesus, I pray together with him, *Our Father ...*