

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

Keep my soul in peace before you, O Lord.

Psalm response

God's message ... is still a living power among you who believe it.

Second Reading

You have only one Teacher, the Christ.

Gospel

Father in heaven, God of power and Lord of mercy,
from whose fullness we have received,
direct our steps in our everyday efforts.
May the changing moods of the human heart
and the limits which our failings impose on hope
never blind us to you, source of every good.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you'd like to reflect further:
Malachi 1: 14–2:2.8–10; Ps. 130 (131); Thess. 2: 2–9. 13; Matthew 23: 1–12



‘All who exalt themselves will be humbled,
and all who humble themselves will be exalted.’ *Gospel*

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time,
Year A, 5th November 2023

‘Did not one God create us?’

In our readings today, we hear how easy it is for human pride and laxity to diminish or even falsify God's message. Instead, let us follow the invitation to honour God in humility, sincerity and truth.

In the **First Reading**, the prophet Malachi does not mince his words. His message is hard-hitting: the priests are reproached for their spiritual negligence and failure to instruct the people properly, as well as for their half-hearted service of God.

Religious leaders are also criticised in the **Gospel**. Jesus castigates their hypocrisy: they are more concerned with drawing attention to themselves and exploiting their social position, rather than committing themselves to the message they preach. This type of self-aggrandisement and pride is the exact opposite of what the followers of Jesus should aspire to. Jesus himself is our role model: he teaches us that the route to leadership is through service of God in all things.

In contrast, the **Second Reading** presents Paul as a truly devoted pastor: enthusiastic, hard-working, full of love for his people; endlessly sharing the living word of God with this community.

To follow Christ is to serve him humbly; and humility, together with complete trust in God, is the theme of today's **Psalm**.

Let us pray this week: Lord God, you are both Father and Mother to us. We beg you: help us to be sincere and joyful in our practice of faith and prayer; to serve you in our daily lives; and to be even more alert and awake to your presence in nature all around us.

We also pray with all our hearts for that peace which this world cannot give.



Opening Prayer

Almighty and merciful God,
by whose gift your faithful offer you right and praiseworthy service,
grant, we pray, that we may hasten without stumbling
to receive the things you have promised.

Psalm 130 (131)

R/. Keep my soul in peace before you, O Lord.

O Lord, my heart is not proud,
nor haughty my eyes.
I have not gone after things too great
nor marvels beyond me.

Truly I have set my soul
in silence and peace.
A weaned child on its mother's breast,
even so is my soul.

O Israel, hope in the Lord
both now and for ever.

Once I am settled in my prayer space, I still myself as best I can.
Although I may find it hard to put aside the noise and busyness of my mind
today, I can relax my body by breathing deeply and slowly.

With each breath, I may repeat a short phrase such as '*My soul rests in
you, O Lord*'. I try to allow a childlike trust in God to arise within me.

Once I am ready, I read this beautiful, gentle psalm aloud a number of
times. I notice when my heart and mind resonate with certain words or
phrases. I linger, savour them, and ponder ...

Can I, like the psalmist, acknowledge and freely accept my own limitations
and smallness, as a deeply beloved child?

Can I entrust myself in peaceful surrender to my loving Father?
Knowing I cannot achieve this on my own, I pray with sincerity for the
grace of humility, and for spiritual and psychological freedom.

The psalmist speaks of a contemplative prayer practice that seeks silence
and peace within the soul, as a child clinging to its mother.

I ask the Holy Spirit to aid my relationship with God in this way.

Perhaps I ask God to strengthen my commitment to sitting regularly in
silence, or to walking in nature. I pray that my attention and gaze may be
turned each day towards the Holy Mystery of God, in whatever way is
possible.

Glory be ...

Gospel Matthew 23: 1–12

Addressing the people and his disciples Jesus said, 'The scribes and
the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do
what they tell you and listen to what they say; but do not be guided by
what they do: since they do not practise what they preach. They tie up
heavy burdens and lay them on people's shoulders, but will they lift a
finger to move them? Not they! Everything they do is done to attract
attention, like wearing broader phylacteries and longer tassels, like
wanting to take the place of honour at banquets and the front seats at
the synagogues, being greeted obsequiously in the market squares and
having people call them Rabbi.

'You, however, must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi, since
you have only one Master, and you are all brothers and sisters. You
must call no one on earth your father, since you have only one Father,
and he is in heaven. Nor must you allow yourselves to be called
teachers, for you have only one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest
among you must be your servant. Anyone who exalts himself will be
humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted.'

As I settle into my place of prayer, I ask God to bless me: to give me the
grace to slow down and be attentive. I pray not to be distracted by any of
my cares or 'idols', whether external or internal.

Like the psalmist, I pray to '*set my soul in silence and peace*' before my Lord.

Once I am ready, I read Jesus's passionate address a couple of times.
I hear his attack on religious hypocrisy, and his countercultural teaching on
what it means to be his follower.

I notice where I am drawn. Is there anything that troubles or disturbs me
about Jesus's guidance? I reflect and pray ...

Perhaps I yearn for greater spiritual freedom and peace, and seek a more
humble, Christ-centred way of life?

Or maybe I notice some resistance to this, or temptation?

Whatever arises, I surrender with trust and hope to God, my loving Father
and Mother.

From the depths of my being, I pray with longing for the grace of a humble,
open heart and mind.

I may like to end my time of prayer by repeating the response to the psalm:
'*Keep my soul in peace before you, O Lord.*'