

URC Prayer Handbook 2021 - 'Conversations'

Monday of Holy Week:

John 12:1-11 (Isaiah 42. 1-9)

'Extravagance for the Poor'

How can my gratitude be enough for your gift of life?
Expensive perfume for your death, Jesus. Both are
extravagance!

I feel the same in the life you have restored in me
and I offer all I have - myself, my family, my home and
hospitality.

But, still, such a gift invites more.
Your purpose is beyond just me and you.
You are a light to the nations, so the Prophet said,
Not breaking a bruised reed or quenching a flickering
flame.

'The poor are always with you' you say
and I recall that
whatever I shall do for the least I shall do for you.

May I not disregard the least, the bruised, the flickering
Encourage me to share your extravagance
May I give of myself,
rejoicing in the life you have given to me.

Wednesday of Holy Week:

John 13:21-32

'Is it me?'

It is a disturbing thought, Jesus, that one of us, your friends, would betray you. When you said it during supper none of us could believe it, having set out to follow you faithfully. Yet, our having to ask you "Who is it? Is it me?" is evidence of our own sense of weakness.

I am shamed, knowing the frailty of faith.

In that same moment you claim glory for the Son of Man and for the Father through him. How can this be?

In those moments when betrayal is what I am about. When I fail to love the person I am or see the potential your gifts offer.

As I give little attention to the needy of the world.

Failing to even know my neighbour, let alone love them.

When religion is about my personal gain.

I long for your forgiveness and the renewal of your love in me.

Give me, Lord, that bit of bread, your body broken, your life unreservedly given,

So that I might know your forgiveness and your faith in me.

May you be glorified through me and your Father in you.

Good Friday:

John 18:1-19:42

'In the midst - who are you?'

In the midst of the maelstrom of religion, politics and popular desire I find you, Jesus, standing in my world
I want to know who you are? Where are you from?
You say your Kingdom is not of this world and yet you invite my participation. Your Kingdom is near!

Will you destroy my religion, because you are above it all?
Will you emasculate my power,
coming with a Kingdom of your own?
Will your voice overcome the clamour that claims my attention?

'It is finished' you cry

The priests return to their impotent temple
Pilate has washed his hands
The crowd has no big cause to cheer
Criminals appreciate your promise of paradise
Your Mother and friends stand in silence
A few friends care for your body.

Your body - bearing the marks of suffering and death has given all of its energies in love.

Help me, Jesus, Son of God, care for your Body,
to expend all that is humanly possible in love,
there to discover who you are.

Easter Sunday:

John 20:1-18

'In the Garden'

We met in the garden when I came seeking a body.
"Why are you weeping?" you asked.
Tears of sadness, grief and loss flow.

I thought you were the one who cares for that place of
the dead, not realising that you care for me
more than I could imagine.
I did not recognise you, the One I love,
but you know me by name.

Why am I weeping? They are tears of joy!
I have met with you, the Gardener,
Your care and your love bring life to the dead.
I see that you are alive!
I know your life!

You are also invited to write two further prayers, drawing on any themes or topics which inspire you.

'Moments with my Father'

This prayer arises from my experience and reflection on dementia leading to an appreciation of the importance of the present moment, the enduring nature of love and that there is nothing to fear because here we can experience God.

While the use of 'Dad' emphasises the human aspect, I am quite happy if you feel the substitution of 'Father' would be better for the wider audience.

I sat with my Dad the other day
Just Him and me
He was uncertain of who I was
I struggled to recognise him
I sat with my Dad the other day
We explored the vivid past
The future did not seem to matter
The present was rather confusing
But the Moment was full of appreciation and love
I sat with my Dad the other day
There were long silences of unknowing
But the time was rich
He urged me to value the past
To be with him in the present moment
To be fearless of the future
I sat with my Dad the other day
We had a good time, if a little puzzling
It was full of moments that I want to remember
Brief moments full of love for a lifetime
Thank you Dad for rich moments shared with you
Bits of life that point to an eternity.
You clearly know Love and find it in me.

Creative conversation

Genesis 1, John 1, Revelation 21,

This springs from reflecting on the collaborative nature of any creative activity and how it aids my understanding of how God is at work in us and how we see this in Scripture.

You started this conversation quite a while ago now
You invited me to join in and I'm glad
It's really interesting and very creative, sparking a variety
of thoughts and actions
At the outset you caused everything to happen
and all was just as you said
Then you graciously asked 'What do you think?' and the
conversation opened up.

It can get quite animated. We can both be quite dogmatic
But I sense your patience and forgiveness when I'm hot-
headed and stubborn.
When I am really despairing and cry out, I am confident
you are there -
listening, encouraging, calming, healing, restoring, loving.
Here, things get really creative. Your purpose is clear.

Sometimes you can sound quite distant, but then
I met someone who sounds just like you.
It all became more personal and even more creative.
Realising that you continue to shape your creation, your
people, with a loving purpose
I am eager to join in, to play my part.

May the Spirit who breathed creation - the Breath in
your voice, the Breath you gave up -
Be the breath of my creating, forgiving and loving.