

Day of Prayer, Fasting and Works of Charity – Thursday 14th May

Pope Francis has called on people of all religions to come together on Thursday 14th May for a day of prayer to implore God to help humanity come together to overcome the Coronavirus pandemic. We encourage you all to join in with this, and we hope that this resource will help you to enter into this day of prayer.

During this period of lockdown, many of us feel that our daily rhythms and routines have been altered or lost. One of the great traditions of Christian spirituality is that of monasticism, with its wonderful rhythm of life; with times set aside to spend time in prayer and contemplation. It is this sense of routine and balance of the day that has been attractive to so many people throughout Christian history. This pattern of life will often have times for prayer in the morning, in the middle of the day and in the evening. These times of prayer reflect the flow of our day: in the morning asking God to bless the day that lies open before us; at midday asking God to strengthen and sustain us as we go about our day; and in the evening reflecting on the day that is past, on the things that have gone well and not so well and asking for a peaceful evening and night. This resource follows this ancient pattern of prayer.

Fasting is an important part of Christianity. It helps us to rebalance our lives and focus on what is important. By denying ourselves something, we make more room for God in our lives. Fasting was something that Jesus himself did, and there are lots of biblical references to it. Often when we fast it means that we give up some food, but it could be fasting from something else that distracts us; such as the internet, television or our mobile phone. Fasting from food should only be done by those who are healthy enough to do it. It might be that you choose not to eat meat on that day, or have smaller portions or do not eat things we might regard as treats, or perhaps abstain from alcohol. The important thing is that whatever you choose to fast from, you offer it to God for Him to bless it and fill your lives with His love.

Pope Francis has also called on people to perform acts of charity. This reminds us that even though we are isolated we are still part of a community, part of a worldwide family. It might be that you choose to get some shopping for a neighbour (if it is safe for you to do so); or call a friend, relative or neighbour to see how they are and provide some company that way, or perhaps write them a letter; or it may be that you make a donation to a charity; or perhaps if you are shopping or on your daily exercise you smile and say hello to the people you meet – it could be the one thing they really need that day.

Morning prayers

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

As a deer pants for flowing streams,
so pants my soul for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God,
For the living God. (*Psalm 42*)

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever. Amen (*Common Worship*)

Today is the feast day of St Matthias, who was chosen by the apostles to take the place of Judas. Read the account of his calling in Acts 1: 15-26 and spend some time reflecting on what God is calling you to do in this day of prayer and how you might respond to it.

Intercessions:

A time of prayer where you can pray for all those who are affected by the current situation. Pray for the world; for the Church; for our country and Government; for our doctors, nurses and emergency services; for your family, loved ones and friends; for those who are lonely or anxious; for the sick and dying; for the departed; and do not forget to pray for yourself and your own needs and concerns.

Then offer to God the fasting that you commit to undertake today and ask Him to bless that and the works of charity that you will do.

Finish your intercessions by saying the Lord's prayer.

Eternal God and Father,
by your power we are created
and by your love we are redeemed:
guide and strengthen us by your Spirit,
that we may give ourselves to you
in love and service of one another;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.

Midday prayers

It is the tradition of the Church to pray the 'Regina Caeli' at midday in Eastertide. This is a chance for us to pause, reflect and celebrate with Mary at the joy of the Resurrection of Jesus.

Joy to thee, O Queen of Heaven, alleluia.
He whom thou wast meet to bear, alleluia.
As he promised, hath arisen, alleluia.
Pour for us to him thy prayer, alleluia.

Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.
For the Lord is risen indeed, alleluia.

O God, by the Resurrection of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, you have brought joy to the whole world: grant that, by the help of his mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life; through Christ the Lord. Amen

Prayers for those affected by the Coronavirus pandemic:

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

God of healing and hope,
in Jesus you meet us in our places of pain and fear.
Look with mercy on those who have contracted this virus, on any who are vulnerable,
and on all who feel in danger.
Through this time of global concern, by your Holy Spirit
bring out the best not the worst in us.
Make us more aware of our interdependence on each other,
and of the strength that comes from being one body in you.
Through Christ our wounded healer.
Amen.

As May is the month traditionally dedicated to Mary, you might like to pray the Rosary. If you have not prayed the Rosary before, you can find some resources here:

<https://bishopoffulham.org.uk/marys-month-may-2/>

Evening prayers

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

Let my prayer be counted as incense before you,
and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. (*Psalm 141*)

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your mercy come down upon us
to cleanse our hearts
and set us free to sing your praise. Amen (*Common Worship*)

Spend time in reflecting on how the day has gone; think of the times when you have felt God's presence; give thanks to God for the good things that have happened; strength to overcome things that have not gone well; and forgiveness for any sins that you have committed.

Read slowly and prayerfully through John chapter 15, and reflect on the day that has past. On how we have joined together globally in prayer as a vine. That through works of charity we have loved one another. That what we have fasted from will be filled with the Holy Spirit. That the command from Jesus to pray and love one another goes beyond today.

Intercessions:

A time of prayer where you can pray for all those who are affected by the current situation. Pray for the world; for the Church; for our country and Government; for our doctors, nurses and emergency services; for your family, loved ones and friends; for those who are lonely or anxious; for the sick and dying; for the departed; and do not forget to pray for yourself and your own needs and concerns.

Finish your intercessions by saying the Lord's prayer.

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Common Worship*)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God