

31st March

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Last week the Archbishops of Canterbury and York instructed all clergy to close their churches, and so our building is now locked. This is a real loss to us. I hope we might soon be able to reopen our buildings, and in time resume public worship, but, as yet, there is no indication when the current restrictions might end.

I am following the Bishop's direction to continue to pray Morning and Evening Prayer, and his invitation to continue to celebrate a daily Mass at home. I pray for you all each day, and I encourage you to contact me if there is anything, or anyone, in particular that you would like me to remember in my prayers. Please also feel free to contact me at the Vicarage about any other matter, or simply to talk. I am especially conscious of the greater risk of anxiety and loneliness at this time. Please do contact me as need arises. I am available day or night on 01295 811364. You can also email me at fathermatthew.r@icloud.com.

In common with other clergy I am continuing to officiate at funerals and emergency baptisms.

In St Paul's letter to the Galatians he refers to the Church as the 'household of faith'. In our current circumstances that phrase takes on a particular poignancy. The practise of our religion at home has become

even more important than usual. Even though our buildings are closed, the Church is active in our prayers and acts of devotion in our households.

To that end I've set out below some prayers which you may wish to use at a set time of your choosing each day. I also commend to you the practice of making your spiritual communion. The Prayer Book reminds us that if, due to sickness or other good cause, we are prevented from receiving the sacrament, we may nevertheless receive the benefits of Holy Communion if we prayerfully acknowledge our sins and reaffirm our belief in the benefits we receive from Christ's Passion. Therefore, I have also included a short devotion with that purpose in mind.

With my prayers and every blessing,

Fr Matthew

Daily Prayer

O Lord, open thou our lips, and our mouth shall show forth thy praise
O God, make speed to save us, O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,

the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Collect for the appropriate time:

Palm Sunday

Almighty and everlasting God,
who of thy tender love towards the world
hast sent thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon him our flesh
and to suffer death upon the cross:
grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord,
who liveth and reigneth with thee,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

or,

Good Friday

Almighty God,
we beseech thee graciously to behold this thy family
for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed and
given up into the hands of sinners
and to suffer death upon the cross;
who now liveth and reigneth with thee,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

or,

Easter Eve

Grant, O Lord,

that as we are baptised into the death of thy blessed Son our Saviour
Jesus Christ,
so by continually mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried
with him;
and that through the grave and gate of death
we may pass to our joyful resurrection;
for his merits, who died and was buried and rose again for us,
thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

or,

Easter Day

Lord of all life and power,
who through the mighty resurrection of thy Son
hast overcome the old order of sin and death
to make all things new in him:
grant that we, being dead to sin
and alive to thee in Jesus Christ,
may reign with him in glory;
to whom with thee and the Holy Spirit

be praise and honour, glory and might,
now and in all eternity.
Amen.

and,

The Collect for Grace, to be said in the morning:

O LORD, our heavenly Father, Almighty and everlasting God, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day: Defend us in the same with thy mighty power; and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger; but that all our doings may be ordered by thy governance, to do always that is righteous in thy sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

or,

The Collect for Aid against all Perils, to be said in the evening:

LIGHTEN our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

or,

A prayer at night:

Be present, O merciful God, and protect us through the silent hours of this night, so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this fleeting world, may repose upon thy eternal changelessness; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

An act of Spiritual Communion

(You may wish to pray all or part of the following):

Reflect on the day.

- *What blessings have come from God today?*
- *Where have I fallen short?*
- *What might I do tomorrow?*

You may wish to pray

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Read the following words from Scripture.

Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'

John 6.35

Pray for the needs of the world. You may wish to remember your local community, those working in the NHS, in government, and other agencies dealing with the pandemic, and for those close to you. End with the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father...

Give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with you now.

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.

O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

after the Prayer of St Richard of Chichester

You might then add one or more of the following prayers:

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples, 'I am with you always'.
Be with me today, as I offer myself to you.
Hear my prayers for others and for myself,
and keep me in your care. Amen.

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord, in these days of mercy,
make us quiet and prayerful;
in these days of challenge,
make us stronger in you;
in these days of emptiness,
take possession of us;
in these days of waiting,
open our hearts to the mystery of your cross.

Angela Ashwin

Almighty God, Father of all mercies,
we your unworthy servants give you most humble and hearty thanks
for all your goodness and loving kindness.
We bless you for our creation, preservation, and
all the blessings of this life;
but above all for your immeasurable love
in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ,
for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.
And give us, we pray, such a sense of all your mercies
that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful,
and that we show forth your praise,
not only with our lips but in our lives,
by giving up ourselves to your service,
and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be all honour and glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Conclude with the following:

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.
Amen.