

EXPLORING CHRISTIAN FAITH

No. 16

ABBA! FATHER!



A selection of personal prayers and devotions

INTRODUCTION

Of all the relationships we develop, that with God is arguably the most important. How we seek to be open to the well of life, source of all good and ‘ground of our being’ will determine how we relate to everything else. Whatever our image of God there is a longing deep within each person that cannot be truly satisfied apart from that desire. *‘God asks for his Word to be answered, he asks for response. To exist really is to exist as responding-to-God. Each of us is called to be a different kind of response to God, to mirror God in unique ways, show God what he is like, so to speak, from innumerable new and different standpoints.’ (Archbishop Rowan Williams).*

Each of us will respond to what calls most deeply to us and we constantly need to recognise that which calls us more deeply towards our true being – the image of God within us – and that which leads us away. Over millennia and in every society women and men have recognised a call to pray – to reflect on and express their deepest longings and desires through words, music, poetry, art and action. Human beings have a longing to explore and whilst some might climb to the heights of heaven, the depths of the heart – the ground of our being and place of encounter – are accessible to all. *‘The heart is the dwelling-place where I am, where I live; according to the Semitic or Biblical expression, the heart is the place "to which I withdraw." The heart is our hidden centre, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter, because as image of God we live in relation: it is the place of covenant.’ (from ‘The Catechism of the Catholic Church’)*

Many people have expressed the movements of the heart through prayers and meditations and the following are offered as a tiny collection of these which come from many, mostly Christian, traditions. They are offered in the hope that some might help you in your own relationship with God and as an encouragement for you to find your own expressions of your hearts desire.

‘Prayer is not a thing we do, it is a thing we can become when the heart is filled with waiting and longing for a clearer vision and a readier understanding.’

- W.H.Vanstone: *‘Love’s Endeavour, Love’s Expense*

RISING PRAYERS

O Lord, let my first thoughts be of thee;
to praise and to thank thee for thy goodness
and protection through the night.

Give me thy grace.

I pray thee, so to live through this day that at nightfall
I may not be ashamed to meet thee.

O Thou who didst disseminate
the primeval radiance of the light,
that thy works may sing thee in the light,
O Christ their Creator:
guide thou our paths in the light.

O satisfy us early with thy mercy:
so shall we be glad and rejoice all the days of our life.

MORNING PRAYERS

In the Name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the
Holy Spirit. Amen

Silence

O GOD, Make haste to save me.

Silence

GOD, Be merciful to me a sinner
We bow before thy Cross, O Master
and we glorify thy Holy Resurrection.

O HEAVENLY KING, O comforter, the Spirit of Truth,
who art in all places and fillest all things,
the treasury of blessing and giver of life, come and abide in us.
Cleanse us of all impurity, and of thy goodness, save our souls.

HOLY GOD, Holy and Strong, Holy and Immortal,
have mercy upon us.

Arising from sleep, we fall down before thee, O Blessed God
and sing to thee, O mighty One,
the angelic hymn: Holy, holy, holy art thou, O God.
Through the prayers of the Mother of God,
have mercy upon us.

LORD, help me to add to the
world's tale of goodness today,
in thy Name and by thy aid.

Lord, in all the love, joy and loveliness
about our path this day,
help us to discover your hand and praise you.

Lord, in this day's difficulties,
keep me serene of heart and faithful to your will.

Lord, help me to bear today the pains and burdens of others.

Lord, help me to contend for truth today, if only by a word.

Lord, make my faith today grow and flow,
as a flame leaping upwards.
Lord, may your face lighten me today
that I may advance from weakness to glory,
from struggle to peace,
towards the perfect day and endless light. *Amen.*
King of kings, and Lord of lords, making the true light to shine:

lighten our darkness now and evermore,
that with our lips and in our lives we may praise you
and give you thanks for your great glory. *Amen.*

AT THE START OF THE DAY

Thanksgiving – Joy
for life
for the day

Take me; break me; mould me; use me; LOVE me.

CHOOSE GOD THIS DAY; CHOOSE LOVE; CHOOSE TO GIVE
“I am the Light of the World;
he that follows me shall not walk in darkness,
but shall have the light of life” *Jn. 8:12*

‘From the unreal lead us to the real,
from darkness lead us to light,
from death, lead us to immortality.’

Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth thee,
for thou art my GOD.
Hide not thy face from me. I am thine: O save me!
Order my steps in thy word and so
shall no wickedness have dominion over me.

Be thou nigh at hand, O God.
Make thou thy servant delight in that which is good.
Show the light of thy countenance upon thy servant:
and teach me thy statutes.
Hold thou me up and I shall be safe.
In all things direct and rule my heart.

The Lord direct our hearts into the love of GOD,
and into the patient waiting for Christ. (II Thess. 3-5)
Thou wast transfigured upon the mount O Christ God,
revealing unto thy disciples thy glory
in so far as they could bear it.
Let thy light everlasting illumine us sinners also
through the prayers of the birth giver of GOD.
O light-giver. Glory to Thee.

May Holy Mary, Mother of our Lord and GOD,
Jesus Christ and all the Holy, righteous and elect of GOD
(*especially S. Joseph.....*)
intercede for us sinners to the Lord our GOD,
that we may be aided and saved by him
who is perfect Trinity, lives and reigns.....
Blessed be the most sweet name of Our Lord Jesus Christ,
and of Blessed Mary,
and may all the company of heaven be blessed,
now and forevermore. *Amen.*

I give thanks to thee, O GOD, lover of all men, for
Christ, the redeemer of all men,
Mary, the example of all men,
Francis, the inspirer of all men.
For all who love me.
Amen.

AT NIGHT

Deliver me from my own shadows, my Lord,
from the wrecks and confusion of my days.
For the night is dark and thy pilgrim is blinded.
Hold thou my hand.
Deliver me from despair.
Touch with thy flame the lightless lamps of my sorrow.
Waken my tired strength from its sleep.
Do not let me linger behind counting my losses.
Let the road sing to me of the house at every step.
For the night is dark and thy pilgrim is blinded.
Hold thou my hand.

A Night Litany for London

O God our Father, hear us.
We plead before thee the sacred heart of Jesus
for all who live in our cities who need tonight
thy merciful love and protection.

On souls beset by temptation, have mercy.
On those who are in deadly sin, have mercy.
On those who have fallen into sin, have mercy.
On those who are given up to worldliness and
are forgetful of thee, have mercy.
On those who at this moment are in danger
of losing thee for ever, have mercy.
On those who are tempting others, have mercy.
On all who are out tonight; the homeless,
the weary, the starving, the suicides, the addicts,
the drunkards, have mercy.
On all who are out for sin, have mercy.
On those who are out to rescue from sin, have mercy.
On all who work tonight, have mercy.
On the sick and suffering, have mercy.

On all undergoing operations, have mercy.
On those who cannot sleep tonight, have mercy.
On those in anxiety and distress, have mercy.
On all children who cry tonight, have mercy.
On the police and all criminals, have mercy.
On all places of sin and vice, have mercy.
On all night-nurses, have mercy.
On all doctors and priests called out tonight
 have mercy.
On those for whom this will be their last night on earth,
 have mercy.
On those dying tonight without priest or
 sacrament, have mercy.
On those dying unconscious, have mercy.
On those who are afraid to die, have mercy.
On all dying priests, religious, and communicants,
 have mercy.
On the faithful departed, have mercy.
On ourselves in our last hour, have mercy.
On behalf of all who have said no prayers today,
 let us say:
 OUR FATHER, ... HAIL MARY, ...
On behalf of all who are ignorant or neglectful
of the Blessed Sacrament, let us say:
 Blessed and praised be Jesus Christ on his throne
 of glory and in the most holy sacrament of the altar.

On Saturdays and the Eves of Feast Days may be added:

Abide with us, O Lord,
for it is towards evening and the day is far spent.
As watchmen look for the morning, so do we wait for thee,
O Lord.
Come with the dawning of the day
and make thyself known to us

in the breaking of the Bread.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living GOD,
who at the hour of Compline didst rest in the Sepulchre,
and didst thereby sanctify the grave
to be a bed of hope to thy people.

Make us to abound in sorrow for our sins,
which were the cause of thy Passion,
that when our bodies lie in the dust,
our souls may live with Thee:
who lives and reigns with the Father....

Visit, we beseech thee, this place
and the homes of all who are dear to us,
and drive far from them all the snares of the enemy.

CONFESSION

*Confession is an act of love:
a way whereby we open ourselves to GOD,
expose ourselves to Him and,
naked before Him, await His loving forgiveness
to draw ourselves back to him.*

Ps. 51, 130

O Lord, deal not with us after our sins,
nor reward us according to our wickedness.

O Lord, remember not our old sins:
but have mercy upon us and that soon,
for we are come to great misery.

1 Corinthians 13

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,
but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries
and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains,
but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned,
but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind;
Love is not jealous or boastful;
Love is not arrogant or rude;
Love does not insist on its own way;
Love is not irritable or resentful;
Love does not rejoice at wrong;
Love rejoices in the right.

Love bears all things,
believes all things,
hopes all things
endures all things.

Love never ends;
as for prophecies, they will pass away;
as for tongues, they will cease;
as for knowledge, it will cease.
For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesy is imperfect;
but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.
When I was a child, I spoke like a child,
I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child;
when I became a man I gave up my childish ways.
For now we see as in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.
Now I know in part, then I shall understand fully,
even as I have been fully understood.
So faith, hope and love abide, these three;
but the greatest of these is love.

ABSORBEAT of St. Francis

MAY the power of your love, O Lord,
fiery and sweet
so absorb my(our) heart(s) as to withdraw it(them)
for all that is under heaven.
Grant that I(we) may be ready
to die for love of your live,
as you died for love of my(our) love.
Amen.

THE CHRISTARAKSHA

May the Cross of the Son of GOD,
who is mightier than all the hosts of Satan,
and more glorious than all the angels of heaven,
abide with us in our going out and our coming in!
By day and by night,
at morning and at evening,
at all times and in all places,
may it protect and defend us!
From the wrath of evil men,
from the assaults of evil spirits
from foes visible and invisible,
from the snares of the devil,
from all low passions
that beguile the soul and the body,
may it guard, protect and deliver us.
May the Lord of heaven and earth
vouchsafe us his blessing
and grant forgiveness
to all the faithful departed. *Amen.*

PRAYER OF ABANDONMENT

Father,
I abandon myself into your hands;
do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you;
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me
and in all your creatures –
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul;
I offer it to you with the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord,
and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands,
without reserve
and with boundless confidence,
for you are my Father.

St. Charles de Foucauld

A PRAYER OF SAINT SERAPHIM

O Lord and Master of my life,
give me not a spirit of sloth, vain curiosity,
lust for power and idle talk,
But give me Thy servant a spirit of soberness, humility,
patience and love.

O Lord and King, grant me to see my own faults and
not to condemn my brother:
for blessed art thou to the ages of ages. *Amen.*

PRAYERS OF FR. GILBERT SHAW

O OCEAN of love, stillness profound,
light and life of all who come to thee,
draw me into they still peace,
that all the noise of things be stilled
and the music of my soul be all one harmony,
thysel alone, my GOD, my all.

O GOD, I am thine;
move thou my prayer, that I may seek thee;
O GOD, I am thine;
move thou my heart, that I may find thee;
O GOD, I am thine;
enslave my will, that I may hold to thee;
enlighten my will, that I may grow in thee;
enfold me in thyself, that all my being be to thee alone.
my GOD, my all.

O GOD, my love,
from thee I come,
thine I am,
to thee I go.

O GOD, thou hast made us for thyself,
that we might be the mirror of thy loveliness:
thou hast taken our life to be thine,
that we may see thy beauty as
thou wouldst have it in human form.

O Jesus, GOD and Man,
so draw us to thyself,
that lost in thee we may find life.

NAKED of all save love went love,
till naked in body,
wounded, pierced in agony of love.
Love broke the casket of the font of love,
that he might draw all souls to find
their end within the Heart of GOD.

LORD, give me love that I may know true penitence.

O MYSTERY of love, that love must give so much.

FATHER,

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt,
rank me with whom thou wilt;
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me be employed for thee or laid wide for thee;
exalted for thee or brought low for thee;
let me be full, let me be empty;
let me have all things, let me have nothing;
I freely and heartily yield all things
to thy pleasure

DEAR Lord, set us free
from the concerns and anxieties of today;
help us to not ignore them, but to leave them in your care,
and whilst here, help us to give our whole selves, unhindered,
into your loving arms, that we may be in you and you in us.
Then send us back to your concerns,
seeing you in each one of them
so that we may carry you to them, and them to you.
Grant us, in this way, to be bearers of your love. *Br. Keith SSF*

DEAR Lord,
into the wound in your side I place those whom I love;
hold them always close to you and draw them ever closer.
And as you do so, draw me ever closer,
that in our closeness to you, we may be closer to each other.

LORD, make me an instrument of your peace!
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, Joy.

O DIVINE MASTER, grant that
I many not so much seek
To be consoled, as to console;
To be understood, as to understand,
To be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS ON THE PASSION

We venerate thy Cross, O Lord,
and sing and tell the glory of thy Resurrection,
for by virtue of the Cross,
joy is come into the whole world

To earth thou hast come down, O Master,
to save Adam; and not finding him on earth
thou hast descended into Hell seeking him there. *Orthodox prayers*
Author of the world's joy. Bearer of the world's pain.

At the heart of all our distress let unconquerable gladness dwell.

At this point He began first to show me His might,
for He went into Hell; and when He was there,
He raised up the great root out of the deep darkness
which rightfully was knit to Him in highest heaven.
The body lay in the grave till Easter morning;
and from that time he lay never more.

- *Julian of Norwich*

In Eden, I shall always remember this:
I lost blessings without number.
Down fell my bright crown.
But the victory of Calvary
restored them to me once again.

- *Pastycelyn 18th century Wales*

Jesus, by Thy wounded feet
O guide my feet aright!

Jesus, by Thy wounded hands
O keep my hands from wrong!

Jesus, by Thy parched lips
O curb my cruel tongue!

Jesus, by Thy closed eyes
O guard my wayward sight!

Jesus, by Thy thorn-crowned brow
O purify my mind!

Jesus, by Thy pierced heart
O knit my heart to Thee!