

Iona–style Morning Prayer

Introductory prayer

The world belongs to God,
the earth and all its people.

How good it is, how wonderful,
to live together in unity.

Love and faith come together,
justice and peace join hands.

Open our lips, O God,
and our mouths shall proclaim your praise.

Confession

Holy God, maker of all,
have mercy on us.

Jesus Christ, servant of the poor,
have mercy on us.

Holy Spirit, breath of life,
have mercy on us.

At the centre of our faith is the belief that God' goodness is at the heart of humanity, planted more deeply than all that is wrong. Let us in silence confess our faults and admit our frailty. (*silence*)

For the dullness of our vision, Father forgive.

For the weakness of our faith, Jesus forgive.

For the joylessness of our living, Spirit forgive.

Holy Three have mercy upon us; forgive us our sins,
help us to seek,
help us to see,
help us to serve you.

Listen to the words of Jesus, words that we can trust: "Don't be afraid, your sins are forgiven. I love you. Come and follow me".

A Prayer for God's help

Move among us O God; give us life.
Let your people rejoice in you.

Make our hearts clean within us.
Renew us in mind and spirit.

Give us again the joy of your help.
With your spirit of freedom, sustain us.

The Collect for the day,

Risen Christ:
You filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope.
Strengthen us to proclaim your risen life
and fill us with your peace
to the glory of God the Father
Amen.

The Readings for the day,

1 John 3.1-7
Luke 24.36-48

At the end of the readings:

For the word of God in Scripture,
for the word of God among us,
for the word of God within us,
Thanks be to God.

A Short Reflection

Forgiveness.

'Repentance and forgiveness are to be proclaimed in his name to all nations. You are witnesses of these things.'

Reading the Gospels, we find that a huge amount of Jesus's teaching was about forgiveness. Not just the obvious bits, like the return of the prodigal son, or Jesus forgiving Peter after he denied him, but in all his healings and exorcisms, which were accompanied by the words—'your sins are forgiven—go in peace'.

I remember being taught in confirmation classes when I was about 12 about 'sins of commission and sins of omission' and I expect you do too—in other words, the wrong things we do, and the good things we fail to do. 'We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us', as it says in the Book of Common Prayer.

Nowadays, sin is a rather out of date word, not because we don't sin, but because we don't recognise the word for what it means. It has been made a bit of a joke, with people trying to lose weight talking about a 'sinful' chocolate cake and so on. And perhaps that is one of the reasons that our younger generations find church difficult, with the emphasis in much of our liturgy on sinfulness and the need for repentance. Perhaps it is more helpful to talk in terms of our failings and mistakes, which we all make, all the time. Some of them are big failings, big mistakes. Some of them are more minor, but usually they damage or hurt other people, and often they damage ourselves. Which one of us can say that when we have been having an argument with someone dear to us, we have never snapped out something in our irritation which we instantly regret, and which sours the relationship for a while?

And perhaps what would be even more helpful is to put the emphasis of our thought, our prayer, on forgiveness.

Because forgiveness is the healing of relationships, perhaps between God and myself, or between me and another person, or between two different societies, or even between me and myself. It has to be a two-way thing: it can't be unilateral, because true forgiveness will always have an effect on the forgiven, as well as on the forgiver. It is freeing and healing. True forgiveness does not leave the offender feeling small and judged, but liberated and loved. As Richard Rohr, the American Franciscan friar says:

'If forgiveness doesn't happen—on a daily basis—there will be no community; without forgiveness, the logic of victimhood and perpetrator rules, instead of the illogic of love.

The logic of victim and perpetrator: bickering children, or rowing marital partners, royal brothers, people on the streets of Londonderry and Belfast, or groups of people with differing skin colour.

You will remember the story in the gospel of Luke about the woman who anointed Jesus' feet with costly ointment, wiping them with her hair, and how Jesus said to his critics that her love to him showed that her great sins had

been forgiven. He added that those who have not been forgiven cannot show love. It's a story which turns our human notions of fairness and justice on their heads. We humans think of sin as deserving punishment, which may then lead us to repentance, which may then lead on to our transformation into a better person. But Jesus' message in this story was that God works in a different way. His way is to respond to our sin, our failings and mistakes, by offering us his unconditional love and forgiveness. And it is that love and forgiveness which can effect our transformation, so that we want to repent, so that we want to be better people. And that story is one that is repeated over and over in the Bible, both Old Testament and New, and which of course reaches a climax in the story of Jesus' ministry and self-sacrifice. Indeed, it is the foundation of the Christian faith, that we are loved and forgiven by God, so that we are drawn towards that transformation in ourselves and our society which is what is meant by 'the kingdom of God'.

It's another reason why forgiveness is so important. Because nothing new can happen without forgiveness. Nothing can move forward. No progress can be made. We just become more entrenched in our attitudes, either as victim or as justified perpetrator, repeating the same old patterns, illusions, and half-truths.

But with forgiveness comes the chance of transformation.

Amen

Our Affirmation of Faith

We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.

We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Let us pray:

You may like to:

give thanks for something good that has happened for you.

pray for someone or some part of the world you know which is in trouble of some sort

pray for your friends and family

remember someone who has died.

The Lord's prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name; your kingdom come;
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

Closing prayer

O God, you have set before us a great hope
that your kingdom will come on earth, and have taught us to pray
for its coming. Make us ready to thank you for the signs of its
dawning, and to pray and work for the perfect day when your will
shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.
In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

May the blessing of the God of life be ours,
the blessing of the loving Christ be ours,
the blessing of the Holy Spirit be ours,
to cherish us, to help us, to make us holy.

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!

