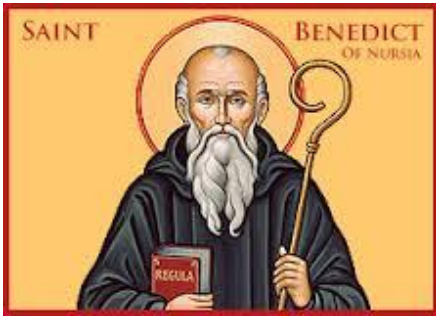


A Little Book of Comfort

Reflections and Prayers





St Benedict begins his Rule with the following words:

“LISTEN, CHILD, OF GOD TO THE GUIDANCE OF YOUR TEACHER. Attend to the message you hear and make sure that it pierces to your heart, so that you may accept with a willing freedom and fulfil by the

way you live the directions that come from your loving Father.”

Further on in the Rule, St Benedict goes on to say:

“This then, is the beginning of my advice: make prayer the first step in anything worthwhile that you attempt. Persevere and do not weaken in that prayer. Pray with confidence, because God, in His love and forgiveness, has counted us as his own sons and daughters.”

These words have encouraged Christians over the centuries up to the present day and will continue to do so in the future. As we read through this booklet, we pray that these words continue to echo and inspire each one of us in these times of uncertainty to maintain and strengthen our faith, in the love and compassion of our Father who cradles each one of us in his arms. Amen



Psalm 150

Praise for God's Surpassing Greatness

Praise the Lord!
 Praise God in his sanctuary;
 praise him in his mighty firmament!
 Praise him for his mighty deeds;
 praise him according to his surpassing greatness!
 Praise him with trumpet sound;
 praise him with lute and harp!
 Praise him with tambourine and dance;
 praise him with strings and pipe!
 Praise him with clanging cymbals;
 praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
 Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!
 Praise the Lord!

Both Christians and Jews say that this is a very special Psalm. Its author is unknown and it is the Psalm that concludes the Book of Psalms written perhaps after the exile in Babylon some 600 years before the birth of Christ.

The Psalm reminds us that we must shout to God in praise and thanksgiving. We must sing to him and make music, showing our joy for all He does in caring for his people.

Christians believe today that we should continue to give God praise for all he does for his children and to remember that we are never alone. No matter what happens God is there beside us. We are never alone.

Prayer

Father God,

Help us to remember just how much you love us and that there is nothing to fear.

In times when we are fearful and weak in our faith we ask that you sustain us and help us to be more aware of your presence placing our fears and anxieties into your loving hands. Remind us that there is no burden too great for you to carry.

We ask you to strengthen and re-energise our faith and love of you. Amen

'Your hope of fulfilment should be centred in God alone.'



Scripture Reading

See what love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are



God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

(1 John 3: 1-3)

This extract focuses on God's love and how his love results in Christ's followers becoming children of God. As a child of God we are seen as a sign of love from God our heavenly Father. John highlights the fact that we are not only called children of God but as believers we truly are God's children. This theme is closely linked to John's words in John 1 v 12,

"But to all who did receive him, who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

Those who both receive Jesus as Lord and believe in his name as the risen Messiah are God's children.

Prayer

Father we pray that as your children we ask that we may live out our lives in the way you would have us to do and that love and service to our neighbour is at the forefront of all we do and say. We pray that we may be strengthened in prayer and be still in your presence to listen attentively to your voice for guidance in all we do. Amen



Canticle from Ephesians (Eph. Ch.1 v3-10)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.



He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us.

With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

We read, in this canticle from the letter of St Paul written to the Ephesians, of Paul giving praise to God for the wonders of our salvation and especially for God's choice in making us his children. We do not know why God has chosen us, as we are sinners and do not merit such love but with Paul we are certain that God's choice is real. We are his sons and daughters, and God will never go back on his word.

Prayer

Father God your love for us is a real mystery and we acknowledge that we may never be able to fully understand this. What we do know is that you do love us and through your Son's death and resurrection we are freed from sin and death.



Thank you for your love and grace. We place our life into your hands and ask that through our faith others may come to know you. Amen

We find fulfillment in God

What God requires of us

Scripture Reading

'With what shall I come before the Lord,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings,
with calves a year old?
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
with tens of thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?'
He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

This reading is one of my favourites in that we see clearly that God requires only three things from us 'to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God'. All three may seem simple enough and achievable. Yet realistically they will challenge us and God knows this. So to help us in accomplishing God's requirements we need to be constantly aware of the presence of God in our lives and maintain a close relationship with Him through prayer to enable us to fulfil fully what He asks. Remember that God does not expect that we will always succeed but that we try.

Prayer

Father we ask that you will guide us in our prayer life and help us to try to maintain a regular time set aside for you. The world is so full of distractions and it is so easy for us to lose sight of what really is important. Our time with you is never wasted. It allows us time to think, to find peace and solace, to re-energise our strength physically and mentally and to direct our energies towards family, friends and our neighbour. We place ourselves into your loving hands and ask that you will help us never to be defeated in our efforts but to keep trying. We make this prayer in Jesus name. Amen

'God doesn't require us to succeed he only requires us to try'



Psalm 67

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,
that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.

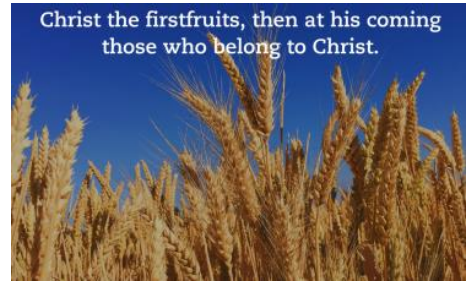
Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth.

Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.

May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him.



Originally a harvest thanksgiving Psalm it has been sung in Church on Sundays since the fifth century, since in this psalm we give thanks for the resurrection of Christ, the first fruits of those who sleep, the beginning of the new harvest of Mankind to salvation.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give you praise and thanks for your love for us as your children. A love that is so often not acknowledged, valued, or deserved. Despite all our failings you sent your Son Jesus to save us from both sin and death and in doing so leave us a pathway to repent of 'our sins' and through your gracious love enable us to enter the kingdom of heaven to live with you for eternity. Amen

First fruits of the Resurrection



Scripture Reading

Unity in the body of Christ

'I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift'.

(Eph. Ch.4 v 1-7)

This reading has a very clear message about the relevance of unity. For many Christians, how to walk in unity with others is one of the most important things that will not only enable the Church to grow but each individual in their faith. It must also be said that unity across denominations must be pursued with determination from all leaders and members. Spend some time reflecting on the following ten points;

- *Unity is a gift from God.*
- *Unity is maintained, not created by man.*
- *Unity grows over time.*
- *Unity is most opposed by pride and self-interest.*
- *Unity is a uniquely Christian adornment.*
- *Unity requires a doctrinal centre – the gospel.*
- *Unity does not mean uniformity.*
- *Unity depends on grace and gifts.*
- *Unity grows when it is stretched, pressured, and even threatened.*
- *Unity glorifies God and attracts unbelievers.*

Prayer

Father, as we come to you in prayer, we ask that you help us to work together in unity with people we meet in our day-to-day lives, within the communities in which we live, and with other denominations. Help us to

realise that we are far stronger together than being divided and whatever differences there are can be overcome and seen as



positive rather than negative. We remember that we are created by you in one body and one Spirit, just as we are called to one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Amen

Psalm 34

I will bless the Lord at all times;
 his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
 My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
 let the humble hear and be glad.
 O magnify the Lord with me,
 and let us exalt his name together.
 I sought the Lord, and he answered me,
 and delivered me from all my fears.
 Look to him, and be radiant;
 so your faces shall never be ashamed.
 This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord,
 and was saved from every trouble.
 The angel of the Lord encamps
 around those who fear him, and delivers them.
 O taste and see that the Lord is good;
 happy are those who take refuge in him.
 O fear the Lord, you his holy ones,
 for those who fear him have no want.
 The young lions suffer want and hunger,
 but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

Come, O children, listen to me;
 I will teach you the fear of the Lord.
 Which of you desires life,
 and covets many days to enjoy good?
 Keep your tongue from evil,
 and your lips from speaking deceit.
 Depart from evil, and do good;
 seek peace, and pursue it.

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
 and his ears are open to their cry.



The face of the Lord is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears,
and rescues them from all their troubles.
The Lord is near to the broken-hearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the Lord rescues them from
them all.

He keeps all their bones;
not one of them will be broken.

Evil brings death to the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

The Lord redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.



In the Prologue of his Rule St Benedict quotes from this particular Psalm. In the 'Covenant Charter' he makes it a guide to Christian life, and a call to all those who long for life. It is a Psalm that helps us to commit our lives afresh to God acknowledging that only our heavenly Father can satisfy our needs.

Prayer

Heavenly Father in whose strength we put all our trust we ask that you hear our prayer. We are weak and can do nothing without you. We ask that you will grant us help through your grace, so that in following your commands our words and actions will please you. We ask this in your Son's name, our saviour Jesus Christ. Amen



Scripture Reading

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

(Col. Ch. 3 v 12-17)

This extract, from scripture, talks about how we are a part of the body of Christ and as such we should try to live out our lives as a visible sign to others of our love of God. As Christians, God calls us individually to play our part. But what does it mean to be called? We can see the meaning when we read, 'Each one of you is part of the body of Christ, and we are chosen to live in peace and service of our neighbour. So let the peace that comes from Christ control our thoughts and allow us to do the best we can. God blesses us with gifts and he wants us to recognise those gifts and use them for the benefit of others. In doing this we discover meaning and purpose to our lives and an inner joy of helping to build the kingdom of God on earth.'

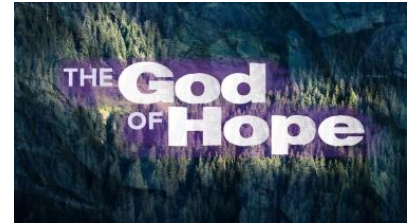
Prayer

Father, we come into your presence to thank you for the gifts you have given to each of us. We pray that you will open our eyes to recognise them and to use them fully for the benefit of your people and in building your kingdom here on earth. Amen



Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.
 Lord, hear my voice!
 Let your ears be attentive
 to the voice of my supplications!



If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
 Lord, who could stand?
 But there is forgiveness with you,
 so that you may be revered.

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
 and in his word I hope;
 my soul waits for the Lord
 more than those who watch for the morning,
 O Israel, hope in the Lord!
 For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
 and with him is great power to redeem
 It is he who will redeem Israel
 from all its iniquities.

This Psalm is a prayer for help in the midst of distress, but also a prayer of hope and trust in God in whom all find redemption and healing.

Prayer

We come to you to ask for forgiveness and for healing, Father. We know that through your grace you will answer our prayer and in so doing bring peace to our lives. We ask that through the power of the Holy Spirit we may be strengthened to begin again and be people of compassion, forgiveness and love and live out our lives in the way you want us to. Amen.

**When words don't come easily God still hears our prayers.
 Be still, have faith, all will be well.**



Scripture Reading

For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

(Ezekiel Ch.34 v 11-16)

God is the true shepherd of his people. In early Christian writings and art Jesus too was often represented as the Good Shepherd. Each of us is called to be both sheep following the Master and to be shepherds to those in need of our love and care.

Prayer

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters
he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,

I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

