



**DURHAM  
CATHEDRAL**

THE SHRINE OF ST CUTHBERT

# Praying Together

*during the week beginning Sunday 13 September  
The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity*

*During this time of great anxiety and uncertainty, we want to stay in touch with our regular worshippers and indeed with everyone who is associated with the Cathedral family. We are delighted that we have been able to reintroduce congregational worship here at the Cathedral and there is more information about that later on in this booklet. Durham Cathedral is also open for private prayer and quiet reflection.*

*If you'd like to come to the cathedral for worship and/or prayer, there are some important measures we'd like you to know about, to ensure the safety of members of the public and staff. You can find this information on our website: [www.durhamcathedral.co.uk](http://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk) We will continue to live stream services as well so that, if you can't re-join us yet, you will still be able to engage with us online.*

## **Gospel**

**Matthew 18. 21-35**

Then Peter came and said to Jesus, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe." Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave

you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?" And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

## Thought for the Day

by the Reverend Canon Charlie Allen

Today we commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain – a military campaign in the Second World War that saw the Royal Air Force and the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy defend the United Kingdom from the skies.

This morning, however, I want to take you just a few weeks later into that war – to a cold November night in which the city of Coventry was devastated by bombing. To a night when over 500 people were killed, and four and a half thousand homes were destroyed.

The 14<sup>th</sup> century Cathedral was amongst the many buildings razed to the ground in that tragic series of events. You might have expected a reaction of anger or despair. But Richard Howard, who was the Provost of Coventry during the Second World War, had the extraordinary words '*Father, Forgive*' carved into the East wall behind the remains of the altar instead.

Those words remain today. And they are still extraordinary. They bring us to the very heart of the Gospel – to the requirement to forgive in order to be able to move forward. It is one of the most profoundly difficult parts of the Christian tradition.

C.S. Lewis summed it up rather well when he wrote, '*Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive*'.

Yet this concept is so fundamental to the Christian faith that Jesus even spoke of it in his dying breath: '*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*'.

In this morning's Gospel reading we find Peter struggling with forgiveness – it sounds as if he is having a challenging time with another member of the church community. And he asks Jesus how many times he must forgive a person, making the generous suggestion of seven times. We're not told how he responds to Jesus' reply, but we can imagine he was astounded, because Jesus states that he should

forgive a person not just seven times, but seventy seven times – the implication being that this is a number so great that you stop counting.

Peter is being invited to a new way of being. He is invited to embrace the vision of a world in which mercy and self-giving love have the final word, not vengeance or self-preservation. A movement the unforgiving servant in today's parable struggled to make.

Forgiveness is hard and difficult work. It requires us to see into the heart of the other and to walk around for a while in their shoes, for we will never forgive someone unless we recognise that there is a neighbour to love on the far side of the action that hurt us so much.

Yet Shakespeare's description still resounds: "Mercy is twice bless'd – it blesseth him that gives and him that takes". To live in an environment of mercy and forgiveness is to live in an atmosphere of peace, healing and growth. Forgiveness says, "I want the person to be fully well and alive again".

Forgiveness is a concept so fundamental to the Christian faith that in the Gospels Jesus makes it as central as our daily bread. "*Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us*" we pray daily in the Lord's Prayer. We ask to be forgiven, only in so far as we forgive others. Jesus taught his disciples that forgiveness is a way of life, a way of being. It is not about duty or obedience, but an expression of the divine within us – an act of participation in the life of God.

And today, as we gather around this altar, we are called to renew that expression of the divine life within us.

Give us grace, Lord, to forgive. Let us pray:

Loving God,

as you opened Peter's eyes to the liberating challenge of forgiveness,  
so you invite us to reflect on the forgiveness we seek,  
and the forgiveness we struggle to give.

Grant us courage in this calling, that we may nurture the divine within us,  
and hold before us a vision of your Kingdom where mercy and love abound  
and relationships are restored.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

# A Form of Intercession

United in the company of all the faithful  
and looking for the coming of the kingdom,  
let us offer our prayers to God,  
the source of all life and holiness.

Merciful Lord,  
strengthen all Christian people by your Holy Spirit,  
that we may live as a royal priesthood and a holy nation  
to the praise of Jesus Christ our Saviour.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Bless Paul our bishop, and Sarah, Bishop of Jarrow,  
and all ministers of your Church,  
that by faithful proclamation of your word  
we may be built on the foundation of the apostles  
and prophets  
into a holy temple in the Lord.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Empower us by the gift of your holy and life-giving Spirit,  
that we may be transformed into the likeness of Christ  
from glory to glory.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Give to the world and its peoples  
the peace that comes from above,  
that they may find Christ's way of freedom and life.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Hold in your embrace all who witness to your love in the  
service of the poor and needy;  
all those who minister to the sick and dying;  
and all who bring light to those in darkness.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Touch and heal all those whose lives are scarred by sin  
or disfigured by pain,  
that, raised from death to life in Christ,  
their sorrow may be turned to eternal joy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Remember in your mercy all those gone before us,  
who have been well-pleasing to you from eternity;  
preserve in your faith your servants on earth,  
guide us to your kingdom,  
and grant us your peace at all times.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Hasten the day when many will come  
from east and west, from north and south,  
and sit at table in your kingdom.

**Lord, have mercy.**

We give you thanks  
for the whole company of your saints in glory,  
with whom in fellowship we join our prayers and praises;  
by your grace may we, like them,  
be made perfect in your love.

**Blessing and glory and wisdom,  
thanksgiving and honour and power,  
be to our God for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

# Calendar of Holy Days

Monday 14 September

Holy Cross Day

Almighty God,  
who in the passion of your blessed Son  
made an instrument of painful death  
to be for us the means of life and peace:  
grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ  
that we may gladly suffer for his sake;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

Tuesday 15 September

Cyprian, bishop, martyr, 258

Wednesday 16 September

Ninian, bishop, apostle of the Picts, c 432

*Edward Bouverie Pusey, priest, 1882*

Thursday 17 September

Hildegard, abbess, visionary, 1179

Saturday 19 September

*Theodore, archbishop, 690*

## Hymn

Love Divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heaven, to earth come down,  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,  
All thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesu, thou art all compassion,  
Pure unbounded love thou art;  
Visit us with thy salvation,  
Enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,  
Let us all thy life receive;  
Suddenly return, and never,  
Never more thy temples leave.

Thee we would be always blessing,  
Serve thee as thy hosts above,  
Pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,  
Glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,  
Pure and spotless let us be;  
Let us see thy great salvation,  
Perfectly restored in thee.  
Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in heaven we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before thee,  
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Charles Wesley

## Poem: Knole by C H Sisson (1914-2003)

*Bristol-born critic, translator and poet, C H Sisson's poetry was experimental, sparse and direct. Here he paints a picture of human and animal functionality, going through the motions, without real awareness of the divine plan but, in a universalist final coup, all enjoying the eternal benefit of Christ's resurrection. This is the poetry of hope.*

The white hillside is prickled with antlers  
And the deer wade to me through the snow.  
From John Donne's church the muffled and galoshed  
Patiently to their holy dinners go.

And never do those antlered heads reflect  
On the gentle flanks where in autumn they put their seed  
Nor Christians on the word which, that very hour,  
Their upturned faces or their hearts received.

But spring will bring the heavy doe to bed;  
The fawn will wobble and soon after leap.  
Those other's will die and this or the next year's turn  
And find the resurrection encased in sleep.

## A Prayer for use during the Coronavirus outbreak

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.

## A Prayer of Legacy and Renewal

Every history of ours, O Lord, is the history of all.  
For no church is an island, entire to itself.  
For the fire of thy servants in far centuries,  
thy name be praised, O Lord;  
for ancient stones and liturgies, for ripened learning  
and long disciplines of prayer and peace,  
thy name be blessed, O Lord;  
and every saint, O lord,  
preserve, renew, and multiply,  
in the eternal Christ.  
Amen.

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