

ELY DIOCESAN MOTHERS' UNION

Thursday Prayer July 15 2021. Praying our faith today.

Good morning everyone and a warm welcome to our July Thursday prayer. Our theme is praying our faith.

Let us open our hearts to God in praise and joy. With Mary we magnify The Lord and rejoice in God our saviour.

Heavenly Father, we bow down before you and we recognise your power, your reign over everything that has existed and all that will be in the future.

We come together to worship and glorify our God who through Jesus we may call the one almighty father, who has given us life and the promise of eternal life.

Let everything that breathes – praise the Lord. Amen.

Through our praise we become aware of the powerful love of our heavenly Father for us and we bring before him our sins – in our thoughts, our words and our actions, those we have done and those we have neglected to do. Sins committed recently and those which over time have become a burden. May we lay our sins at God's feet and ask for his forgiveness. Loving Lord, thank you for your forgiveness and understanding.

You are our strength, hope and salvation. Teach us to always walk with you on our life's journey. Amen.

God of life we praise and thank you for your unfailing love and infinite mercy. We thank you for the knowledge of your presence in our lives and your many blessings. You are indeed a great provider. Amen

Della

Our reading is taken from Paul's letter to the Philippians chapter 4 verses 4 to 7.

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Jesus Christ."

Reflection on Praying our Faith today.

As I reflect on my prayer life today my mind goes back to the first prayers I remember saying. I wonder how many of you share similar memories of bedtime prayers usually with my mother and to whom I'm very grateful that she gave me such a firm base to build upon. There was a structure which included the Lord's prayer, saying thank you to God and asking his blessings on family and Friends and ended with a verse asking a blessing on me during the night, which meant a lot as I didn't then and still don't like the dark very much.

During my confirmation classes at our village church led by our Rector I remember being given the ACTS format for the next stage in prayer. Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication, (our modern prayers of intercessions) I found this very helpful but I, like many others, continued and still do, to discover and learn more about prayer and its meaning in our lives.

We discover that prayer is communication as when we make a phone call, it is a two-way conversation which involves both speaking and listening to God. During our journey of faith we are

invited by God to be in his presence not just in church or our personal prayer time but that our whole life can be a time spent with God. We need to be tuned in, like the radio to the correct wavelength. We learn to accept that at times it can feel dry, arid or foggy and blurred, but although we can feel lost in the wilderness and prayer is unfathomable it is also awe inspiring beautiful and joyously real. Prayer involves being open, attentive, faithful and often patiently waiting on God's timing. It goes beyond asking in order to obtain particular answers, for God knows our needs before we voice them. It is bringing those for whom we pray to come ever closer to God's love and presence.

We are all very different personalities and there are a variety of types of prayer and we learn that some will appeal to us more than others. Formal prayer and personal prayer are well known. Being sensitive to people's needs or situation and immediately taking them to God in prayer, maybe asking guidance and strength in any action we take, are known as arrow prayers.

For many of us the recent lockdowns have given us the opportunity to experience stillness solitude and silence. It has been a time to listen and to learn that God can speak to us if we allow ourselves the time and space to listen.

As Christians we turn to Jesus and read in the New Testament that during his earthly life Christ prayed in many different ways. From the formality of the temple and synagogue, praying for his friends his enemies and over children. Jesus taught his disciples to pray the prayer we know and still use today as the Lord's Prayer. He prayed silently in the garden of Gethsemane and cried out to his father from the cross. We are told Jesus said that whenever two or three are gathered together in his name he will be there with us.

Stephen Cottrell the Archbishop of York writes:

"We need the transforming power of the gospel to shape and renew us. That is why a regular pattern of prayer and Bible reading is so helpful. It becomes the foundation upon which a Christian life is built."

This reminds me of Mary Sumner and why the Mothers' Union is based on prayer, which may lead or alter the course of our actions. Prayer is indeed the place where God's spirit shows us what we need to see and is the place where we draw nourishment from God to fulfil our lives.

Through prayer we open ourselves and others to the possibility of change and how evident this has been during the past 18 months with the emergence of the use of the Internet and other ways of communicating and taking part together in worship. Changing things through prayer can often feel as if they take a long time in human terms but who would have imagined, pre-Covid, that a live stream zoom service could become such an integral part of so many of our lives.

God's ways are indeed mysterious. Prayer appears at times simple when we talk with God but it is also complex for we are communicating with One who is outside time and eternity.

Praying our faith today in Ely diocese means offering a variety of prayers to the Mothers' Union members and covers a wide range for both individual and branch needs, to be used regularly or on a one off basis. Printed prayer material from our HQ in Mary Sumner house is passed on to you and includes the worldwide prayer diary and midday prayers for daily use and a range of prayer books e.g. Dear Lord and individual prayer cards.

At diocesan level among other things we provide our diocesan prayer diary for daily prayer, the monthly Thursday prayer and this year a Quiet Day in September. We also highlight the need for prayer for our global members with the worldwide links. Closer to home we provide for indoor members, MU liaison with clergy, encourage family worship and provide a time of silent vigil during the 16 days of activism campaign.

Recently I discovered the 10 fingers prayer based on Philippians 4 verse 13. Saint Paul writes:
"I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

A short verse but each word corresponds to the fingers of both hands so instead of counting to 10 in times of stress or anger take a deep breath and count off this prayer on your fingers. It really does help.

Wherever you are in your life praying our faith - Keep calm and keep praying.

Heavenly father inspire us, Counsel and comfort us.

Help us to respond with new depths to our loving, in new heights in our praising, new lengths to our serving, new breadths to our praying as we follow in the footsteps of Christ filled with your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our prayer for today.

A gracious and holy father give us wisdom to perceive you, diligence to seek you, patience to wait for you, eyes to behold you, a heart to meditate upon you and a life to proclaim you, through the power of the spirit of Jesus. Amen.

We will say the Lord's prayer together.

Intercessions

Angela.

Dear lord we pray for your blessings upon the worldwide work of the Mothers' Union and Sheran Harper our worldwide president. The Chief Executive Bev Julien, the task group leaders and all who work in Mary Sumner house. For our province of Canterbury and Kathryn Anderson our provincial president.

We pray for our own diocese of Ely and our Mothers' Union members. Guide Hazel Williams our diocesan president, the trustees, our archdeaconry vice presidents and officeholders as they plan and prepare for future events initiatives and projects.

Bless the vision for the Mothers' Union throughout the world.

Gill.

Mothers' Union is based on prayer and today our theme is praying our faith so we pray for our praying our faith team and their prayerful work with:

Indoor members organised by Joanna Saunders

Our clergy liaison led by Della Fletcher.

Chaplaincy matters with Reverend Michael Banyard,

Young families and worship encouraged by Angela Jones.

Campaigns particularly the 16 days of activism against domestic violence and gender abuse and

Bye Buy childhood campaign shared with the faith in action group.

Our worldwide links headed by Gill Uttin

Lusaka in Zambia

Shyogwe in Rwanda

Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria

Karimnager in India

Plus our diocese to diocese links with Kigali in Rwanda and Vellore in India

We finally pray for the team, and coordinator and those involved in any way with organising, preparing and the practicalities of Thursday prayer, Ely diocesan prayer diary and quiet days.

We pray Lord that you will give us humility, wisdom, confidence, faith and understanding to give all our members support and opportunities to pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Helen.

Dear God we offer to you our families, friends and those we know who have particular needs at this time. Please guide, protect and heal all those we name in our hearts. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us pray the Mothers' Union prayer together.

Loving Lord, we thank you for your love so freely given to us all. We pray for families around the world. Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.

Empowered by your spirit may we be united in prayer and worship and in love and service, reach out as your hands across the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

We will now join together to sing the hymn Be still for the presence of the Lord.

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the holy one, is here;

come bow before him now

With reverence and fear.

In him no sin is found,

We stand on holy ground.

Be still for the presence of the Lord

The holy one is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord

Is shining all around

He burns with holy fire

With splendour he is crowned.

How awesome is the sight

Our radiant king of light.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.

Be still for the power of the Lord

Is moving in this place

He comes to cleanse and heal

To minister his grace.

No work too hard for him

In faith receive from him

Be still for the power of the Lord

is moving in this place.

And may we close with the Grace, which we will say together.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and evermore. Amen.