

## Thursday Prayers for February 16th 2023

in the Cathedral and on Zoom 10.30am

Zoom details:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83847809128?pwd=VVhXUGlNWkpaGkyMUdwWHQvcC9tQT09>

ID. 838 4780 9128/Passcode 338053

Prayer Focus: Choose Life

### Introductory Prayer

Dear God, we ask for a flourishing community, where neighbours learn to love each other and come to know Jesus. We pray that we can be good stewards of Your love to each one of our neighbours. We ask that our communities may be places where all are welcomed.

**Amen**

### The Mothers' Union Prayer

**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**

### Prayer for the month

Generous God, we affirm your power to bless all cultures and transform communities.

Abundant God, you have provided all the resources to transform communities and create a sustainable future.

Compassionate God, enable your people to see your provision that their sense of worth and quality of life may flourish.

Gracious God, transform the mindsets of the vulnerable from powerless dependency to the freedom of self sufficiency.

Generous God, we are blessed by your constant provision. Help us to use your resources well and enable others to do the same.

**Amen**

### Bible Reading 1Corinthians 3:1-3

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. <sup>2</sup>I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; <sup>3</sup>for you are still carnal. For where *there are envy,*

strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

### Reflection

In Joshua 13:22 we read that Israel crossed the Jordan River from the plains of Moab into the land of Canaan, which was the Promised Land. It was not given for Moses to go with them but he prepared them for their new life, reminding them of the history of Israel's journey through the wilderness and of the 10 Commandments that they were given by God. At the end of this, in Deuteronomy 30:15-20, he gives them a stern warning - that this Law comes with a proviso - a choice of life or death: blessings or curses.

They were to keep all of these commandments and to live according to them. Doing this would bring them life and prosperity, but if they did not listen and followed their own hearts, then they would reap death and adversity.

The Gospel Reading from Matthew 22: 34-40, has Jesus engaging the Ten Commandments and, although Deuteronomy 30 is not referenced, it is possible to see that Jesus' interpretation of these commandments stands on the side of life. When asked by the Pharisees which is the great commandment in the law, Jesus answered 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.' But then Jesus added a second commandment, even though he had been asked only which single commandment was the most important. 'And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'

We commonly think of our neighbours as those who live near to us, but Jesus sees the word 'neighbour' as inclusive of the whole world. In the Old Testament, Leviticus 19:18, we are told to do no wrong to others but in this new law Jesus takes it a step further bringing it into something more. After all, if we just stayed in bed all day then it would not be difficult to keep this command from the Old testament. But now we are commanded to love one another as our very self. This causes us to put ourselves in the situation of our fellow man and so gives rise to an inner need, a desire to be kind and, furthermore, to help those in adversity. It means that this commandment now becomes an active one where we must get up and do something to make things better for all. To reinforce this, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan showing that this extends even to our enemies.

When St Paul writes his first letter to the Corinthians, he tells them that they are not mature enough in their Christianity and that he has not

been able to address them other than as children. They have been quarreling and are jealous of each other in their dealings.

St Paul knows that God loves his creation, so much so, that He feels the pain and the joy they experience at the hands of others. When Jesus says in Matt. 25:35-40 'inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it to me' He is telling us that if we think that we are obeying the 1st commandment but then go on to be unkind to our neighbour, this is in direct opposition to loving God, because in hurting others, we hurt our God. Thus the two great commandments can now be seen to be intrinsically tied together. You can't have one without the other.

Jesus and his followers, as Jews, are well aware of the requirements of Deuteronomy: therefore, he calls them to act and to obey as a way to choose life.

So, shall we Choose life?

And so help bring the Kingdom of Heaven down to Earth.

### **Hymn**

**A new commandment**

**I give unto you,**

**That you love one another**

**As I have loved you,**

**That you love one another**

**As I have loved you.**

**By this shall all know**

**That you are My disciples,**

**If you have love one for another.**

**By this shall all know**

**That you are My disciples,**

**If you have love one for another.**

**You Are my friends if**

**You do what I command you.**

**Without my help you can do nothing.**

**You Are my friends if**

**You do what I command you.**

**Without my help you can do nothing**

**True Love is patient,**

**Nor arrogant, nor boastful.**

**Love bears all things, love is eternal.**

**True Love is patient,  
Nor arrogant, nor boastful.  
Love bears all things, love is eternal.**

Intercessions:

We ask for God's blessing on Beverley Jullien, our chief executive; Sheran Harper our Worldwide President; Kathryn Anderson, our Provincial President; Julia Jameson, our Zonal Trustee; and, in our own diocese of Ely: Hazel Williams, Diocesan President; the Trustees, the Task Group Leaders and all who work in Mary Sumner House.

We remember in our prayers, our MU links world wide: Lusaka in Zambia, Shyogwe in Rwanda, Sokoto and Ikka in Nigeria, Karimnager in India and our diocesan links with Kigali in Rwanda and Vellore in India.

*In our Wave of prayer:*

We pray for Bentiu in South Sudan; Bunyoro Kitara in Uganda; Okigwe-North & Omu-Aran in Nigeria; Kilmore, Elphin & Ardagh in All-Ireland and Krishna-Godavari in India.

As we reflect on the Old Testament story of the Israelites in exile in Egypt, whom Pharaoh forced to make more bricks with less resources, it makes us grateful for our generous God, who provides us with all the tools and materials we need to carry out his work.

We shall now have a few moments of silent prayer to offer personal concerns to God for those in need, remembering also the Ukraine and all those in Turkey and Syria affected by the recent earthquake.

**The Thursday Prayer**

**Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**Amen**

**The Grace**