

# HIGH TIDE

*Parish  
Magazine*

*Weymouth  
St Paul  
with Fleet*

NOV 2024



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*We continue to explore the immense spiritual treasury of the Church of England.*

*Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) charities' appeal for donations in aid of the population in Gaza, Palestine, Lebanon, and the West Bank.*

*What is it that we open our hearts to? How does our heart influence the very life we live and our relationships with God, ourselves, and others? By the end of the article it should be clear to see why it is important to guard our hearts!*

*Good luck! :)*

*This article looks at some interesting Maltese traditions that shed light on the long history of food and death: how meal(s) are forms of dealing with death and its consequences.*

*She stole bread from his father's kitchen. On his return from war, her husband found a man in their bed. Her mother was Hungary's most hated Queen. A fascinating and holy life of a medieval princess who died in deep (and embraced) poverty.*

*The Book of Deuteronomy is a book of choice: life or death?!*

*Psalm 44 explores the difficult question of faith and trust in a loving God who alone truly shapes the course of events — and yet the same God allows suffering and destruction to befall on his people.*

*Many thanks to all who have contributed to the Parish Magazine and to Liz Evans for the proofreading. The next Magazine will be published on **Sunday 1st December**. Please, send all articles, information, news you wish to be publish by Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> Nov.*

Front cover: “*St. Elizabeth of Hungary and the lepers*” (right wing of an altarpiece) by Hans Holbein the Elder (ca. 1516); Alte Pinakothek, Munich (Germany)

## From the Vicar

Dearly Beloved,

History clearly teaches us that the world expects the Church - made Mother and Teacher, by the very Lord Jesus - to raise her voice when evil descends on our world. Even those who declare themselves non-believers or oppose the Church in every possible way, very often will want her to speak up and to act in defence of justice and peace, in defence of the suffering, the innocent, and the defenceless. Good historic examples are slavery or Nazi Germany. Regardless whether or not the charges are accurate, today many accuse the Church, in connection of the atrocities committed in those times, of having been silent and having lacked action.

For this reason, this month's magazine will be dedicated in great part to two grave evils of our times. One is the ongoing war in Gaza, first escalated by Hamas and then by the State of Israel, both choosing unjustifiable violence and the death of countless innocent people. There were various articles in the October issue of High Tide about the ongoing war between Israel and Palestine, reminding us of the immense suffering and unacceptable loss of life on both sides. Remember that all previous parish magazines are available on our parish website ([stpaulsweymouth.org](http://stpaulsweymouth.org)).

This month the stress will be on the need of prayer and help. When liturgical rules allow it, we say the Votive Mass for Peace here at St. Paul's and the so called Leonine Prayers (*Hail Mary; Hail Holy Queen; St. Michael Archangel*) at the end of every Low Mass are also offered for peace. I invite you to pray daily for peace in our world.

However, the sincerity of prayer is measured in our actions that follow it. Charities that are part of the Disasters Emergency Committee are responding right now in Gaza, Lebanon and the West Bank and your donation is vital. The UK Government will match pound-for-pound up to £10 million donated by the public to this appeal. Please pray incessantly and give generously.

On the day of Last Judgement, when Christ will return in glory, he will ask us what we have done to alleviate suffering (*see Mt 25,31-46*). We do not want the words of *Dies irae*, this medieval prayer for the departed, to apply to us: "*Guilty, now I pour my moaning, / All my shame with anguish owning*" as we stand in front of Christ's judgement seat in silence, having missed the opportunity of prayer and good deeds.

The second great evil to which various pages are dedicated in this magazine, is the Bill introduced to Parliament on assisted suicide, or as its supporters call it with misleading euphemism: "assisted dying".

To us, Christians, apply the words spoken through Isaiah: “*I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and give thee for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out them that sit in darkness out of the prison house*” (42,6.7). Sadly, different churches are seldom united in their teaching and action on important issues. However, now they all speak in one voice on the issue of assisted suicide. This unity shows that there is clear teaching in revelation, coming from God, in this matter and Christians, by proclaiming and following this teaching, must be the light that leads our world out of the dark culture of death and destruction.

In his letter to the clergy, Bishop Paul of Oswestry, in whose pastoral care, after that of your Vicar, this Parish has been placed, writes:

“You will know that a Bill was introduced last week which, if successful in its passage through Parliament, will visit a grave evil upon all people, most notably the most vulnerable in our society. [...] I ask you all to read the letter, and to circulate it as widely as you are able among your parishes and chaplaincies, so that all God’s beloved people may awaken to the great risk posed by this dangerous and deadly legislation, and play their part - through prayer and action - in defending the sacred gift of life.”

On the following pages you will find statements from different churches denouncing and explaining the evil of this proposed legislation. There are two main, common arguments. One is that every human life is God’s gift and has infinite value and while suffering and pain are evils that must be alleviated, they do not take away from the infinite value and dignity of human life. This has been showed by the example of Jesus’ Passion and Death. Only God can determine the beginning and end of human life. The second argument is more practical. It is the experience of *every* country where assisted suicide has been introduced that, with time, rules and safeguarding are relaxed and human life loses something of its sacredness in society and assisted “dying” is extended to more and different cases. Some vulnerable people are made to feel a burden and thus “pushed” towards choosing assisted suicide.

I urge you to pray that this Bill does not pass. Pray especially the Holy Rosary, which is the “prayer of Life” par excellence. However, do not stop at prayer. ***Write to your local MP voicing your opposition to this most evil Bill of death.*** This can be done in under two minutes by visiting **[righttolife.org.uk](http://righttolife.org.uk)**. Be that light God is calling you to be.

Assuring you of my prayers, I am,  
ever yours in Christ,

*Fr. Gregory*

## Letter from Society Bishops

Dear Friends,

We are writing to you to make clear our opposition to the Assisted Dying Bill which was introduced to the House of Commons last week and which will be debated later this autumn.

Our resistance to these proposals is grounded both in what our faith teaches us about the dignity and value of every human life, and our conviction that this legislation will not serve the common good in our nation.

We know that the subject we are writing about is a very sensitive one. Like most of you, we have walked with families into the valley of the shadow of death and we are fully aware how, for many people, that can be a time of immense pain. Allowing medical professionals to end the lives of those who are suffering seems to many to be a sensitive response. But the unintended consequences of such legislation are deeply alarming.

The parishes we serve and the clergy who minister in them seek to pay attention to the powerless and give a voice to the most vulnerable in our society. Here we are led to find very real danger in this legislation. If assisted suicide becomes a legal possibility, it will inevitably follow that some who are dependent, aged, or dying, will feel under pressure to end their lives. Equally inevitably, those who will feel that pressure most acutely will be those who are income deprived and who fear becoming a financial burden on their loved ones.

Campaigners suggest that safeguards will be in place to protect people from such pressure, but the mere fact that such legislation exists will in itself impose intolerable burdens on people to opt for assisted suicide. What appears to offer choice to one set of people will take away choice from countless others.

Moreover, the example from every other nation is that, once a precedent has been set for a medical professional intentionally to end the life of one their patients, the relaxation of safeguards and an exponential increase in the number of people dying in this way follows. This is why so many medical professionals and disability rights campaigners, notably the Paralympian Tanni Grey-Thompson, have expressed such profound concerns about this Bill.

We are aware of the acute social care crisis in this country. Many tens of thousands of people who are close to death are unable to access proper palliative care. However, the solution to these problems is not to allow doctors to kill their patients, a decision that would change for ever the

character of the medical profession. What is required is the political courage to invest responsibly in social and end-of-life care.

Life is God's gift, not ours to possess. God is incarnate in the person of Jesus. Because God has united Himself with human life, so all human life is sacred, and every human person infinitely loved by God. The debate around this Bill is one that takes us to the very heart of the purpose and dignity of human life and, as Christians, staying silent is not an option. We would urge all who look to us for episcopal care to consider the following steps:

**Write to your MP.** Such letters have a demonstrable impact. It is best to keep letters short but personal, ideally drawing on your own experiences.

**Talk about the issue.** It is important to raise public awareness about this debate and it is a proper subject for preaching and teaching. The Christian life is about our preparation for death, so conversations about a good Christian death within a Church family are healthy ones.

**Pray.** Pray for those MPs who will soon have to decide how to vote. And pray for the dying, especially those whose death is a painful one.

It is a joy and a privilege to serve you as your Bishops. Please be assured of our constant prayer and our love for you all.

## Letter from the Bishops of the Church in Wales

Dear Friends,

This is an extremely difficult issue over which different people, including Christians, will have arrived at differing views with the best of intentions. Nonetheless, the protection of the most vulnerable people in our society from the risks inherent in this measure must be the paramount issue, and for that reason, we cannot in good conscience support the proposed legislation. There is abundant evidence from those jurisdictions where this measure has been enacted that good intentions can swiftly lead to bad and unintended outcomes, and to the devaluing of all human life.

Our Christian faith has always been rooted in the reality of pain and mortality, but also in the incalculable value of each human person, irrespective of their social standing, their access to resources, or their physical or mental ability.

In that spirit, shown to us in the person of Jesus, we give our heartfelt support to the extension of the best possible palliative care to all who require it, so that no limits are put on the compassion which we show as individuals and as a society.

## Open Letter on Assisted Dying

Sir,

The Private Member's Bill on assisted dying introduced to the House of Commons on Wednesday 16 October presents a dangerous threat to our society. The Christian faith offers a defence of the dignity of life and a call to improve the quality of life for all those living - including those who are dying.

Proponents of this legislation argue that it is intended only for those acutely suffering at the end of their life; however, in almost all other places where such legislation has been introduced, this provision has been widened over time to remove such safeguards. In the US State of Oregon (oft cited by supporters of assisted dying as a "safe" form of the legislation) the provision has been widened to include non-terminal conditions; in Canada assisted dying for the mentally ill will become legal in 2027; in Belgium assisted dying is now available to children. This is a perilous journey for our legislature to undertake. Not only will assisted dying become more widely available over time, it will also become increasingly acceptable.

This risk applies mostly to those in society who are already vulnerable: the elderly, the poor, the mentally unwell, the long-term sick, the lonely and isolated. The option of death should not be put to anyone in society, least of all those already disadvantaged by a culture that seems to value only productivity and success.

The real answer to these issues is multilayered, but must include greater investment in hospice and palliative care, further medical research into effective pain relief and treatment, and support for the families of those who are dying. These concerns ought to be the urgent concern of our parliamentarians, not legislating to provide an option of death for the suffering.

To reduce the value of human life to physical and mental capacity and wellbeing has sinister implications for how we as a society view those who experience severe physical or mental issues, and risks that those undergoing such suffering come to see their life as of less value than others. Once legislation is made, society itself risks coming to see these lives as of less value, too.

We must resist this culture of death by seeking to improve quality of life for all the living.

Yours sincerely etc.

*(By the time of printing the Parish Magazine, the letter had already been signed by 627 priests and 12 bishops of the Church of England.)*



## **Oppose Assisted Suicide:** **a message from the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales**

In early September 2024, when parliament returned and a Bill on assisted suicide – so-called assisted dying – started its passage through the House of Lords, our Lead Bishop for Life Issues, Bishop John Sherrington, called for Catholics to **unite in prayer and compassionate action**.

That call is renewed now as on Wednesday, 16 October, the House of Commons will hear the first reading of a new bill on assisted suicide tabled by Labour MP Kim Leadbeater.

This is another attempt to legalise assisted suicide and we need you to contact your MP to voice your opposition.

**Act Now! Contact your MP** - The charity *Right to Life UK* ([righttolife.org.uk](http://righttolife.org.uk)) has a simple online mechanism to do this. It takes little more than a few minutes to input your postcode, make sure the suggested text suits your viewpoint and submit your message to ask your MP to stop assisted suicide being rushed into law.

**Pray** - We are a praying Christian community and, as Bishop Sherrington says, the legalisation of assisted suicide undermines the sanctity and dignity of human life. “The Catholic Church accompanies those suffering and nearing the end of their lives with hope and affection, but also reminds them that their life is precious until the very last breath,” he says. “In preparation for these challenging debates, let us offer our prayers for those facing the end of their lives, that they may receive the care and support they need to live their final days with respect for their dignity. Let us also pray for our politicians and our country that wisdom and compassion may guide their decisions. I also urge all Catholics to become better informed about the serious problems associated with the legalisation of assisted suicide.”

**Prayer for the dying** — I commend you, my dear brother/sister, to almighty God, and entrust you to your Creator. May you return to Him who formed you from the dust of the earth. May holy Mary, the angels, and all the saints come to meet you as you go forth from this life. May Christ who was crucified for you bring you freedom and peace. May Christ who died for you admit you into his garden of paradise. May Christ, the true Shepherd, acknowledge you as one of his flock. May He forgive all your sins, and set you among those He has chosen. May you see your Redeemer face to face, and enjoy the vision of God forever. Amen.

**Pastoral Letter on Assisted Suicide**  
**from Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster**

*(This letter was recommended by our Society Bishops, including Bishop Paul of Oswestry, to all Church of England clergy and parishes.)*

My brothers and sisters,

This Wednesday, 16 October 2024, a bill will be introduced to Parliament proposing a change in the law to permit assisted suicide. The debate will continue for a number of months, in society and in Parliament, before a definitive vote is held there. This puts in the spotlight crucial questions about the dignity of human life and the care and protection afforded by our society to every human being.

As this debate unfolds there are three points I would like to put before you. I hope that you will take part in the debate, whenever and wherever you can, and that you will write to your Member of Parliament.

The first point is this: Be careful what you wish for.

No doubt the bill put before Parliament will be carefully framed, providing clear and very limited circumstances in which it would become lawful to assist, directly and deliberately, in the ending of a person's life. But please remember, the evidence from every single country in which such a law has been passed is clear: that the circumstances in which the taking of a life is permitted are widened and widened, making assisted suicide and medical killing, or euthanasia, more and more available and accepted. In this country, assurances will be given that the proposed safeguards are firm and reliable. Rarely has this been the case. This proposed change in the law may be a source of relief to some. But it will bring great fear and trepidation to many, especially those who have vulnerabilities and those living with disabilities. What is now proposed will not be the end of the story. It is a story better not begun.

The second point is this: a right to die can become a duty to die.

A law which prohibits an action is a clear deterrent. A law which permits an action changes attitudes: that which is permitted is often and easily encouraged. Once assisted suicide is approved by the law, a key protection of human life falls away. Pressure mounts on those who are nearing death, from others or even from themselves, to end their life in order to take away a perceived burden of care from their family, for the avoidance of pain, or for the sake of an inheritance.

I know that, for many people, there is profound fear at the prospect of prolonged suffering and loss of dignity. Yet such suffering itself can be eased. Part of this debate, then, must be the need and duty to enhance palliative care and hospice provision, so that there can genuinely be, for all of us, the prospect of living our last days in the company of loved ones and caring medical professionals. This is truly dying with dignity. Indeed, the radical change in the law now being proposed risks bringing about for all medical professionals a slow change from a duty to care to a duty to kill.

The third point is this: being forgetful of God belittles our humanity.

The questions raised by this bill go to the very heart of how we understand ourselves, our lives, our humanity. For people of faith in God - the vast majority of the population of the world - the first truth is that life, ultimately, is a gift of the Creator. Our life flows from God and will find its fulfilment in God. *'The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'* (Job 1,21) To ignore or deny this truth is to separate our humanity from its origins and purpose. We are left, floating free, detached, in a sphere that lacks firm anchors or destiny, thinking that we can create these for ourselves according to the mood of the age, or even of the day.

The clearest expression of this faith is that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God. That is the source of our dignity and it is unique to the human person. The suffering of a human being is not meaningless. It does not destroy that dignity. It is an intrinsic part of our human journey, a journey embraced by the Eternal Word of God, Christ Jesus himself. He brings our humanity to its full glory precisely through the gateway of suffering and death.

We know, only too well, that suffering can bring people to a most dreadful state of mind, even driving them to take their own lives, in circumstances most often when they lack true freedom of mind and will, and so bear no culpability. But this proposed legislation is quite different. It seeks to give a person of sound will and mind the right to act in a way that is clearly contrary to a fundamental truth: our life is not our own possession, to dispose of as we feel fit. This is not a freedom of choice we can take for ourselves without undermining the foundations of trust and shared dignity on which a stable society rests.

As this debate unfolds, then, I ask you to play your part in it. Write to your MP. Have discussions with family, friends and colleagues. And pray. Please remember: be careful what you wish for; the right to die can become a duty to die; being forgetful of God belittles our humanity. May God bless us all at this critical time.

## Ten reasons to oppose assisted suicide and euthanasia

1/ Life is a gift and equally valuable even in times of suffering — The Church teaches that life is a gift to be cherished and cared for at all stages until natural death and that it is morally wrong to intentionally end one's own life or that of another person, including at their request.

2/ Assisted suicide is based on a flawed idea of autonomy — Assisted suicide can never be an isolated act but is always deeply relational, involving many beyond the dying person such as family, friends, and healthcare professionals.

3/ Assisted suicide is based on a misleading view of compassion — Appeals for assisted suicide are often based on a false view of 'compassion' which fails to address the reality of suffering that is part of being human. The Church consistently teaches that human compassion consists not in causing death, but in embracing the sick, in supporting them in their difficulties, in offering them affection, attention, and the means to alleviate suffering, such as through nursing homes, hospices, and chaplaincy work in hospitals.

4/ Calling assisted suicide 'dignity in dying' ultimately passes judgement on the value of human life — Those who propose assisted suicide are, implicitly, denying that life has an inherent value beyond its abilities and capacities. Deliberately bringing about death in the name of 'dignity' denies the innate dignity of every human life which, in turn, has damaging consequences for how society views those with severe disabilities, those who are dying and those in great discomfort.

5/ Assisted suicide undermines the medical duty to care for patients — Legalising the intentional killing of patients would gravely undermine the vocation of healthcare professionals to care for life until its natural end. Trust between doctor and patient would be undermined by the difficulty in accurately predicting the outcome of terminal illness. No doctors' groups in the UK support assisted suicide, including the British Medical Association, the Royal College of General Practitioners, and the Association for Palliative Medicine.

6/ Assisted suicide undervalues the lives of people with disabilities — The legalisation of assisted suicide would be likely to result in a change in the way society views those with disabilities by effectively reducing the value of life to its physical or psychological capabilities such that those living with disabling, terminal, or progressive conditions could easily become disillusioned with their lives to the extent that they see death as preferable. The dehumanising effect of assisted suicide legislation on people living with disabilities has been highlighted by the United Nations which has expressed

serious concern at a growing international trend in providing access to assisted suicide largely based on whether people have a disability. All major disability rights groups in the UK have opposed any change in the law on assisted suicide.

7/ People may choose assisted suicide because they feel a burden — Evidence from countries where assisted suicide has been legalised demonstrates that those who seek it often report a fear of burdening their loved ones with their suffering, which is particularly concerning for those who are elderly and infirm. The fear of being burdensome would be amplified by the current health and social care crises and cost-of-living crisis.

8/ We cannot know for sure if people seeking assisted suicide have full mental capacity — Prescribing lethal medication for individuals suffering from suicidal ideation would be a grave betrayal of the public health duty to save life. Expressions of suicidal ideation by any other group, such as young women suffering from eating disorders, would be treated as psychological distress requiring compassionate care rather than as cause for lethal medication. International experience suggests that there are serious dangers to those who have mental health conditions from the gradual extension of assisted suicide legislation.

9/ Legalising assisted suicide is likely to lead to a slippery slope — The experience of other jurisdictions illustrates the slippery slope of assisted suicide legislation from hard cases to more comprehensive provision. Oregon, often referenced as a model template for mild assisted suicide legislation, now allows assisted suicide for non-terminal conditions including anorexia, arthritis, and kidney failure. Canada, legally and culturally very similar to England and Wales, now offers assisted suicide when death is not ‘reasonably foreseeable’. Belgium has expanded their provision of assisted suicide to include children. Any legalisation of assisted suicide for terminal illnesses in England and Wales would be likely to be challenged in court on discrimination grounds and extended to allow for cases of non-terminal illnesses.

10/ Investing in palliative care is a better way to support people suffering at the end of life — Rather than legalising assisted suicide, churches across England and Wales strongly supports greater Government investment in the availability and accessibility of specialist palliative care across the country. We reiterate the Church’s commitment to protecting and valuing life at all stages, no matter how physically or psychologically limited, and our opposition to assisted suicide as an attack on the inherent dignity of human life.

## FAQs on assisted suicide

*What is the difference between assisted suicide and euthanasia?* — According to the definitions currently provided by the NHS, assisted suicide is “the act of deliberately assisting another person to kill themselves” whilst euthanasia is “the act of deliberately ending a person’s life to relieve suffering”. Euthanasia can be voluntary or non-voluntary where it is not possible for the patient to provide consent and another person is authorised to make the decision on their behalf. Assisted suicide and euthanasia are both illegal in England and Wales.

*Why does the Church oppose assisted suicide and euthanasia?* — The Church opposes the legalisation of assisted suicide out of concern for the good of every person in society, the protection of this good in law, and the spiritual and pastoral care of the sick and dying. Assisted suicide is inherently wrong. In addition, the evidence from other jurisdictions shows that there can be no “safe” or limited assisted suicide law. Life is a gift from God and remains equally valuable even in times of suffering. Life is to be cherished and cared for at all stages from conception until natural death, and it is morally wrong to intentionally end the life of a person, including at their request.

In practice, the legalisation of assisted suicide and euthanasia would endanger the lives of some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Many people living with disabilities, suffering from progressive illnesses or approaching the end of their lives can be highly vulnerable and feel themselves to be a burden on their loved ones and the wider community.

*Why do we oppose the use of the phrase “assisted dying”, which is commonly used by proponents of assisted suicide and euthanasia?* — Replacing the word “suicide” with “dying” conflates the wrongful and intentional act of deliberately ending a life with the natural process of dying, implying that helping to deliberately end a person’s life is as normal and as familiar as assisting somebody by caring for them as they are coming towards the end of their lives. True assisted dying means caring for those coming towards the end of life with love, companionship and support. Similarly, calling assisted suicide “dignity in dying”, as campaigners for assisted suicide and euthanasia do, implies that there is something undignified about living with severe disabilities or that physical or psychological discomfort denies the innate dignity of every human life.

*What does the experience of assisted suicide and euthanasia laws tell us about the dangers of their introduction in our own country?* — The experience of other

jurisdictions reveals that there is a “slippery slope” whereby laws are quickly and progressively widened to cover much wider scenarios. Oregon, often referenced as a model template by proponents, now allows assisted suicide for non-terminal conditions including anorexia, arthritis and kidney failure. Canada, legally and culturally very similar to England and Wales, now offers assisted suicide even when death is not “reasonably foreseeable”. Belgium has expanded their provision of assisted suicide to include children.

Any legalisation of assisted suicide for terminal illnesses in England and Wales would be likely to be challenged in our courts on grounds of discrimination and thereby extended to allow for assisted suicide in cases of non-terminal illnesses. It is likely that it would also be extended to allow euthanasia in cases of physical difficulty in self-administering lethal medication. There are increasing dangers that mental health will be included in assisted suicide legislation.

*What is the Church’s view on the continued treatment of people who are in serious discomfort?* — Christian faith commands that we care for the sick and dying. The Church supports the provision of necessary medical care and the alleviation of suffering for those who are in serious discomfort, as long as the intention of administering any medication is to relieve pain and not to shorten life. At the same time, to care for the sick and dying does not mean that we should seek to prolong life at all costs. The Church recognises a difference between ordinary and extraordinary means of sustaining a person’s life and that there exist times when the continuation of medical treatment would be futile and even cause additional suffering to patients and their loved ones. In those cases, the patient, or their loved ones on their behalf, should make decisions on treatment in dialogue with the physician and after considering medical advice. At the same time, care for the patient should be the priority.

*Are we certain that assisted suicide and euthanasia lead to a pain-free death?* — Assisted suicide typically involves the oral ingestion of a lethal dose of medication. In euthanasia, the medication is administered to the patient by a doctor or nurse. Published research shows that such medication can lead to various complications and sometimes fails to end life, leaving patients and their loved ones in a deeply distressing situation. Complication rates are close to 15%. Around a third of deaths from assisted suicide take over an hour. Deaths by euthanasia through lethal injection can also involve complications. Given the difficulties in ensuring that patients remain unconscious, it has been argued that such deaths could be akin to drowning or suffocating without the patient having any means of communicating the agony.

*What is the alternative to assisted suicide and euthanasia?* — Rather than the legalisation of assisted suicide and/or euthanasia, the Church strongly supports greater provision of high-quality specialist palliative care and hospice care for the sick and dying. Such care can comprise pain management, symptom relief and holistic support for patients and their loved ones towards the end of life. The intention of such care is to cherish and care for the lives of those who are approaching their death based on the view of human life as remaining inherently dignified and valuable even in times of great physical or psychological suffering.

It is worth noting that the introduction and availability of assisted suicide and/or euthanasia may well lead to a decline in investment in palliative and hospice care given that the provision of lethal medication is often a much cheaper option than holistic, life-affirming care.

*How does the Catholic Church view the reality of suffering at the end of life?* — Although God never desires that we suffer, suffering is an unavoidable part of human life, including as we approach death. While we should seek to relieve rather than prolong suffering as much as possible, the reality of suffering is also an invitation to come closer to God and depend more on His grace as we realise the limitations of our physical and psychological capacities. In such moments, it is crucial to remember that Christ shared our suffering, including when He experienced suffering Himself toward the end of His life on earth for the sake of our redemption. We can offer our own suffering to God for our sins and the sins of others as well as experience His compassionate love and mercy amidst our difficulty. This is especially important towards the end of life, as we approach our death and an encounter with the justice and mercy of God.

*What guidance does the Catholic Church offer to healthcare professionals who may be confronted with requests for assisted suicide or euthanasia?* — Healthcare professionals are called to protect and preserve life and to conscientiously object to any practices that undermine this calling. Therefore, healthcare professionals must not support, encourage or provide assisted suicide or euthanasia. We are also called to do good as well as to avoid evil. We therefore encourage healthcare professionals to prioritise and promote palliative care and hospice care. Support is available through relevant organisations.



**Calendar, Service times,  
and Prayer Intentions**

**Anniversaries of death**

**Order of Morning and Evening Prayer**

## Calendar for November 2023

FRI	1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>ALL SAINTS</b>	12pm, 6pm
SAT	2 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>ALL SOULS</b>	9am, 10pm, 12pm
SUN	3 <sup>rd</sup>	<b>23<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY</b>	10.30am, 4pm
MON	4 <sup>th</sup>	St. Charles Borromeo, Bishop	12pm
TUE	5 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Feria (of Requiem)</i>	9am
WED	6 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Feria (of Requiem)</i>	10am
THU	7 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Feria (of Requiem)</i>	6pm
FRI	8 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Holy Four Crowned Martyrs (of Requiem)</i>	12pm
SAT	9 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Dedication of the Lateran Basilica</b>	9.30am
SUN	10 <sup>th</sup>	<b>24<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY *</b>	10.30am, 4pm
MON	11 <sup>th</sup>	St. Martin of Tours, Bishop	12pm
TUE	12 <sup>th</sup>	St. Martin I Pope, Martyr	9am
WED	13 <sup>th</sup>	St. Didacus, Confessor	10am
THU	14 <sup>th</sup>	St. Josaphat Bishop, Martyr	6pm
FRI	15 <sup>th</sup>	St. Albert the Great, Doctor	12pm
SAT	16 <sup>th</sup>	<b>St. Edmund of Abingdon, Bishop</b>	9.30am
SUN	17 <sup>th</sup>	<b>25<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY</b>	10.30am, 4pm
MON	18 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Dedication of St. Peter's &amp; St. Paul's</b>	12pm
TUE	19 <sup>th</sup>	St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Widow	9am
WED	20 <sup>th</sup>	St. Edmund King, Martyr	10am
THU	21 <sup>st</sup>	Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary	6pm
FRI	22 <sup>nd</sup>	St. Cecilia Virgin & Martyr ( <i>Anointing</i> )	12pm
SAT	23 <sup>rd</sup>	St. Clement I, Pope & Martyr	9.30am
SUN	24 <sup>th</sup>	<b>26<sup>TH</sup> &amp; LAST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY</b>	10.30am, 4pm
MON	25 <sup>th</sup>	St. Catherine of Alexandria, Virgin & Martyr	12pm
TUE	26 <sup>th</sup>	St. Sylvester Abbot	9am
WED	27 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Feria (of Requiem)</i>	10am
THU	28 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Feria (of Requiem)</i>	6pm
FRI	29 <sup>th</sup>	Vigil	12pm
SAT	30 <sup>th</sup>	<b>St. Andrew Apostle</b>	9.30am

\* Remembrance Sunday

## Daily Intentions



## Anniversaries of death

*We pray for...*

- 1<sup>st</sup> Our Parishes - *Charles Coleman*  
2<sup>nd</sup> Departed - *Andrew Neal, Cynthia Ingham*
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Our Parishes  
4<sup>th</sup> Priests & priestly vocations - *Norman Bridge, David Mutch*  
5<sup>th</sup> Departed  
6<sup>th</sup> Departed  
7<sup>th</sup> Departed - *William Walmsley*  
8<sup>th</sup> Departed - *Mehyn Humm*  
9<sup>th</sup> Pope Francis - *John Richards bp.*
- 10<sup>th</sup> Our Parishes - *Owen Anderson*  
11<sup>th</sup> Beechcroft & Conifers - *Albert Clark, Geoffrey Rose*  
12<sup>th</sup> Dying - *Elsie Smart, Pearl Melpass, Lyn Davidge*  
13<sup>th</sup> All those killed in combat - *Olive Clark*  
14<sup>th</sup> Westhaven Hospital  
15<sup>th</sup> Friends - *Frederick Sefton-Smith*  
16<sup>th</sup> Shrine of Walsingham - *Pat Stockting, William Kelly pr.*
- 17<sup>th</sup> Our Parishes  
18<sup>th</sup> Chapter of St. Aldhelm (Servers) - *Alfred Scriven, Baby John Greet*  
19<sup>th</sup> Deprived & homeless - *Minnie White, Maxwell Biles*  
20<sup>th</sup> The King - *Gordon Groves, Christine Bagwell, Leonard Barlow, Ray Clothier, Mark Ison*  
21<sup>st</sup> Victims of abuse, violence - *Lilian Wilcox*  
22<sup>nd</sup> Sick - *Ron Jones, Timothy Lawford*  
23<sup>rd</sup> Cell of O.L.W. - *Gordon Coombs, Karen Collings*
- 24<sup>th</sup> Our Parishes  
25<sup>th</sup> All those suffering with anxiety - *Ted Turner, Cecil Day*  
26<sup>th</sup> Our Choir & Organists - *Evelyn Groves, Eric Powell*  
27<sup>th</sup> Departed - *Irene Wellman*  
28<sup>th</sup> Departed - *Frederick Humm, Eric Kemp bp.*  
29<sup>th</sup> Families  
30<sup>th</sup> Eastern Churches & Patriarch Bartholomew - *Glenda Harris, Irene Roberts*

*If there are names missing from the list or you want to add names, please, talk to the Vicar.*

Open, O Lord, my mouth to bless thy holy Name; cleanse also my heart from all vain, evil, and wandering thoughts; enlighten my understanding and kindle my affections; that I may worthily, attentively, and devoutly recite this Morning Prayer, and so be meet to be heard before the presence of thy divine Majesty. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## MORNING PRAYER

**V.** The Angel of the Lord brought tidings to Mary.

**R.** And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

**V.** Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

**R.** Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

**V.** Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

**R.** Be it unto me according to thy word.

**V.** Hail Mary... **R.** Holy Mary...

**V.** And the Word was made flesh.

**R.** And dwelt amongst us.

**V.** Hail Mary... **R.** Holy Mary...

**V.** Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

**R.** That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

**V.** Let us pray. We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts, that as we have known the Incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of his Resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. **R.** Amen.

**V.** O Lord, open my lips. **R.** And my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

**V.** O God, make speed to save me. **R.** O Lord, make haste to help me.

**V.** Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

**R.** As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Alleluia!

**V.** Let us rejoice in the Lord; let us joyfully sing to God our Saviour! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us joyfully sing psalms to him!

**R.** Unto the Eternal King all live. O come, let us worship Him.

**V.** For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hands are the depths of the earth; and the heights of the mountains are his.

R. O come, let us worship Him.

V. The sea is his, for who but he made it; and his hands fashioned the dry land. O come, let us worship and fall down, and weep before the Lord who made us! For he is the Lord our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

R. Unto the Eternal King all live. O come, let us worship Him.

V. Today if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts: As in the provocation, on the day of temptation in the wilderness, where your fathers tempted me, and put me to the test, and they saw my works.

R. O come, let us worship Him.

V. For forty years I loathed that generation, and I said: They always err in heart, they have not known my ways, so I swore in my wrath: they shall not enter my rest.

R. O come, let us worship Him.

V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

R. Unto the Eternal King all live. O come, let us worship Him.

## HYMN

Day of wrath! O day of mourning!  
See fulfilled the prophets' warning,  
Heaven and earth in ashes burning

Oh, what fear man's bosom rendeth,  
When from heaven the Judge descendeth,  
On whose sentence all dependeth.

Wondrous sound the trumpet flingeth;  
Through earth's sepulchres it ringeth;  
All before the throne it bringeth.

Death is struck, and nature quaking,  
All creation is awaking,  
To its Judge an answer making.

Lo, the book, exactly worded,  
Wherein all hath been recorded,  
Thence shall judgement be awarded.

When the Judge his seat attaineth,  
And each hidden deed arraigneth,  
Nothing unavenged remaineth.

What shall I, frail man, be pleading?  
Who for me be interceding,  
When the just are mercy needing

King of Majesty tremendous,  
Who dost free salvation send us,  
Fount of pity, then befriend us!

Think, kind Jesu! – my salvation  
Caused Thy wondrous Incarnation;  
Leave me not to reprobation.

Lord, all-pitying, Jesus blest,  
Grant them Thine eternal rest.  
Amen.

*The appointed Psalm(s) and Reading(s) follow (please see next page).*

1	15, 149	Isaiah 35,1-9 Luke 9,18-27	16	15	Daniel 7,15-end Revelation 9,13-end
2	23	Wisdom 3,1-9 1 Peter 1,3-9	<b>17</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>Isaiah 8,1-15</b> <b>Matthew 6,1-18</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>Ecclesiastes 5</b> <b>John 18,12-27</b>	18	16	Daniel 8,1-14 Revelation 10
4	143	Daniel 1 Revelation 1	19	17	Daniel 8,15-end Revelation 11,1-14
5	144	Daniel 2,1-24 Revelation 2,1-11	20	19	Daniel 9,1-19 Revelation 11,15-end
6	146	Daniel 2,25-end Revelation 2,12-end	21	20	Daniel 9,20-end Revelation 12
7	149	Daniel 3,1-18 Revelation 3,1-13	22	21	Daniel 10 Revelation 13,1-10
8	1	Daniel 3,19-end Revelation 3,14-end	23	27	Daniel 12 Revelation 13,11-end
9	2	Daniel 4,1-18 Revelation 4	<b>24</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>Isaiah 12</b> <b>Matthew 8,23-end</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>Isaiah 3,1-15</b> <b>Matthew 4,1-11</b>	25	28	Isaiah 40,1-11 Revelation 14
11	3	Daniel 4,19-end Revelation 5	26	30	Isaiah 40,12-end Revelation 15
12	5	Daniel 5,1-12 Revelation 6	27	31	Isaiah 41,1-7 Revelation 16,1-11
13	6	Daniel 5,13-end Revelation 7	28	32	Isaiah 41,8-20 Revelation 16,12-end
14	8	Daniel 6 Revelation 8	29	34	Isaiah 41,21-end Revelation 17
15	14	Daniel 7,1-14 Revelation 9,1-12	30	47	Ezekiel 47,1-12 John 12,20-32

*Each reading ends with these words:*

V. This is the word of the Lord.

V. Thanks be to God.

## BENEDICTUS

*Ant:* I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, \*  
    who has come to his people and set them free.  
He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, \*  
    born of the house of his servant David.  
Through his holy prophets God promised of old \*  
    to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us,  
To show mercy to our ancestors, \*  
    and to remember his holy covenant.  
This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham: \*  
    to set us free from the hands of our enemies,  
Free to worship him without fear, \*  
    holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.  
And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, \*  
    for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,  
To give his people knowledge of salvation \*  
    by the forgiveness of all their sins.  
In the tender compassion of our God \*  
    the dawn from on high shall break upon us,  
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, \*  
    and to guide our feet into the way of peace.  
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
    and to the Holy Spirit.  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, \*  
    world without end. Amen.

*Ant:* I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

V. Let us pray. — *Intercessions* are offered for the Church, for the Sovereign (the world), for those in need, and for the dead. Then follows the Collect:

O God, who are yourself at once the Maker and the Redeemer of all your faithful ones, grant unto the souls of your servants and handmaids remission of all their sins, so that they may have that forgiveness which they have ever

hoped for. Who lives and reigns with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. **R.** Amen.

**V.** Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

**V.** The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life.  
**R.** Amen.

**V.** Let us bless the Lord. **R.** Thanks be to God.

**V.** And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. **R.** Amen.

*Morning Prayer ends with the final Antiphon of Our Lady:*

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy; our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

**V.** Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.

**R.** That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

**V.** Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God, who by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, didst prepare the body and soul of Mary, glorious Virgin and Mother, to become a worthy dwelling for Thy Son; grant that we who rejoice in her commemoration may, by her gracious intercession, be delivered from present evils and from everlasting death. Through the same Christ our Lord.

**R.** Amen

## **EVENING PRAYER**

**V.** The Angel of the Lord brought tidings to Mary.

**R.** And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

**V.** Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

**R.** Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.



V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.  
R. Be it unto me according to thy word.

V. Hail Mary... R. Holy Mary...

V. And the Word was made flesh.  
R. And dwelt amongst us.

V. Hail Mary... R. Holy Mary...

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.  
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

V. Let us pray. We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts, that as we have known the Incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of his Resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

V. O God, make speed to save me. R. O Lord, make haste to help me.  
V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.  
R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Alleluia!

### HYMN

Faint and weary, Thou hast sought me,  
On the Cross of suffering bought me.  
Shall such grace be vainly brought me.

Righteous Judge, for sin's pollution  
Grant Thy gift of absolution,  
Ere the day of retribution.

Guilty, now I pour my moaning,  
All my shame with anguish owning;  
Spare, O God, Thy suppliant groaning!

Through the sinful woman shriven,  
Through the dying thief forgiven,  
Thou to me a hope hast given.

Worthless are my prayers and sighing,  
Yet, good Lord, in grace complying,  
Rescue me from fires undying.

With Thy sheep a place provide me,  
From the goats afar divide me,  
To Thy right hand do Thou guide me.

When the wicked are confounded,  
Doomed to flames of woe unbounded,  
Call me with Thy saints surrounded.

Low I kneel, with heart's submission,  
See, like ashes, my contrition,  
Help me in my last condition.

Ah! that day of tears and mourning,  
From the dust of earth returning  
Man for judgement must prepare him,  
Spare, O God, in mercy spare him.

Lord, all-pitying, Jesus blest,  
Grant them Thine eternal rest. Amen.

*The appointed Psalm(s) and Reading(s) follow:*

1	148, 150	Isaiah 65,17-end Hebrews 11,32-end	16	24	Isaiah 8,16-end Matthew 6,19-end
2	27 v. 1-6	Lamentations 3,17-26 John 5,19-25	<b>17</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>Daniel 7,1-14</b> <b>Revelation 9,1-12</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>Judith 8</b> <b>2 Timothy 2,14-end</b>	18	25	Isaiah 9 Matthew 7,1-12
4	119 v. 145-160	Isaiah 1,1-20 Matthew 1,18-end	19	26	Isaiah 10,1-19 Matthew 7,13-end
5	119 v. 161-176	Isaiah 1,21-end Matthew 2,1-15	20	29	Isaiah 10,20-end Matthew 8,1-13
6	4	Isaiah 2,1-11 Matthew 2,16-end	21	33	Isaiah 11 Matthew 8,14-22
7	7	Isaiah 2,12-end Matthew 3	22	35	Isaiah 12 Matthew 8,23-end
8	9	Isaiah 3,1-15 Matthew 4,1-11	23	37	Isaiah 13,1-13 Matthew 9,1-17
9	10	Isaiah 4 Matthew 4,12-end	<b>24</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>Daniel 10</b> <b>Revelation 13,1-10</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>Daniel 3,19-end</b> <b>Revelation 3,14-end</b>	25	38	Isaiah 14,3-20 Matthew 9,18-end
11	11	Isaiah 5,1-24 Matthew 5,1-12	26	39	Isaiah 17 Matthew 10,1-15
12	12	Isaiah 5,25-end Matthew 5,13-20	27	40	Isaiah 19 Matthew 10,16-33
13	13	Isaiah 6 Matthew 5,21-27	28	45	Isaiah 21,1-12 Matthew 10,34-end
14	18	Isaiah 7,1-17 Matthew 5,38-end	29	46	Isaiah 22,1-14 Matthew 11,1-19
15	22	Isaiah 8,1-15 Matthew 6,1-18	30	87, 96	Zechariah 8,20-end John 1,35-42

*Each reading ends with these words:*

V. This is the word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

### MAGNIFICAT

*Ant:* All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,+  
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;\*  
he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed;+  
the Almighty has done great things for me\*  
and holy is his name.

He has mercy on those who fear him,\*  
from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm\*  
and has scattered the proud in their conceit,

Casting down the mighty from their thrones\*  
and lifting up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things\*  
and sent the rich away empty.

He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,\*  
to remember his promise of mercy,

The promise made to our ancestors,\*  
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, \*  
world without end. Amen.

*Ant:* All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.

V. Let us pray. — *Intercessions* are offered for the Church, for the Sovereign (world), for those in need, our Benefactors, and for the dead. Then the Collect is said:

O God, who are yourself at once the Maker and the Redeemer of all your faithful ones, grant unto the souls of your servants and handmaids remission of all their sins, so that they may have that forgiveness which they have ever hoped for. Who lives and reigns with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. R. Amen.

**V.** Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

**All:** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

**V.** Let us bless the Lord. **R.** Thanks be to God. **V.** And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. **R.** Amen.

*Optional private prayer to be said after Evening Prayer:* To the Most Holy and undivided Trinity, to our Lord Jesus Christ Crucified, to the fruitful Virginity of the most blessed and most glorious Mary, always a Virgin, and to the holiness of all the Saints be ascribed everlasting praise, honour, and glory, by all creatures, and to us be granted the forgiveness of all our sins, world without end. Amen.

*Prayer for a departed loved one:* I commend you, my dear [name] to almighty God, and entrust you to your Creator. May you rest in the arms of the Lord who formed you from the dust of the earth. May holy Mary, the angels, and all the saints welcome you now that you have gone forth from this life. May Christ who was crucified for you, bring you freedom and peace. May Christ who died for you admit you into his garden of paradise. May Christ, the true Shepherd, embrace you as one of his flock. May he forgive all your sins and set you among those he has chosen. May you see your Redeemer face to face and enjoy the vision of God, forever. Amen.

*Prayer for the dead:* In your hands, O Lord, we humbly entrust our brothers and sisters. In this life you embraced them with your tender love; deliver them now from every evil and bid them eternal rest. Welcome them into paradise, where there will be no sorrow, no weeping or pain, but fullness of peace and joy where you live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

*Offering of the Mass:* Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Most Precious Blood of Thy Divine Son, Jesus, in union with the masses said throughout the world today, for all the holy souls in purgatory, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in my own home - and amongst them for myself - and within my family. Amen.

## From the Book of Common Prayer

**Collect for Peace:** *O GOD, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed: give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that both our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, and also that by thee we being defended from the fear of our enemies may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen*

The “Prayer for Peace” is an ancient prayer going back at least to the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The collect is full of Scripture, and it not only prays for peace, but it explains how peace comes to us. St. James writes, “*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows*” (James 1,17). The good desires in us come from him, because our weak flesh cannot find good by itself. Guidance in holiness comes from his Word alone, and it moves us to “just works,” that is, to actions that are in line with God’s will. That’s why he gave us his Commandments, to be our guide in life.

We pray that God would give us “that peace which the world cannot give.” That’s a direct quote from Jesus’ words to his disciples (John 14,27). The world’s idea of peace is “absence of war,” “getting along,” “no shouting or fighting.” Jesus knows that for his people who live in a sinful world, that isn’t going to be possible. The peace he gives is an inner peace. This is how God gives peace: God’s forgiveness brings peace to hearts that are troubled by guilt and regret. God’s Word works a conviction in us that his promises and commands are true, and when we trust his promises and follow his commands, we can live with a clear conscience, knowing we are working to please God, following our Shepherd on the path of righteousness. That inner peace endures, even when we see conflict in our world, our families, and among our friends. That inner peace is the peace the angels sang about to the shepherds on Christmas Night.

It’s interesting how the next phrase is worded. It doesn’t say, “Defend us from our enemies.” It says “Defend us from the *fear* of our enemies.” Psalm 23 says “*Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me*”. The dark valley is still there. The world still rages. The earth still gives way. But the promise of God speaks to our hearts, telling us not to be afraid, because our God, the God who calls us his own, promises to be with us in these struggles. Fear is a tool the devil uses to accomplish his goals in us. He wants to destroy our confidence in God’s promise to help. God will grant peace and quietness in our hearts— even when we don’t see it in our outward lives.



**Middle East Humanitarian Appeal** — Conflict in the Middle East is devastating lives. Millions of people across Gaza, Lebanon and the wider region urgently need shelter, food and basic supplies. Save lives. Donate now.



**DEC charities have been providing lifesaving aid in Gaza, Lebanon and the West Bank over the past year, but they now urgently need more funds.** — In Gaza, people are dying of hunger and disease, as well as injuries caused by the conflict. Food and clean water are desperately scarce. Ninety percent of the population are displaced, and more than 42,000 people have been killed.

In Lebanon, more than a million people have had to leave their homes in recent weeks. Shelters are overwhelmed, and hospitals are struggling to treat the thousands of people injured.

DEC charities are ready to do more, and respond across the region, wherever the needs are greatest. But they urgently need more funds.

- £30 could provide blankets for six people to keep them warm
- £50 could provide emergency food, for five families for one week
- £100 could provide emergency shelter for five families

**How to donate to DEC?** — The quickest and safest way to donate is online. Visit <https://donation.dec.org.uk/middle-east-appeal> and follow instructions. If you have problems please get in touch with the Parish Office and we can help you with the online donation. Alternatively scan this QR code with your phone and it will take you to DEC's donation homepage.



**Phone** — you can also donate by calling 0330 123 0333 (standard charges apply).

**Post Office** — Donations can also be made to DEC appeals at your local Post Office branch.

It is important to have a full picture and so the following FAQ is copied here from DEC's website:

***Will funds from this appeal help people in Israel?*** — DEC appeal responses always focus on those areas where significant humanitarian needs are not being met. For this reason, at this time the majority of funds from the DEC Middle East Humanitarian Appeal will be used to support people in Gaza and Lebanon, where millions have fled their homes, and urgently need food, water, shelter and medical care. We will continue to monitor the situation and needs in Israel. A number of DEC charities are in a position to expand their response to include Israel should the situation change.

**A prayer for peace** — *Lord Jesus Christ, You are the true King of peace. In You alone is found freedom. Please free our world from conflict. Bring unity to troubled nations. Let Your glorious peace reign in every heart. Dispel all darkness and evil. Protect the dignity of every human life. Replace hatred with Your love. Give wisdom to world leaders. Free them from selfish ambition. Eliminate all violence and war.*

*Glorious Virgin Mary, Saint Michael the Archangel, Every angel and saint: Please pray for peace. Pray for unity amongst nations. Pray for unity amongst all people. Pray for the most vulnerable. Pray for those suffering. Pray for the fearful. Pray for those most in need. Pray for us all.*

*Jesus, Son of the Living God, have mercy on us. Jesus, bear our prayers. Jesus, I trust in You! Amen.*

## Guard your heart

*Irene Leader writes:*

*“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it”* (Prov 4,23). Everything we do is trying to manifest a life of what we believe about ourselves. *“For as he thinks in his heart so is he. Eat and drink, he says to you, but his heart is not with you”* (Prov 23,7) - he is manipulating and begrudging the cost. In Hebrew, the ‘thinks’ used here is two-fold: gate, portal, door, janitor, keeper, and guard. The way you think is the doorkeeper to the heart.

When a person is ‘born again’ they undergo a spiritual rebirth (2 Cor 5,17). Leading to ‘in Christ’ we no longer have a sinful nature but a righteous nature. This does not mean we no longer sin.

There are a vast number of scriptural verses which tell us to guard our heart. They tell us to keep guard over the entrance of your heart because it is what is in your heart that influences everything you do or think. Allow only to go in what builds up and to keep out what corrupts. If the bible warns so much about this, it must be important. Deuteronomy 30,15-19 tells us we have the choice to choose life and not death, and so it is up to us to choose life. You know, controllers smell codependent people a mile away. They are like sharks. Don’t attract yourself to manipulators. Guard your heart and surround yourself with people that will confirm your identity.

Everyone gets angry about something. We ruminate on a wrong somebody has done us and think about it constantly, rehearse it, what we could have said but didn’t, etc. That is all meditation. Then we begin to experience the emotions which go with it. It is the amount of meditation, contemplation, reflection, pondering, study, thought, that we give to anything until we experience the emotion, which writes it on our heart. It is what is in our heart that comes out under periods of stress; the way we perceive things, and is reflected in our behaviour, views, and opinions; it is our default position. Prov 18,21 says the power of life and death is in the tongue, which speaks out of the abundance of the heart.

The Bible is quite clear that we should meditate only on God’s Word both day and night (Josh1,8; Ps 1,2). Why should we believe the Bible? God doesn’t gloss over anything to make Him sound good, including untruths told, flaws, and weaknesses of the people who represent Him i.e. Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus: David begat Solomon out of the wife of Uriah (1,6).

The Parable of the Sower (Lk 8,5-15) is a core text. In Mark 4,13 Jesus says, *“you do not understand this parable? How are you going to understand any parable?”* The seed that fell on the path, Jesus explains, is the devil stealing the Word from their heart before they can believe and be saved. The Greek root



word for devil is ‘to oppose’. This is a philosophy which Lucifer uses. He will convince us to talk ourselves out of what God is trying to tell us before it gets planted in our heart.

The seed we sow is what we get more of. We cannot plant apple seed and expect to get grapes. If we plant the seed of the Word of God, we will find we will become more Christ-like as time goes by and the seed comes to fruition. In Addictions we speak a lot about *stinkin’ thinkin’*. If we plant stinkin’ thinkin’ meditation into our heart, then we will get more thorns planted into the garden of our heart and we are told this will choke out any good seed.

The world says *fake it ‘til you make it*, but this is not biblical. It is what is in the heart, not the knowledge one has. To get it from the head to the heart, one needs to experience it by actually applying it to life. For example, one can have a good knowledge of soil, but unless one plants the seed, one will not get any fruit.

The heart *is* deceitful (chaotic) above all *things*, and desperately wicked (see Jer 17,9). The prophet tells us that human beings are born into sin/born with a sinful nature and the heart is chaotic and covered by footprints of pain, wounding, corruption, confusion, and cannot be trusted. He asks how can we know our heart with this wounding? What is a story behind your heart beliefs? The heart is our sense of identity. It is the overlap of your spirit and your soul. It is the five senses of the world and the five senses from the spirit – you choose what you plant in it; this leads to you becoming what you are. The boundaries of your heart always bring you back to what you believe if you step outside of them.

God said through Ezekiel (36,26) “*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you.*” This prophecy would be fulfilled in Jesus. Romans (4,3) tells us that Abraham believed God and his faith was reckoned to him as Righteous. So, we can do nothing to make ourselves righteous because righteousness is a free gift, and we receive this only when we experience a new birth into Christ. The good news is that when we are born again, we are given a new heart. Not physically, but it is cleansed, and we could choose to start again with a new identity. The trouble is that if we do not renew our mind through Christ, we will just reprint on our new heart what was there before. Paul calls this the “*old man*” (2 Cor 5,17).

God speaks to us through our heart. The brain is merely a processor which interprets what He is saying but this is filtered by what is in our heart (Mk 7,20-23). The heart is always ahead of the brain and perceives things before they happen – God can save your life before the event or threat.

However, it takes a heart that is open to the leading of Holy Spirit to hear and obey.

Guard your heart and learn how to solve things from a heart's perspective. Do not live a reactionary life. Do not determine your behaviour by the other person's behaviour. Do a character sketch of how you would be if you were 'in Christ'. Determine how you want to function and how you are going to respond in every situation. No matter the situation, nothing affects you beyond the judgement you place on it or the significance you give it. Establish your identity: who am I going to be in Jesus?

Your heart is your life because your life is directed by what is in your heart. You are programming what your future is going to be like. You are responsible for your heart beliefs, and you have to choose to change them. 2 Cor 3,3 says, "*We are a letter of Christ, not written in ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on the tablets of the human heart.*"

### **Pronunciation poem**

*sent by Jeanne James:*

I take it you already know of tough and bough and cough and dough?  
Others may stumble, but not you, on hiccough, thorough, laugh and through.  
Well done! And now you wish, perhaps, to learn of less familiar traps.

Beware of heard, a dreadful word, that looks like beard and sounds like bird.  
And dead—it's said like bed not bead—and for goodness' sake don't call it deed!  
Watch out for meat and great and threat (they rhyme with suite and straight  
and debt).

A moth is not the moth in mother, not both in bother, broth in brother.  
And here is not a match for there, nor dear and fear for bear and pear.  
And then there's dose and rose and lose—just look them up—and goose and  
choose,  
And cork and work and card and ward and font and front and word and  
sword  
and do and go and thwart and cart—come, come I've hardly made a start.  
A dreadful language? Man alive.

I'd mastered it when I was five.

# The Bizarre Connection between Food and Death

by Matthew Camilleri

Food has always been central to most cultural and religious events celebrated by many communities all around the world. Normally what comes to mind though, would be joyous celebrations; weddings, parties or religious festivities. But of course, another important aspect of any community is how it deals with death, and even here food is often involved.

**Agape Tables** — Some of the earliest evidence for the use of food in funerary rites is to be found in the numerous catacombs dotted around the Maltese Islands. Among the most unusual features of these interconnected underground Roman cemeteries are the so-called ‘agape tables’.

Normally located in the wide public areas of the catacombs, the agape tables resemble in appearance a combination of the reclining couch that was commonly found in Roman dining rooms, together with a table where the food would be laid. The major difference was that these agape tables were carved out of the solid rock, and were clearly meant for repeat usage within the catacombs.

It is possible that these tables would have been used during the Parentalia, the Roman annual festival of the dead. During this festival, life came to a pause while families remembered their ancestors. This culminated in the last day, the Feralia, which saw food offerings such as grain and bread soaked in wine left next to family tombs.

Agape tables were also likely used during the funeral itself. The concept of a wake to bid farewell to the deceased is something which has been lost in Malta, but the presence of the tables in the catacombs is the clearest evidence that it was a common occurrence during the Roman era. In addition, the tables would almost certainly have been used for the refrigerium, a commemorative meal held on the day of burial, again on the ninth day after the funeral, and annually thereafter. By spending time at graves and dining with the dead, the Romans believed they could connect with their ancestors and honour those who had gone before them.

Early Christians continued the refrigerium until it was officially abolished by the Church at the Council of Trullo in 692 AD, in an attempt to curb excesses and abuses which by then seem to have become commonplace.

**The Quċċija** — One of the more interesting ancient funerary rites was that of the ‘kuċċija’. Today, this term refers to a tradition whereby on a child’s first birthday, they are presented with a number of items related to

different professions, and the child's future career is predicted depending on which item they pick up first.

However, 'kuċċija' did not always have the same meaning attributed to it today. Instead it meant some kind of recipe using semolina. The word can regularly be found in medieval manuscripts, particularly in last wills from the time. One such document stated that it was the wish of the individual concerned that on the first night after his funeral "two tumoli of kuċċija would be given to the poor, as is customary". Clearly, the 'kuċċija' was some kind of food that was distributed in churches following someone's death, as suffrage for the deceased's soul.

The Maltese 18th-century historian Agius de Soldanis also mentions the 'kuċċija' in one of his works, referring to it as "wheat that had been boiled and blessed". In some Maltese churches, on the eve of All Souls' Day, some people would take to the church "cooked wheat, with raisins, nuts, and almonds thrown in, shaped like a cross, and distribute it among those present in the church. They would eat this while reciting prayers for the soul of the deceased, for whom this cocchia was being held".

**L-Għaża** — Traditionally, Maltese society observed a number of set rituals following the death of a loved one. There were the 'newwieħa', or paid female mourners, screaming and pulling at their hair; 'viżtu', where close family members of the deceased would wear black for several months; men did not shave for a fortnight; handles were removed from doors; mirrors were covered up.

There was also the tradition of 'għaża'; as a sign of respect and mourning, close relatives of the deceased would be forbidden from cooking food for three days following the funeral. The tradition, in fact, was to turn all pots and pans within the home upside down, as a sign that no cooking could take place, and the family would thus have to eat food that did not require any cooking, or was prepared for them by relatives, friends, or neighbours.

**Bigilla** — When we think of traditional Maltese food, one of the first items that comes to mind is always 'bigilla'. This popular dip, made of mashed tic beans is usually accompanied by the equally traditional 'galletti', or water biscuits. What most people don't realise is that 'bigilla' was once traditionally consumed at funerals, even if this connotation has been lost over time.

Indeed, beans have long been associated with death and the afterlife, both in Maltese and other cultures. Despite being one of the first cultivated crops in history, many civilisations had mixed feelings about them. In ancient Rome for example, priests of Jupiter could not touch, or even mention beans, due to their association with death and decay. There was the belief that beans

could contain the souls of the dead, which is why they also featured in the annual festival known as the Lemuria. It was believed that on the Lemuria, the spirits of the dead emerged from their graves and visited the homes in which they had lived. It was thus necessary to confront them and lure them back out of the house during a night-time ritual which included throwing beans over one's shoulder while reciting incantations, as a representation of casting out the spirits. In Malta these cooked beans, or Beghilla, were distributed to the poor who accompanied the deceased to the Church.

The association between beans and sombre rituals still exists in some places to this day; they give name to the 'fave dei morti', popularly eaten in some parts of Italy on All Souls' Day. The name of these biscuits made in the shape of beans - though not out of them - literally translates to "beans of the dead".

***L-Ikla tal-Ghid tal-Erwieħ*** — In more recent times, a new tradition is starting to become ever more popular. On All Souls' Day - the Ghid tal-Erwieħ - thematic meals are being organised, helping to revive certain long-forgotten practices. A typical menu would start with the guests being served with a glass of 'Maħluta' upon sitting down. This alcoholic cocktail is meant to symbolise the good and bad in life through its mixture of both sweet and bitter ingredients, while the alcoholic content represents the spirit of life.

'Ftiet tal-Għaża' would make the perfect appetiser; the simple dish, consisting of toasted bread with an olive oil, garlic and parsley spread, would have been very easy to prepare and take to mourning relatives observing a period of 'għaża'.

The starter would consist of 'Minestra tal-Erwieħ', a reminder of a tradition introduced by the Capuchin Friars. During the month of October, they would collect charitable donations in the form of vegetables and other ingredients, which on 2 November they would then use to make 'minestra' in a large cauldron, before serving it to the poor gathered for the occasion, as suffrage for the souls of the deceased.

The main course would be roast pork, a reminder of yet another lost tradition, that of the 'Hanzira tal-Erwieħ'. In some villages, the parish priest used to be given a piglet, which was then let loose through the streets with a bell around its neck. People would hear it when it passed their home and would feed it scraps. No one dared steal the pig, for who would dare steal from the dead? On All Souls' Day, the now fattened pig was slaughtered and served to the poor, so that they could get a taste of meat for a change. Alternatively, the pig's meat was sold and half the money would be donated to the poor, while the other half went towards celebrating mass for the repose of the souls of the dead.

## Saint of the month: St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Widow

*19 November*

**Royal origins, saintly family** — Elizabeth, daughter of the king of Hungary, was born in 1207. Amongst his father's ancestors were St. Stephen and his wife Blessed Giselle, St. Emerich, St. Ladislaus and his daughter, St. Piroška. Elizabeth's nieces and one of her daughters will become saints too. Others, such as St. Hedwig, will be raised to the heights of the altars. It is not surprising then that Elizabeth grew up in a family where faith and prayer were at the centre of life. From a tender age, Elizabeth loved prayer, going to church, and giving alms. She showed great love for the poor and suffering.

**The miracle of roses** — It was in the middle of winter that one day Elizabeth, still a little child, stole some bread from the royal kitchens to give it to the poor. While she was carrying the loaves hidden in her apron, she was discovered and stopped by her father, the King. Though he approved of Elizabeth's kindness and generosity towards the needy, he could not condone the means by which Elizabeth came to those bread loaves. So he asked her daughter: "What are you carrying?" Elizabeth, trying to conceal her own good deed (see Matthew 6,3-4), answered, perhaps a bit too quickly: "Roses." Elizabeth and her father both knew this was simply impossible in the middle of winter... but she had no choice and so when her father asked her to open her apron, roses started to fall out of it in abundance. The king, they say, never again interfered with his daughter's charity and alms.

**Betrothed at 4 and married at 14** — Not unusually for royal princesses of her own time, at the age of 4 Elizabeth was betrothed to Hermann, eldest son of the prince and landgrave of Thuringia (in modern Germany). She moved to the castle of her future family and received a deeply religious education. She developed a most sincere friendship with one of Hermann's brothers, Louis, who shared Elizabeth's love for prayer and for the poor. Elizabeth was only 10 when her sickly betrothed, Hermann, died and found herself betrothed again, this time to his best friend, Louis. Their already existing friendship and shared love of God, prayer, church, and alms was a great promise of and firm foundation for a happy and holy marriage.

Around this time, Elizabeth learnt about the death of her mother back in Hungary. She was murdered as part of a plot of court intrigue. For a long time, Elizabeth suffered of nightmares.

**Children and charity** — Elizabeth and Louis lived in great joy and love. The birth of all their children was marked by great acts of charity. After

the birth of their first child, the couple opened an orphanage; after the birth of the second one, they opened a hospital for the poor with 28 beds where Elizabeth herself helped to feed and to wash the sick. The joy they experienced in their married life through their reciprocal love and through the birth of their children, they saw it as God's gift and they wanted to share this joy with others.

**Elizabeth as the wise and prudent servant** — After 4 years of happy married life, Louis had to go to war with his army, leaving Elizabeth in charge of a county devastated by famine and epidemics. She opened the castle to the poor, started a soup kitchen, and expanded the orphanage and hospital. So that she can give more to the poor, she herself, and her household, led a very simple life. Prayer, fasting, and alms were part of daily life in the castle.

On his return from war, Louis praised Elizabeth's wisdom and charity, defending her against other members of his family who accused Elizabeth of wasting the family's riches on the poor.

It was only days before the return of Louis that both the orphanage and the hospital were at full capacity. When yet another sick and hungry man came to the castle in search of alms, Elizabeth led him to her and her husband's own chamber and offered him their own bed. When Louis returned, his family accused Elizabeth of adultery. Convinced of the innocence of his wife but willing to investigate his family's accusation, Louis run to their room where, indeed, a man was lying in the bed. When he stepped closer and looked at the gravely sick man, the features of Christ appeared to Louis on the sick man's face. He kissed his wife and thanked him for bringing such a precious Guest into their home.

**Final years** — In 1227, six years into their marriage, Louis died of leprosy in a military camp. His family deprived Elizabeth of everything and treated her most harshly. She had to leave the castle, taking her three children with her. She cared for them by selling all her remaining dresses and jewellery. From this time, she lived in poverty and simplicity, wearing the grey habit of Franciscans. She earned her living by plait work. She was officially entrusted into the care of her confessor who imposed on her excessive fasting and penance, contributing to her premature death in 1231, at the age of 24.

**Reflection** — Elizabeth understood well the lesson Jesus taught at the Last Supper: the Christian must be one who serves the humblest needs of others, even if one serves from an exalted position. Of royal blood, Elizabeth could have lorded it over her subjects. Yet she served them with such a loving heart that her brief life won for her a special place in the hearts of many.

## Know the Bible! - The Book of Deuteronomy

The fifth and final book of the Torah, which is the very foundation of the Old Testament, is called Deuteronomy and is a very dense book. It can be divided into four sections, each organised around a choice Moses offers to Israel: life and obedience to God or death as consequence of their disobedience.

1) The first section of Deuteronomy is an introduction to the whole book in the form of recap. Moses reminds Israel about the chief events of their history with God: the calling of Abraham; the story of the twelve patriarchs; the birth of Israel as a nation; their rescue from Egypt through the ten plagues; the day when they gathered around Mount Sinai where they saw God's glory in a fiery cloud; how they heard God giving them the Ten Commandments ("*you heard the voice of God*"). And yet, Moses goes on, you still broke the first commandments very quickly by creating yourself an idol and you would have rather gone back to Egypt...

We saw in the previous books how God did not let them go back to Egypt but he did not allow them enter the promised land either. A new generation grew up and now, in the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses is talking to this new generation: choose life and obey God or do what the previous generation did, disobey God and die.

2) After this recap, Moses instructs Israel about how to live in the land they are about to enter. Once they arrive, they must recommit themselves to the laws given by God. Moses even gives them a curious ceremony to perform.

Once in Canaan, half of the people must go on Mountain Gerizim and must say out loud, proclaim, and even shout the blessings that come to Israel if they obey God's laws. The other half of the people must go on the opposite mountain, Mountain Ebal, and shout out the curses that befall Israel if they disobey the law. Through this ceremony, Israel will hear yet again the law proclaimed from a mountain, just as they did in the desert, at Mount Sinai. Though Moses will be dead by then - we know it, he knows it, they know it - he makes them promise nonetheless that they will indeed perform this ceremony.

But what is the law to be proclaimed? So that there can be no misunderstanding, the following chapters of Deuteronomy make a clear list of these laws. Some of these are unique and can only be found in this book of the Bible but most of these laws are present elsewhere, in previous books. Indeed, the name Deuteronomy means "second law" or "repeated law".



Moses boils down all these laws to two basic laws: love God and obey God. These are the two main rules.

In the interpretation of the Book of Deuteronomy, to love God means to have a devotion to God and to God alone. There must be no other gods to whom Israel shows respect, affection, or obedience. They must worship God only and they must worship him in one place only. For now, this only place is the Tent or Tabernacle, later it will be the Temple in Jerusalem.

And what does it mean to obey God? To maintain a certain holiness and reverence (see Leviticus); to exercise social justice especially towards marginalised groups such as widows, the poor, and foreigners. (Just a side note: Deuteronomy contains some very progressive and generous laws towards slaves and other defenceless groups, with no parallels elsewhere in the antique world.) Obeying God also means being generous (tithes) by giving to the priests and/or to the poor. Obedience to God is inseparable from showing respect to the dignity of other persons. Yet again, a choice for Israel to make: to love and obey God or to refuse to do so.

3) In the third section Moses predicts that Israel will be disobedient and consequently God will remove them from the promised land. However, even after their exile God will restore Israel, and he will give them new hearts that will truly love and obey God. Moses repeats it countless times: though you should choose God, you will not, I know it for certain. And yet, in the future God will find ways to help you to love and to obey him somehow.

4) At this point Deuteronomy draws to an end. Moses dies: he goes up the mountain to be with God and he never returns. Joshua is named as leader of the people now ready to cross the Jordan and to enter Canaan. The law is written down and thus Moses's leadership is carried forward in a twofold way: in the person of Joshua and on the written law.

Just before his death, Moses gives Israel a song in which he warns them again of the consequences of their disobedience. It is a song they will be able to sing when they will be in exile and to remember *why* they ended up there. The song is followed by a blessing for each tribe.

Deuteronomy leaves a few things unresolved: what will the people do? Will they do the ceremony ordered by Moses? Will the exile eventually happen? Will Israel be restored? To these questions there will be answers in later books but we will have to wait until the New Testament for the most important answers: will there be another prophet like Moses? Will God's final victory be brought about by the creation of new hearts that can finally love and obey God?

## The Psalms

### *Psalms 44: Cast off by God?*

Though it is impossible to date Psalm 44, most church fathers and bible commentators thought it was composed at the time of the Maccabees, during the religious persecutions of the Jews by Antiochus IV. Regardless when it was written, Psalm 44 describes a devastating situation.

Israel has been defeated by an enemy in battle; the prisoners have been deported to a foreign country; the chosen people of God suffers from the scorn of its neighbours; jackals have made the ruins of destroyed cities their abode; God, the Lord of hosts, who once had gone out to war at the head of the Israelite armies, has refused his help. No wonder that the people now prostrate themselves before God and complain to him of their material and spiritual afflictions, begging for help and deliverance.

**Verses 1-3** — The psalm opens with the statement that the chosen people have heard with their own ears about the saving deeds of God in the past. Their own fathers told so who had heard it from their own fathers.

History clearly assumes a different aspect when seen by faith: even the greatest victories achieved by force of arms or the greatest deeds of heroes fade away and become overshadowed by the acts of God who, emerging from the background of history, makes himself known to the believer as the One who really shapes the course of events. A deep and moving theological statement is given here: God, our God, is the God of history, too.

Through worship in the Temple, these saving acts of God - who is always the same and never changes - become present and accessible to the believers. They who praise God for his great deeds of the past know and experience that they themselves are sustained by the marvellous power of their God. At the root of this continuous help, presence, and sustenance is the incomprehensible miracle of his love.

**Verses 4-8** — This sure knowledge is the basis of every hope. God's love, now proclaimed and celebrated in worship, kindles a powerful hope in the future realisation of salvation. The strength of that hope lies in the humble and yet proud awe which ascribes power and glory exclusively to God. He only needs to command and salvation and help are at hand. The whole psalm has one main theme: "God alone"!

We come to understand more deeply how faith is transmitted. It lives on the experiences of the past which are preserved by their transmission in public worship. This is something we as Christians must remember. The most

secure way of spreading our faith is through authentic testimony of God's love in our own lives and the faithful celebration of this love in the Sacraments.

**Verses 9-16** — These verses deal with what is seemingly a painful contradiction for many Christians as well. The hymnic affirmation of confidence in God we saw in previous verses was made by a nation now defeated and humiliated. Measured against God's confessed and celebrated love and saving rule, the present experience of Israel is confusing for every believer.

Consequently, not only Israel's material existence is at peril but its very faith. It is precisely because God alone shapes the course of events, including those which now bring suffering to Israel, that the chosen people now question God. A trial of faith. The relationship between God and his people is in danger because Israel is unable to understand the way God acts.

However, in this psalm just as elsewhere in the Bible, it is a proof of genuine faith and trust that Israel brings its affliction before God with candour.

Even more fascinating is the attempt of the psalmist to understand the divine purpose of suffering. Though the question remains unanswered, the psalmist dares to ask it: what profit does God derive from abandoning his people? If God at least would thereby gain something, as does a man who sells his property for a reasonable price! This crisis of faith will only be resolved with the arrival of the New Testament.

**Verses 17-26** — The situation becomes more grievous since, at least at this point in history, Israel can genuinely say that they have not been unfaithful to God. Thus regarding their devastating state as punishment and the manifestation of God's justice, is not an option. As we accept Job's proclamation of his own righteousness to be genuine, so we should do in this case. The suffering laid upon Israel must be endured by them even if the tormenting question of the reason and purpose of that suffering remains unanswered. An experience many Christians can relate to—it will be only in Jesus Christ that these previously unanswered questions receive some answer and light.

For now, the Old Testament has only one answer—a valid but incomplete one. Since the reason and purpose of suffering are hidden in God, he is for that very reason also the only one who can help man to endure. It is at this point that suffering stops being a danger to the relationship of Israel with its God. The psalm ends with a final appeal to God's steadfast love, now somewhat obscured by the veil of suffering.

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