

Our next 'Circle of Prayer' for Holy Week & Easter will be circulated in the last week of Lent.

As always, if you would like to make any contributions to these Prayers, please contact me direct at:

[harvey.s.richardson@gmail.com](mailto:harvey.s.richardson@gmail.com)

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## CIRCLE of PRAYER

### LENT

February & March 2024



Natalya Rusetska (Ukrainian, 1984–), *Crucifixion*, 2013. Egg tempera on gessoed board, 20 × 13.5 cm

### A Prayer for Lent:

O God,  
you have made us for yourself  
and against your longing there is no defence.

Mark us with your love,  
and release in us a passion for your justice in our disfigured  
world:  
that we may turn from our guilt and face you, our heart's  
desire.  
**Amen**

### **BIBLE READING: JOEL Chapter 2**

Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!  
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,  
for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near—  
<sup>2</sup> a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick darkness!

<sup>12</sup> Yet even now, says the LORD,  
return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;  
<sup>13</sup> rend your hearts and not your clothing.  
Return to the LORD your God,  
for he is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love.

### **A HYMN for Lent**

#### **God is crying mid the carnage**

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Written 8 January 2023, after listening to Sunday Worship on BBC Radio 4,  
broadcast from Lviv in Western Ukraine as the country celebrated Christmas  
Day. The programme posed the question, 'Where is God in this war?'

The tune **CROSS OF JESUS** [8.7.8.7] is commended for this text.

1 God is crying mid the carnage  
of a thousand broken bones,  
in the dust and fallen rubble  
of our long-discarded homes.

2 Where our children play out stories  
of the visions they have seen,  
God is weeping over losses,  
knowing just what might have been.

3 What if love instead of horror  
filled the passion of our lives?  
Could these stories be rewritten  
where humanity survives?

4 God still with us, God among us,  
sow new seeds of love through grace;  
help us look at one another,  
building hope in every place.

*(Andrew Pratt, b.1948 – one of our Prayer Circle)*



Carl Spitzweg (German, 1808–1885), *Ash Wednesday*, 1860. Oil on canvas, 21 × 14 cm. Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Germany

### **A POEM** , ‘Undo thy door’

“Undo thy door, my spouse dear,  
Alas! why stand I locked out here?  
For I am thy mate.  
Look, my locks and also my head  
And all my body with blood bedewed,  
For thy sake.”

“Alas! alas! evil have I sped,  
For sin Jesus is from me fled,  
My true companion.  
Without my gate he standeth alone,  
Sorrowfully he maketh his moan  
In his manner.”



Aelbert Bouts (Netherlandish, ca. 1451/54–1549), *Man of Sorrows*, mid-1490s. Oil on oak wood, 14 15/16 × 10 7/16 in. (37.9 × 26.5 cm). Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Lord, for sin I sigh sore,  
Forgive, and I'll do so no more,  
With all my might I forsake my sin,  
And open my heart to take thee in.  
For thy heart is cleft our love to catch,  
Thy love has chosen us all to fetch;  
My heart it pierced if I were kind,  
Thy sweet love to have in mind.  
Pierce my heart with thy loving,  
That in thee I may have my dwelling.  
Amen.

*This poem appears in the 1372 “commonplace book” of the Franciscan friar John of Grimestone, who lived in Norfolk, England.*

*Belonging to the Christ-as-lover tradition, “Undo thy door” is based primarily on Song of Solomon 5:2, cited in Grimestone’s manuscript: “I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.”*

*So in the poem, the speaker is keeping company with sin and has locked out her true lover, Christ. Christ stands at the gate of her heart and implores her with great ardour to let him in and to send sin packing. Wet with the wounds of sacrifice, tokens of his love, he is persistent in his longing for her.*

**MUSIC:** *Erbalme dich*, from St Matthew Passion by J S Bach:

<https://youtu.be/MXAbOTVTgls?si=0xu035jOllgkuj-g>

## **THOUGHTS, PRAYERS and MORE for the LENTEN SEASON**

It's now over 60 years since the Bishop of Woolwich dropped a bombshell in his book '*Honest to God*'. This season of Lent is a good time to be honest about how we approach God today.

Let's look at some of the familiar THEMES for each Sunday in Lent:

1. 18 February - *The Temptations of Jesus*
2. 25 February - *The Call to Take up the Cross*

We are so reluctant to take up the cross. Let's be honest – knowing God is not easy, even if his burden is light.

### **PRAYER in the first week of Lent**

Let us pray for the Church of God throughout the world, for the church families and the communities

which mean so much to us. Help us not to avoid taking up our cross.

We also pray for ordained ministers who are preparing to move to new situations and communities. Bless them and guide them, we pray.

Lord, hear us.

**Lord graciously hear us.**



Nicholas Roerich (Russian, 1874–1947), *Christ in the Desert*, 1933. Tempera on canvas, 60 × 50.9 cm. Nicholas Roerich Museum, Moscow.

**PRAYER in the second week of Lent:**

We pray for those who have power and influence, and for all who govern the nations, that, in this time of Lent, they will listen to the voice of Jesus and his call to take up our cross, and grow in love of God and neighbour.

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**



3. 3 March - *Jesus cleansing of the Temple*

4. 10 March – *God loves the world with unbounded super-abundant and uncontainable love (Mothering Sunday)*

**PRAYER in the third week of Lent:**



We pray for the powerless, for all victims of famine, disease and war, and for all who strive for justice and peace.....

We pray for world leaders: that the Holy Spirit may open their eyes to injustice and guide them to speak out for what is right and take action to build a better future

Lord, hear us

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

## **PRAYER in the fourth week of Lent:**

### **A POEM by Christina Rossetti -**

I have no wit, no words, no tears;  
My heart within me like a stone  
Is numbed too much for hopes or fears;  
Look right, look left, I dwell alone;  
I lift mine eyes, but dimmed with grief  
No everlasting hills I see;  
My life is in the falling leaf:  
O Jesus, quicken me.

My life is like a faded leaf,  
My harvest dwindled to a husk:  
Truly my life is void and brief  
And tedious in the barren dusk;  
My life is like a frozen thing,  
No bud nor greenness can I see:  
Yet rise it shall—the sap of Spring;  
O Jesus, rise in me.

My life is like a broken bowl,  
A broken bowl that cannot hold  
One drop of water for my soul  
Or cordial in the searching cold;  
Cast in the fire the perished thing;  
Melt and remould it, till it be  
A royal cup for Him, my King:  
O Jesus, drink of me.

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**



Gaza in October 2023

To be honest, we so easily imagine we can have some knowledge of God, forgetting that he is beyond us and wholly other. Yet, 'and can it be' that there is always more to him and his love than we can ever fathom?

For the love of God is broader  
Than the measure of our mind;  
And the heart of the Eternal  
Is most wonderfully kind.

(F W Faber)

5.17 March – *Christ's glory in dying* (Passion Sunday)

6.24 March - *Jesus's entry into Jerusalem* (Palm Sunday)

We need to be honest and face up to the devastating humility of God, when so many forces push us towards ascribing to God power, control, authority, certainty and domination.

### **PRAYER in the fifth week of Lent:**

We pray for everyone who is sick, bereaved or dealing with loss; and for all who support them. May God grant each of them peace and comfort, courage and perseverance.

Lord, hear us

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

### **PRAYER on Palm Sunday:**

We pray for the Church and for the world: that God may grant us the gifts of courage, compassion and wisdom as we face challenging circumstances together.

Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

**The Lord's Prayer**

**A POEM**

## The Musician

A memory of Kreisler once:  
At some recital in this same city,  
The seats all taken, I found myself pushed  
On to the stage with a few others,  
So near that I could see the toil  
Of his face muscles, a pulse like a moth  
Fluttering under the fine skin,  
And the indelible veins of his smooth brow.

I could see, too, the twitching of the fingers,  
Caught temporarily in art's neurosis,  
As we sat there or warmly applauded  
This player who so beautifully suffered  
For each of us upon his instrument.

So it must have been on Calvary  
In the fiercer light of the thorns' halo:  
The men standing by and that one figure,  
The hands bleeding, the mind bruised but calm,  
Making such music as lives still.  
And no one daring to interrupt  
Because it was himself that he played  
And closer than all of them the God listened.

R S Thomas

**MUSIC:** 'Praeludium & Allegro' by Fritz Kreisler  
[https://youtu.be/S8YbnA2MkjI?  
si=3NOeGKk9HGPqHjAm](https://youtu.be/S8YbnA2MkjI?si=3NOeGKk9HGPqHjAm)



Painting of 'A Cross Violin' by HR  
(painted during 'Lockdown' 2021)

## A POEM by Jan, one of our Circle

Easy, it was once  
to recognise temptation:  
scented and be-labelled  
beckoning gluttony,  
the beguiling, cloaked in lust  
envy and greed both fuelling  
rampant, unbridled need for more  
the fantasy: we were above such things  
as these;  
no wrath executed now, save  
safe at social mediated distance  
can we even be bothered  
to examine what was given, what was lent  
when  
it is tempting today  
to look  
away

*jg 2024*

## A BLESSING:

>> “Вечірня молитва” (Vechirnya molytva) (Evening Prayer): A choral setting of a text from the Divine Service of the Eastern Orthodox Church, by contemporary Ukrainian composer Iryna Aleksyichuk. Performed in 2012 by the Female Choir of Kiev Glier Institute of Music, conducted by G. Gorbatenko. [HT: *Global Christian Worship*] <https://youtu.be/DYP75A2yufM?si=FLZUFPy9Qt3K1Eg->

*English*

*translation:*

Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth,  
Who art everywhere present and fillest all things,  
Treasury of good things, and Giver of life:  
Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every sin,  
And save our souls, O Good One!  
Holy God, holy Mighty, holy Immortal,  
Have mercy on us.