

## **Friday (Metropolitan Anthony)**

Prayer is the search for God, encounter with God, and going beyond this encounter in communion. Thus it is an activity, a state, and also a situation; a situation both with respect to God and to the created world. It arises from the awareness that the world in which we live is not simply imprisoned in the two categories of time and space, a world in which we meet only the surface of things. Prayer is born of the discovery that the world has depths; that we are not only surrounded by visible things but that we are also immersed in and penetrated by invisible things. And this invisible world is both the presence of God, the supreme, sublime reality, and our own deepest truth.

## **Scripture (Psalm 34:3-4,15, 17-18)**

***Proclaim with me the greatness of God, let us acclaim his name together. I seek the Lord and he answers me, frees me from all my fears. The eyes of the Lord are on the upright, his ear turned to their cry. They cry in anguish and the Lord hears and rescues them from their troubles. The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, he helps those whose spirit is crushed.***

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*23rd Week of Ordinary Time*

## **Our Father who art in heaven, thy Kingdom has come**

*If I focus on the man who is cured of his deafness and inability to speak, (Mark 7:31-37, I can get some idea of his joy at being cured by imagining how his life was severely limited before. If I focus on the details about Jesus, I can learn much about his genuine compassion for people, (he takes the man away from the crowd, he sighs, then he insists on ‘no publicity’ when the crowd are amazed.).*

*This love and caring aspect of Jesus and his ability to cure, though, are rarely if ever the focus of the reports of his miracles. If I read the incident as a member of the crowd, I begin to see what Mark is pointing me towards.*

*As Mark refers to ‘the crowd’, it seems likely that the people aren’t all close friends or family; it is likely that many of the crowd brought the man to Jesus as much out of curiosity about this preacher and healer who is working his way through the region as out of concern for the man. This curiosity will not be thwarted by Jesus taking the man aside in private– I imagine that Jesus being deep in prayer (‘he looked up to heaven and he sighed’) allowed them to edge close enough to see and hear what was going on.*

*Apart from a deep admiration for Jesus, the Mark’s specific choice of words to summarise their reaction to what they had witnessed points us to the reason why he records this miracle. “He makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak” is a direct quote from Isaiah 35:4-7, a passage that is rich in promise. Even though Isaiah is talking to people who are afraid and who are oppressed (the powerful Edomites have been oppressing them and taking advantage of their weakness), Isaiah encourages them to take heart, promising that God will reign and those who have been downtrodden will be able to sing and dance. He goes on to describe the changes which will take place when God’s reign is established. The desert where wild animals roamed would spring into bloom and the water will flow. This to describe the victory of God of the reign of evil: where there was death, there will be an abundance of life.*

*The people who brought the deaf man to Jesus would see his affliction to be caused by sin, i.e. by the power of the devil and, given the news that had spread about Jesus as a prophet, bringing this man was to see if there was something more to Jesus than being a healer. In quoting Isaiah’s prophecy of a time when God would reign, they are saying that they believe that this prophecy is being fulfilled in Jesus.*

*Unlike Isaiah’s audience who were looking forward and the witnesses who were seeing in Jesus a beginning, we are looking back to when the Kingdom became established. It is possible for us see in Jesus going into the desert to be tempted, ‘to be with the wild animals’, and to overcome the power of Satan the start of the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy of God’s reign – a reign that was fully established in the cross, resurrection and coming of the Spirit.*

*So what we are praying for when we say, “Thy Kingdom come”? This can’t mean, as I thought for many years, looking to a distant horizon for signs that God will intervene – he’s done that! It would perhaps make sense to pray it in the sense ‘Thy Kingdom, which you established, come to fulfilment’ – which allows us to see where we, today’s crowd who come to Jesus, are involved. Jesus wanted people to keep quiet about his miracles before his death and resurrection. After, it was the Good News of the Kingdom, established by him, he wanted his followers to proclaim, with their lives. Martin Bennett*

## **Monday (Martin Luther King)**

In a real sense ours is a great time in which to be alive. Therefore I am not yet discouraged about the future. Granted that the easy going optimism of yesterday is impossible. Granted that we face a world crisis which often leaves us standing amid the surging murmur of life's restless sea. But every crisis has both its dangers and its opportunities. Each can spell either salvation or doom. In a dark, confused world the spirit of God may yet reign supreme.

### **Scripture (Isaiah 35:3-8)**

*Strengthen then all weary hands, steady all trembling knees and say to the faint hearted, 'Be strong! Do not be afraid. Here is your God, vengeance is coming, divine retribution; he is coming to save you. The eyes of the blind will be opened, the ears of the deaf unsealed, then the lame will leap like a deer and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy; for water will gush in the desert and streams in the wasteland, the parched ground will become a marsh and thirsty lands springs of water; and through it will run a road for them, and a highway which will be called the sacred way.*

## **Tuesday (Daniel O'Leary, 'An Astonishing Secret')**

We receive Holy Communion to really become the bread and wine, allowing them to transform our very being into the presence of God. And then, fully reflecting our baptismal ordination as priests/priestesses and prophetesses/prophets to continue consecrating, through our senses and very existence, every moment, action, experience of each day and night. The silent, sacramental moment after receiving Holy Communion is the precious, timeless space when we touch and feel the mystery of love, when we open ourselves completely to the personal and universal presence of grace when, inextricably linked with our Tremendous Lover, we become intimately aware that we are already that. May the Holy Spirit clarify our hearts and minds to really grasp these truths and live by them. blessed presence in our communities

### **Scripture (Colossians 1:9-14)**

*That is why we ask that you should reach the fullest knowledge of his will, growing in knowledge of God, fortified, in accordance with his glorious strength, with all power always to persevere and endure, giving thanks with joy to the Father, who has made you able to share the lot of God's holy people and with them to inherit the light. Because that is what he has done. It is he who has rescued us from the ruling force of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son that he loves, and in him we enjoy our freedom, the forgiveness of sin.*

## **Wednesday (Bede Griffiths)**

When historical events are seen to reveal the ultimate significance of life, then myth and history meet. Such are the birth, the resurrection and the ascension. They are historical events, yet they are symbols of the ultimate Reality, of the eternal mystery manifest in space and time, of the deliverance from sin and death, of our ascent to the divine. At this point, history becomes wholly meaningful. We discover our real nature and know ourselves as children of God. The divine and the human meet "without separation and without confusion."

### **Scripture (1Peter 1:3-4,10-12)**

*Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and into a heritage that can never be spoilt or soiled and never fade away. This salvation was the subject of the search and investigation of the prophets who spoke of the grace you were to receive; searching out the time and circumstances for which the spirit of Christ, bearing witness in them, was revealing the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow them.*

## **Thursday (2nd Vatican Council, 'The Church Today')**

For God's Word, by whom all things were made, was himself made flesh so that as perfect man he might save all people and sum up all things in himself. The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the longings of history and of civilisation, the centre of the human race, the joy of every heart, and the answer to all its yearnings.

### **Scripture (Ephesians 3:8-10)**

*I have been entrusted with the special grace, of proclaiming to the gentiles the unfathomable treasure of Christ and of throwing light on the inner workings of the mystery kept hidden through all the ages in God, the creator of everything. The purpose of this was, that now, through the church, the principalities and ruling forces should learn how many-sided God's wisdom is, according to the plan which he had formed from all eternity in Christ Jesus our Lord.*