

St Peter's Church, Bishopsworth



*Focused on Christ, caring for
each other and serving the community*

Spiritual reflection for May

Welcome, everyone, to the May Reflection.

I came across this article about prayer recently and I thought it was very appropriate for us as at this time. I hope it helps you to engage with our Lord in prayer. Mick

How do I pray when prayer seems impossible?

Throughout Christian history, when people sought to deepen their relationship with God they went into the desert. They pursued isolation. This way of living the Christian vocation was called the solitary life.

The early monks who fled into the desert were imitating Jesus in his isolation. There are many times in the gospels where Jesus deliberately removes himself from people. He disappears off to a deserted place to pray (Mark 1.32). He dismisses the crowds and goes up a mountain on his own (Matthew 14.23). He sits by a well in the desert (John 4.5). He prays on his own on the night before his death (Luke 22.41). In particular, the monks remembered the days Jesus spent in the wilderness and the temptations he faced there (Matthew 4.1–11).

Encountering the darkness

The spiritual life always involves an encounter with darkness. The people of Israel are led through the desert into the Promised Land. Jesus began his ministry being driven into the wilderness. The garden of the resurrection is entered through his suffering on Calvary. Similarly, our faith must pass through periods of barren difficulty, doubt and despair.

But doubt is not the opposite of faith. The opposite of doubt is certainty. Doubting is part of believing. It is the shadow that is created by the light. This

is why when people become Christians, we do not ask them to say that they know beyond doubt that Jesus is the one they must follow. We ask them if they believe and trust.

When we follow Christ we are not giving our assent to a set of abstract propositions, but to a person. To the living God who is made known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are saying that God is community, and that we are called to live our lives in community with God and with each other.

It is often in prayer that we become most aware of the dark and difficult times of the Christian journey.

Sometimes this is because we are facing a crisis or a tragedy in our life or in the life of the world. Sometimes it can be what feels like a loss of faith. We feel angry and resentful towards God. It feels as if God has let us down, or even abandoned us. Prayer suddenly feels impossible or useless. God seems absent.

When this happens prayer becomes empty, familiar words and rituals lose their comfort. Church becomes boring. Other Christians become irritating, and faith can suddenly feel a ridiculous charade. The energy of our faith is sapped.

Although these experiences are dark and terrible, they are also normal and inevitable. All the great spiritual writers speak of the desert experience as part of the Christian journey.

Many Christians are ill-prepared for the dark times that will inevitably come. Often people not only give up on prayer, but give up on God when they find themselves in the desert.

You might be feeling great despair and darkness right now. Prayer might have become very difficult. But if all you do is hold on to your desire to pray, then you are already on the road to recovery.

Finding refreshment in the desert

When you journey through the desert, what you look for is an oasis: a place where you can quench your thirst. The oasis will be different for each of us: it might be a familiar prayer; a verse from scripture; a piece of music; a photograph; or even some symbolic action. Discern what it is – no matter how small and seemingly insignificant – that still connects you to God, and hold onto it tightly through the desert.

Prayer

O Lord, support us all the day long
of this troublous life,
until the shadows lengthen,
and the evening comes,
and the busy world is hushed,
and the fever of life is over,
and our work is done.

Then, Lord, in thy mercy
grant us a safe lodging,
a holy rest, and peace at the last;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.
(John Henry Newman)

The material by Stephen Cottrell is taken from the illustrated Church House Publishing book and eBook Prayer: Where to Start and How to Keep Going.

Services this week	
Sunday 2nd May	10:30am Café Church Service followed immediately by the A.P.C.M. This Service will take place in Church and can be joined online via Zoom using the following link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88109252030 Meeting ID: 881 0925 2030
Thursday 6th April	10:00am Communion Service

News

Sunday Services have resumed in the Church building. Social distancing measures remain in place, please remember to bring your face covering. **The Services will be livestreamed** via YouTube, Facebook & our website.

The **May Prayer Diary** is available to download here:

<https://stpetersbishopswoth.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2021/04/May-2021-Prayer-Diary.pdf> .

Virtual coffee mornings will run on Thursday 6th and Friday 7th May at 10:30am. Please find the link to join via Zoom here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89414254916>.

Work is currently ongoing on the Church hall buildings to do repointing and repair parts of the walls. **The car park remains open.**

We continue to support **Carpenter's Food Bank**. Please find current food requests here: <https://www.facebook.com/withywoodcentre>.

Prayer Diary (2nd – 8th May)

"In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation" Psalm 5:3

SUN	<i>Risen Christ, your wounds declare your love for the world and the wonders of your risen life: give us compassion and courage to risk ourselves for those we serve to the glory of God the Father.</i>
MON	Pray for all the newly elected church officers and PCC members that they will serve faithfully and effectively and find joy and satisfaction in their service.
TUE	Thank God for the dedicated work of all those in the Fire Service , particularly our local depot on Hartcliffe Way.
WED	Lift up to the Lord all our church children. Give thanks for all those who lead and help in Sparclers and ask God to guide and bless their work.
THU	Pray for the local elections taking place today, that they will be carried out fairly and justly and that the right candidates will be elected to office.
FRI	Consider the beauty and variety of the natural world around us. May the Lord help us to appreciate and preserve it; and may he grant success to all those projects that aim to value and protect our wildlife.
SAT	Think of the work done all around the world by the Red Cross and the help they have brought to people.

Services next week

Sunday 9th May	10:30am Service of Morning Prayer This Service will take place in Church and will be live streamed via YouTube , Facebook and our website .
Thursday 13th May	10:00am Communion Service

Contact details

Rev Tim Godden 0117 964 2734 info@stpetersbishopsworth.co.uk

Website: <https://stpetersbishopsworth.co.uk/>

Follow us on [Facebook](#) & [YouTube](#)