**Feast of St. Stephen**

**Prayers of the Faithful**

**Celebrant:** As we remember St Stephen, the first to follow in the footsteps of Christ in his martyrdom, we thank God for his witness and courage and pray for our needs and the needs of the world.

1. For our Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world persecuted because of their faith in Jesus Christ; may our prayers and solidarity support and encourage them in times of doubt or adversity. **Lord, hear us.**
2. For all who guide and lead us in our faith; we pray especially for all deacons and catechists. Inspire them to follow the example of St Stephen in his fearless approach to opposition. **Lord, hear us.**
3. For peace on earth, that the peace which Christ brings will become a reality for the peoples of Ukraine, Gaza, Israel, Iran, Yemen, Ethiopia, Congo, Haiti, and Pakistan. **Lord, hear us.**
4. In times of economic uncertainty, we pray for political leaders – may they have the strength to resist what destroys our humanity and the courage to propose new paths. **Lord, hear us.**
5. For our parish communities, that we will trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to give us the words we need to draw others to Christ. **Lord, hear us.**
6. For all who will visit our homes this Holy Season, may we welcome them as if it were Christ himself, seeking help and companionship. **Lord, hear us.**
7. For all intent on war, destruction, conflict, racism, or bigotry; humbly guide them in the ways of mutual respect and love, that they may contribute positively to building a society of peace and love. **Lord, hear us.**
8. For all who have died; Lord, receive their spirit. **Lord, hear us.**

**Celebrant:**  Lord our God, Stephen pardoned and prayed for those who stoned him. Answer our prayers that we, too, may be filled with the same gift of prayer and forgiveness. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**