

Prisoners' Sunday 2023

Parish Resources

Prisoners' Sunday is an opportunity to pause, reflect and pray for the men, women and children in prison and detention, and how we as a Church serve those affected by imprisonment. Sunday, 5th November is Prisoners' Sunday. It is significant that one of only fifteen 'Days of Prayer' should be set aside for prisoners. Prisoners, people with convictions, and their children and families often find themselves on the margins of our society. Yet Jesus challenges us with His words:

"I was in prison and you came to me..."

PRISONERS' SUNDAY PRAYER

Lord, you offer freedom to all people. We pray for those in prison.

Break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist.

Support with your love prisoners and their families and friends, prison staff and all who care.

Heal those who have been wounded by the actions of others, especially the victims of crime.

Help us to forgive one another, to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly together with Christ, in his strength and in his Spirit, now and every day.

Amen.

(Source: www.prisonadvice.org.uk/prisoners-sunday)

SUGGESTED READINGS FOR PARISH PRAYER SERVICE

Old Testament

A reading from the Prophet Jeremiah

(29:10-14)

This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfil my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”

Gospel

A reading from the gospel according to Luke

(7:36-50)

When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.” Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.” “Tell me, teacher,” he said.

“Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”

Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.”

“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but

this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

New Testament

A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians. (2:1-10)

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

1. God of mercy, you offer freedom to all people. We pray for those in prison and for their children and families. Break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist. May your love overcome struggle and heartache and bring new life. **Lord, hear us.**
2. Lord God, we commend to you all who work or volunteer, in courts, prisons and communities. May they know your presence with them as they work and may their efforts inspire us to share your love ever more widely. **Lord, hear us.**

3. Lord Jesus you know what it is to be held captive. We pray for all those resident in prison and their families. May they be aware of your presence with them and may your spirit bring them peace and the hope of new life in Jesus Christ. **Lord, hear us.**

4. We pray for all victims of crime; may your spirit bring them healing and peace as they rebuild their lives. **Lord, hear us.**

5. On this Prisoners' Sunday, we pray for all those unlawfully imprisoned throughout the world, particularly prisoners of conscience, that they receive justice and be released and restored safely into the care of their families and communities. **Lord, hear us.**

DAILY PRAYERS FOR PRISONERS

Sunday

Out of the Depths I cry to you O Lord (Psalm 130:1)

Heavenly Father, thank you for those who work in the prison service. May they be motivated by a desire to help others live well. We pray for any who are discouraged. Help them to look up and cry out to you, for you are both holy and full of mercy and hear our prayers. May they know your unfailing love for them and for the prisoners they serve. Please give them fresh hope and encouragement at work today.

Monday

I cried Out to God to hear me (Psalm 77:1)

God, for those in the darkness where they feel alone and abandoned. Hear their cries for help? In the darkness of night, shed your light to guide their way. You know them better than they know themselves. Speak to them, listen to them, visit them. Rescue them from all their fears.

Tuesday

I Wait for The Lord... And in his word I put my trust (Psalm 130:5)

We pray for all those affected by prison – the prisoner, the family or victims. Be near them when they are angry, sad or cry for help. May they be assured of your trust and love for them. Lord, you know us and you are near us wherever we are and whatever we do. Even though we stray so often from your presence may they know the comfort of your loving arms around them.

Wednesday

For Great Is your love towards me; you have delivered me from the depths of the grave (Psalm 86:13)

Lord God, we thank you for Your grace and mercy. Help the victims of crime to forgive those who have hurt them and turn that pain into purpose. We pray for those who find themselves in prison, that they will also come to know your

goodness and be glad to receive your love, so that their lives too, can be transformed and renewed.

Thursday

***Where Can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?
(Psalm 139:7)***

We look to the God who knows the turbulence we've experienced. And we pray that we will find stability. We look to the God who knows our hurt. And we pray that we will find peace. We look to the God who knows who matters to us; those held dearly and missed. We pray that your abiding presence will guide all who need the strength of Your Spirit.

Friday

Be still and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10)

Dear Lord, we lift up to you all of those caught up within the prison system. We ask that in the midst of confusion, violence and addiction, they will know that their refuge is in you. We pray for peace in the heart of each of those behind locked doors and we pray that they would know you close.

Saturday

The heavens declare the Glory of God (Psalm 19:1)

Creator God, the heavens declare your glory and you have made me in your image. Come to all in prison and those affected by crime in their moments of despair and sadness. Remind them that they can do nothing without You. Help them to lift their eyes and hear the call of Jesus to follow and truly be at peace with themselves and the world.