

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 14 September 2025
Holy Cross**

Welcome to this week's prayers and reflections. This week, we are celebrating Holy Cross Day. It is a festival that reflects on the cross on which our Lord died to save us. It is, I think, the most wondrous and yet mysterious part of the Christian faith. Over the centuries, theologians have tried to discern God's answers to this burning question, '*Why did Jesus have to die to save us?*'

Enjoy pondering the ideas within today's reading.

Every blessing,

Revd Katrina

Vicar

Phone No. 01604 812907

Mobile No. 07710 464675

E-mail: katrinahutchins94@yahoo.co.uk

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This week's hymn is inspired by Philippians 2:6-11, St. Paul's hymn of sacrifice, our Lord's sacrifice. It invites us to come and worship our Lord Jesus.



At the name of Jesus
every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him
King of glory now:
'tis the Father's pleasure
we should call him Lord,
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word.

Caroline Maria Noel (1817-1877)

Prayers and Reflections
for use at home on Holy Cross
Dying to save us

PREPARING OURSELVES

Take a moment to be still in God's presence and feel his love. If you are indoors, you may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love - here, in your room. You may also wish to have a bowl of water ready for the time of letting go. When you are ready, say this opening prayer.

Lord, as I sit and wait in silence,
I place my hopes and dreams,
my fears and concerns,
into your safe and loving hands.
Enfold me with your love,
make my heart beat in time with yours;
in Jesus' name,
I pray. **Amen.**

LETTING GO

If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets, with things that you wish you had not said, done or been, offer them to God in the silence of your heart. And then, reflect on the words of this next verse.

At his voice creation
sprang at once to sight,
all the angel faces,
all the hosts of light,
thrones and dominations,
stars upon their way,
all the heavenly orders,
in their great array.

Caroline Maria Noel (1817-1877)



*If you wish, dip your finger into a bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your palm.
Feel God's forgiveness.*

Our verse contexts us to the opening lines of St. Paul's hymn of sacrifice, God's Son came to us. The one who was there at his Father's side as earth was spoken into life came to the planet which was made with so much love and care. He gave up his throne in heaven and the worship of the angels to live a humble human life. He gave up all of this for us.

Ponder this as you read St. Paul's words.

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death -
even death on a cross.

Philippians 2:6-8

Did you feel the depth of our Lord's love for our planet home, for everyone on earth? He gave up so much to be here. He took on so much to save us, the human race, from ourselves. The cross is an unbearable way to die, it is pure agony. This is answer one to the question, 'Why did Jesus have to die to save us?', to show us how much God truly loves and cares for us. A love like this should trigger a loving response. Love saves.

*How does our Lord's cross-shaped love inspire your own love for him?
How is he inspiring you to be a better - more loving - version of yourself?
How might this image help you in the week to come?*

Offer your self-giving praise and prayers to Jesus.

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

(The Collect)

Across our villages and the worldwide Church, this prayer is being said today. Add your voice to this earthly circle of prayer to our God whose love is unbreakable.

Almighty God,
who in the passion of your blessed Son
made an instrument of painful death
to be for us the means of life and peace:
grant us to glory in the cross of Christ
that we may gladly suffer for his sake;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

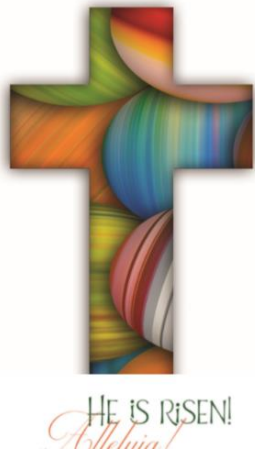
Our prayer reminds us that the cross was a symbol of torture and death, akin to the gallows that were used in this country in past centuries to execute criminals and traitors. Crosses were left on roadsides to bring shivers down the spines of travellers. Their gruesome message being, 'Obey the Romans or you will die like this.' For Christians, Jesus has transformed this suppressive symbol of fearful obedience to one of liberating freedom and loving obedience. Dying, Jesus set us free to learn from our mistakes, to love others as we love him. Rising to new life, Jesus offers us a new vision of a life beyond this life; a vision that inspires how we live today.

Our calling is to live as he taught us to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.

Accepting the cross as the symbol of our faith is to say, 'Lord, I will dedicate my life to offering signs of your love and peace and justice. Your will be done in me and through me.'

This is answer two to the question, 'Why did Jesus have to die to save us?' The cross is a sign of our dedication. Ponder and affirm this as you sing or say the next verse of our hymn.



Humbled for a season,
to receive a name
from the lips of sinners
unto whom he came,
faithfully he bore it
spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious,
when from death he passed.

Caroline Maria Noel (1817-1877)

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

God's plan!

Jesus said to Nicodemus, 'No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.'

John 3:13-17

God's plan...

Answer three to the question, 'Why did Jesus have to die to save us?' is because this was part of God's plan all along. This passage suggests that, perhaps, the cross was where our Lord was heading even as he was being worshipped by the angels and shepherds and wise men.

God's people had a long history of ignoring his prophets, of rejecting God's powerful messages to them. If they could imprison or threaten prophets like Jeremiah and Elijah, what might they do to God's own Son, the Messiah? Being born into a humble branch of King David's family, rather than into a wealthy or high status part of his family line, will have confused the Jewish elders. He cannot be the one, can he?

Yes, the possibility of rejection will have been there from the beginning, the cross a part of God's plan of salvation. A symbol of God's power to save us from all of our faults and failings, the cross can encourage us to stay strong in the face of temptation and live as Jesus came to do. His is a heart inspired by love and compassion and social justice. Is yours?

The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Luke 4:18-19

It is by being at one with our Lord and on board with his life-changing agenda that we live the best of lives: a life at one with God - creation - neighbours and strangers. Jesus came to transform life on earth from within. The cross show us just how vital this mission was - and is - to him. It should be as vital to you and me.



In your hearts enthrone him;
there let him subdue
all that is not holy,
all that is not true:
crown him as your Captain
in temptation's hour;
let his will enfold you
in its light and power.

Caroline Maria Noel (1817-1877)

OUR PRAYERS

Feel free to use one or more of these prayers and to add your own.

Lord Jesus, the cross shows me how deeply you care for me,
and all life on earth. Dying, you set us free to love as you love,
as your Father loves. Lord, help me to feel this as I hold my cross...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, the cross shows me that you came to give your life
to bring love and peace and fairness to all peoples. You ask us
to dedicate our lives to this mission. Lord, help us to live as you lived...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, the cross is a symbol of inner healing and hope.

By your wounds, we are set free to live purer lives. By your rising,
we believe in the life beyond this life. Lord, help those weighed down...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings, praise and thanksgivings.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF BLESSING

A closing prayer of blessing for this week.

O God, you search me and you know me,
all my thoughts and feelings are open to your gaze,
you see the paths I will take before I take them. Guide my daily living.
Bless me and keep my loved ones safe, I pray. **Amen.**