

# When Mass cannot be celebrated publicly

*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? :*

*the Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

These words from Psalm 26 were penned by David in the twilight of his life. Having experienced many ups and downs as King of Israel, he reflects on the one steadfast thing, the love of God for him. In these difficult times when our worlds can seem to be upside down and the familiar patterns of life are removed from us, we turn to God and rely on his mercy and loving compassion for us all. This booklet has been provided as a help for prayer when Mass is not available to us. Our priests will continue to offer Mass for the Church and the world at this time, and we can unite ourselves to their celebrations through a spiritual communion. St Thomas Aquinas described Spiritual Communion as, 'an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the most holy sacrament and lovingly embrace him'. As our pattern of life changes, we should endeavour to keep a pattern of prayer and praise in our days, and this is one way we can unite ourselves in prayer to our Lord and his world.

Be assured of my prayers for you all at this time.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols

President

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

## Introduction

*Some will find it helpful to have a space as a focus for their prayer. This might include a crucifix, icon or other holy image, and a lighted candle.*

## Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Examen

*Before listening to the Word of God take a moment to reflect.*

For what am I grateful to God for today?

Where did I stray from God: through words, actions or things I did not do. How might I do better tomorrow?

What grace do I ask from God in order to live more closely in his love.

*You may wish to conclude by saying:*

Lord Jesus, you have revealed yourself as the way to the Father: Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

You have poured out on your people the Spirit of truth: Christ, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

You are the Good Shepherd, leading us to eternal life: Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

## The Word of God

*The readings for the Mass of the Day can be found in a People's Missal or online Universalis [<https://universalis.com/mass.htm>]. Either read all the texts or choose just to read the Gospel of the Day.*

## Psalm 85

(1-6, 11, 15-16)

Turn your ear, O Lord, and give answer for I am poor and needy.

Preserve my life, for I am faithful:

save the servant who trusts in you.

You are my God, have mercy on me, Lord, for I cry to you all the day long.

Give joy to your servant, O Lord,  
for to you I lift up my soul.  
O Lord, you are good and forgiving, full of love to all who call.  
Give heed, O Lord, to my prayer and attend to the sound of my voice.  
Show me, Lord, your way  
so that I may walk in your truth. Guide my heart to fear your name.  
You, God of mercy and compassion, slow to anger, O Lord,  
abounding in love and truth,  
turn and take pity on me.

## Gospel

## Mark 4:35–41

On that day, when evening had come, Jesus said to them, ‘Let us go across to the other side.’ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, ‘Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?’ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’

Silent reflection *Pause for a moment of silent reflection.*

## **HOMILY FOR FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT - Fr David Irwin**

“Amazing Grace” is one of the world’s most popular hymns, its words were written by English clergyman John Newton in the late eighteenth century. Yet did you know that Newton wasn’t always a man of faith and compassion?

Newton was a seafarer from an early age and was involved with the Atlantic slave trade. On one occasion, when his ship was caught up in a violent storm and seemed to be filling with water, he feared for his life and called out to God for mercy. He survived, and the incident marked the beginning of his spiritual conversion. He went on to study theology and to speak and write about the slave trade and his own experience of sin. “Amazing Grace” is written in the first person, reflecting Newton’s feelings of wretchedness at his wilful sin and distance from God, and then his experience of religious conversion, moving from blindness to sight. He became a hymn-writer, and, towards the end of his life, a prominent supporter of the abolition of slavery.

The New Testament served as the basis for many of the lyrics of “Amazing Grace” The story of Jesus healing a blind man who tells the Pharisees that he can now see is told in today’s Gospel from John. Imagine how excited the blind man must have been to see for the first time. He had a life-changing experience through this miracle.

The blind man progresses from darkness to light: he regards Jesus as a prophet, and finally believes that he is the Son of God. The Pharisees, on the other hand, first appear to accept the blind man’s healing but then begin to doubt and finally deny Jesus’ heavenly origins. They end up refusing to see, rendering themselves spiritually blind.

The story of the blind man’s healing takes exactly two scriptural verses; the controversy surrounding the cure, thirty-nine verses. There is an analogy and a distinction between

physical and spiritual blindness, as there are with most of the Gospel miracle stories where Jesus heals blind people. The early Christians saw physical blindness as a metaphor for the spiritual blindness that prevents people from recognising the divinity of Jesus and following his teachings.

The Gospel shows that the one thing you need to qualify to bear witness to Jesus is experience of the person of Jesus Christ. And God's divine intervention can happen during the darkest moments of any of our lives. Today the Church invites us to reflect on God's love and compassion for the whole world and to be joyful because of it.

God works in others too -sometimes through the most unexpected people. Do we make the effort to engage with people outside of our immediate family and friends? And what areas of the Church, of society and of our culture need serious healing in our own time? Where are the blind spots to addressing hardship and disability in our society? How are they being addressed?

Where can we recognise the light of Christ shining in the world today and in our own community? Let's celebrate God's love and healing power as the blind man did after encountering Jesus. God's divine intervention helps us transform into people who live lives of goodness, generosity and justice, reflecting God's light. Amazing Grace !

## Prayers

### Intercessions

*Pray for family and loved ones so that they may be held in God's compassionate care. Pray for other countries who are struggling with the effects of the COVID 19 virus.*

*If the following intentions are said in a family or other group you may wish to conclude each one with the response:*

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer

For those in authority:

may they offer advice with care and integrity, may they seek to protect the poor and vulnerable.

For all who work in healthcare:

give strength to all who look after the sick

so that they may bring comfort and relief to the suffering.

For the Church:

may she offer prayers and consolation for all those affected.

For our local community and all for those in need: may those who are isolated know the support and service of their neighbours.

## Lord's Prayer

Our Father...

## **Spiritual Communion - Prayer of St Alphonus**

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in this Holy Sacrament of the altar. I love you above all things, and I passionately desire to receive you into my soul.

Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,  
come spiritually into my soul

so that I may unite myself wholly to you now and forever. Amen.

## **Conclusion**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **Additional Prayers**

### **Pope Francis' prayer to the Virgin for protection**

O Mary, you shine continuously on our journey  
as a sign of salvation and hope.

We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick.

At the foot of the Cross you participated in Jesus' pain, with steadfast faith.

You, Salvation of the Roman People, know what we need.

We are certain that you will provide, so that, as you did at Cana of Galilee, joy and feasting might  
return after this moment of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love,

to conform ourselves to the Father's will and to do what Jesus tells us:

He who took our sufferings upon Himself, and bore our sorrows to bring us, through the Cross, to  
the joy of the Resurrection.

Amen.

We seek refuge under your protection, O Holy Mother of God. Do not despise our pleas — we  
who are put to the test —

and deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

### **Invocation of Our Lady**

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,

that never was it known

that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession was left  
unaided.

Inspired with this confidence,

I fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.

To you I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,

despise not my petitions, but in your mercy, hear and answer me.

### **Prayer for the Household**

Hear us, Lord, and send your angel from heaven to visit and protect, to comfort and defend  
all who live in this house. Amen.

Information about how the Church is responding practically to Coronavirus (COVID 19) can be found here: [www.cbcew.org.uk/coronavirus-guidelines](http://www.cbcew.org.uk/coronavirus-guidelines) This information is kept up to date and should be checked regularly.

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