

PRAYERS FOR LENT 2021, NO. 5

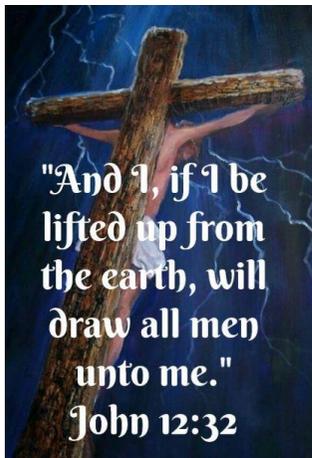
GOSPEL PASSAGE: JN 12: 20–32 (ESV)

Some Greeks Seek Jesus

²³ And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there will My servant be also. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honour him.

The Son of Man Must Be Lifted Up

²⁷ “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify Your name.”
... ³¹ “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.” ³³ He said this to show by what kind of death He was going to die.



QUESTIONS TO PONDER ...

1. Some Greeks came to see Jesus and to question Him. What in my heart of hearts would I like to ask Jesus today? To what do I need His answers?
2. Jesus uses vibrant visual images, of the seed dying, and of being ‘lifted up from the earth.’ Can I recognise in His divine words that His death contains life? Do I truly believe this?

EXTRACT FROM *PATRIS CORDE*

(Pope Francis’s letter on the Year of St Joseph 2020/21)

Joseph was the man chosen by God to guide the beginnings of the history of redemption. He was the true “miracle” by which God saves the child and his mother. God acted by trusting in Joseph’s creative courage. ... Faced with imminent danger from Herod, who wanted to kill the child, Joseph was warned once again in a dream to protect the child, and rose in the middle of the night to prepare the flight into Egypt. ...



The “good news” of the Gospel consists in showing that, for all the arrogance and violence of worldly powers, God always finds a way to carry out his saving plan. So too, our lives may at times seem to be at the mercy of the powerful, but the Gospel shows us what counts. God always finds a way to save us, provided we show the same creative courage as the carpenter of Nazareth, who was able to turn a problem into a possibility by trusting always in divine providence. ...

The Gospel does not tell us how long Mary, Joseph and the child remained in Egypt. Yet they certainly needed to eat, to find a home and employment. It does not take much imagination to fill in those details. The Holy Family had to face concrete problems like every other family, like so many of our migrant brothers and sisters who, today too, risk their lives to escape misfortune and hunger. I consider Saint Joseph the special patron of all those forced to leave their native lands because of war, hatred, persecution and poverty.

At the end of every account in which Joseph plays a role, the Gospel tells us that he gets up, takes the child and his mother, and does what God commanded him. Indeed, Jesus and Mary his Mother are the most precious treasure of our faith. ... From Saint Joseph, we must learn that same care and responsibility. We must learn to love the child and his mother, to love the sacraments and charity, to love the Church and the poor. (from §5 *A Creatively Courageous Father*)

PRAYER FOR 23RD MARCH (NATIONAL DAY OF REFLECTION)

Words from Cardinal Vincent ...

We welcome the designation of Tuesday 23rd March as a National Day of Reflection to mark the anniversary of the first national lockdown. We ask you all to make this not only a Day of Reflection but also a Day of Prayer. In reflection we ponder on all that has taken place; in prayer we bring this to our Heavenly Father. For all who live by faith in God, reflection and prayer always go hand in hand. Throughout this difficult year, so many have been inspired by prayer, so much effort sustained in prayer, in every place.



March 2020 was the first time our churches had to be closed. It is our hope that on this day, every one of our churches will be open. We invite everyone to enter a church on this day, to reflect and pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. We know this will involve an extra effort, but this can be part of our important contribution to a significant moment in the life of our country. Indeed, we ask that you might invite a friend, neighbour or colleague to come to church with you as you make this visit.

We reflect in sorrow on all those who have died, whether family members, friends or those unknown to us personally. We pray for them, asking our Father to welcome them into their heavenly home, the destiny for which God first gave us the gift of life.

We reflect with compassion on all those who have suffered during this last year, whether through illness, stress, financial disaster or family tensions. We pray for their ongoing resilience, courage and capacity to forgive.

We reflect with thanksgiving for the generosity, inventiveness, self-sacrifice and determination shown by so many in this most difficult of times. We pray for them, thanking God for their gifts and dedication, whether they are scientists, politicians, health workers, public servants of every kind, community leaders, or steadfast family members and friends who continue to show such love and compassion.

We reflect in hope that, as the pandemic is controlled and we open up our lives again, we will gather in the lessons we have learned and build our society into a better shape, more compassionate, less marked by inequalities, more responsive to needs and deprivation. We ask for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen us in this endeavour, whether we are focussing on overcoming family breakdowns, economic recovery, or building political consensus.

Christian prayer is, of course, centred on Jesus Christ, the one who is “lifted up” before us “so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him.” We pray with Jesus, in Him and through Him, for He is the one who carries us, and our prayers, into the embracing presence of His Father. He is our comfort in sorrow, our strength in the face of need, our rejoicing in the gifts we celebrate and our hope in the face of the weighty darkness of death.



**God of Love,
As we think about all that has changed this year, help us
to trust that You are always with us.
As we remember those who have died, help us to trust
they are at peace with You.
As we reach out to others with kindness and care, may
hope shine out in every heart and home. Amen.**