

## **WORSHIP AT HOME FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY – GOOD FRIDAY – EASTER SATURDAY – EASTER SUNDAY**

Dear friends,

I tend to feel that if we jump from the excitement of Palm Sunday straight to the celebration and joy of Easter and the Risen Christ we never truly take to heart just what Christ did for us. Therefore this week's offering of Worship at Home is longer than usual so that we can work through the days at the end of Holy Week and then celebrate the Resurrection of Christ. I hope that you are all keeping well and I look forward to us being able to meet in person once again sometime soon.

God bless – Margaret.

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### **MAUNDY THURSDAY**

#### **John 13: 1-17; 31b-35:**

Jesus knew on the evening of Passover Day that it would be his last night on earth before returning to his Father. During supper the devil had already suggested to Judas Iscariot that this was the night to carry out his plan to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had given him everything and that he had come from God and would return to God.

And how he loved his disciples! So he got up from the supper table, took of his robe, wrapped a towel round his loins, poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel he had around him.

When he came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him: 'Master, you shouldn't be washing our feet like this!'

Jesus replied: 'You don't understand now why I am doing it, but some day you will.'

'No,' Peter protested: 'you shall never wash my feet!'

'But if I don't wash you, you cannot be my partner,' Jesus replied.

Simon Peter exclaimed: 'Then wash my hands and my head as well – not just my feet.'

Jesus replied: 'One who has bathed all over needs only to have his feet washed to be entirely clean. Now you are clean – but that isn't true of everyone here.' For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said: 'Not all of you are clean.'

After washing their feet he put on his robe again and sat down and asked: 'Do you understand what I was doing? You call me "Master" and "Lord" and you do well to say it for it is true. And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow; do as I have done to you. How true it is that a servant is not greater than his master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends him. You know these things – now do them! That is the path of blessing.'

**[verses 31b-35]** Jesus said,: 'My time has come; the glory of God will soon surround me – and God shall receive great praise because of all that happens to me. And God shall give me his own glory, and this so very soon. Dear, dear children, how brief are these moments before I must go away and leave you! Then, though you search for me, you cannot come to me – just as I told the Jewish leaders. And so I am giving a new commandment to you now – love each other just as much as I love you. Your strong love for each other will prove to the world that you are my disciples.'

**Prayer:** Loving God, we look back today to Jesus in the wilderness, faced with the temptation to compromise – forced to choose between the easy and the demanding path – the way of the world or the way of costly sacrifice. Speak through the example Christ has given and help us to listen.

We remember also Jesus in Jerusalem, the shouts of the crowd still ringing in his ears and their welcome still fresh in his memory – once more faced with the temptation to compromise but forced to choose between the easy and the demanding path. We remember now how he chose the costly way, the way of suffering, humiliation and death.

Loving God, forgive us that we lack the same courage, the same faith, the same commitment, the same love.

Forgive us that we so often choose the easy option – conforming to the world’s expectations rather than risk rejection or confrontation – more concerned with present happiness and earthly success than the things which bring eternal fulfilment.

Speak through the example Christ has given and help us to listen

Loving God, we thank you that through the love of Christ we are assured of your mercy, accepted as we are with all our faults and failings – we are daily renewed by his Spirit. Inspire us by his example to serve you more faithfully and love you more deeply, even as you have loved us. **Amen**

‘If it be possible, take this cup from me.’

Lord, how often have we heard those words? The desperate cry of Jesus as, in the darkness of Gethsemane, he faced up to the horror of the Cross. He knew all too well what the future held, and was terrified by it.

Yet he was able to say: ‘Not my will, O God, but yours.’

And it wasn’t simply courage that led him to do that – still less some superhuman reserve by virtue of being your Son. It was his love for you, and his love for us.

Loving God, help us, as we worship you and recall the torment that Jesus went through, to appreciate the magnitude of what he did. And so in turn may we learn the true meaning of love, for you, for ourselves, and for others. In Jesus’ holy and precious name we pray. **Amen.**

**The words to ‘To see the King of heaven’ written by Keith Getty [b. 1974] and Stuart Townend [b.1963]  
Singing the Faith 269**

1 To see the King of heaven fall in anguish to his knees,  
The Light and Hope of all the world now overwhelmed with grief.  
What nameless horrors must he see, to cry out in the garden:  
‘Oh, take this cup away from me – Yet not my will but yours,  
yet not my will but yours.  
and every sin is paid,  
And every sin is paid.

2 To know each friend will fall away, and heaven’s voice be still,  
For hell to have its vengeful day upon Golgotha’s hill.  
No words describe the Saviour’s plight – to be by God forsaken  
‘till wrath and love are satisfied and every sin is paid,  
And every sin is paid.

3 What took him to this wretched place, what kept him on this road?  
His love for Adam’s cursed race, for every broken soul.  
No sin too slight to overlook, no crime too great to carry,  
All mingled in this poisoned cup – and yet he drank it all,  
The Saviour drank it all – the Saviour drank it all.

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## **GOOD FRIDAY**

### **Jesus offers his all to bring life to all**

#### **The Last Days [Alan Dale – Alan Dale Bible]**

##### **In the Garden:**

**John 18: 1-12**

Jesus left the house with his friends and crossed the Kidron Brook to the other side of the valley. They came to a garden and went inside. They knew it well for Jesus and his friends had often met there. Judas knew this, and he led a detachment of Roman soldiers and a company of Jewish police straight to the spot. They were fully armed and carried lanterns and torches. Jesus stepped out to meet them. 'Who do you want?' he asked. 'Jesus from Nazareth,' they answered. 'I'm the man you want, then,' said Jesus. At these words they stepped back and fell on the ground. 'Who do you want?' asked Jesus again. 'Jesus from Nazareth,' they repeated. 'I've told you – I'm the man you want,' he said. 'If it's me you're after, let these men go.' Peter drew his sword and struck at the High Priest's servant and cut off his right ear. 'Put your sword up,' said Jesus. 'Do you want to stop me facing what God the Father has set before me?' The soldiers then arrested Jesus and handcuffed him.

##### **Before Annas:**

**John 18:13, 15-27**

The soldiers took Jesus before Annas, the most powerful man in Jerusalem City. He was not the High Priest of the Jewish people. Caiaphas was the High Priest that year, Annas was his father-in-law. Now Jesus had a friend whose name we do not know. He was not one of the 'Twelve', but belonged to one of the most important families in Jerusalem; the High Priest knew him well. He was the 'other friend'. Peter and the 'other friend' followed Jesus along the road. When they got to the courtyard, the 'other friend' went straight in with Jesus; Peter was left standing outside at the door. The 'other friend' came back and had a word with the girl on duty at the door and then took him inside. 'You're one of this fellow's friends, too, aren't you?' the girl asked Peter. 'Not I,' said Peter. It was a cold night and the slaves and court officers had lit a charcoal fire. They were standing round it, trying to keep warm. Peter joined the crowd round the fire, he wanted to get warm too. The High Priest asked Jesus about his friends, and what he stood for. 'What I have had to say,' said Jesus, 'I have said openly for everybody to hear.. I have talked in the Meeting Houses and I have talked in the Temple to Jewish people from all over the world. I have not been plotting in back rooms. Why ask the questions now? Ask the ordinary people, in the villages and in this city. They heard me. They know what it was I talked about.' One of the court officials standing near him gave him a slap on the face. 'Is that the way to talk to the High Priest?' he said. 'If I did something wrong,' said Jesus to the officer, 'prove it. If I didn't, why hit me?' Annas had Jesus handcuffed and sent to Caiaphas. Peter was still standing near the fire, getting warm. 'You are one of the fellow's friends too, aren't you?' said one of the men by the fire. 'Not on your life,' said Peter. Now it happened that one of the court officers standing there was a relative of the man Peter had slashed with his sword. 'I saw you in the garden with him, didn't I?' he asked. 'No, you didn't,' said Peter. At that moment, somewhere in the distance a cock crowed.

##### **Before the Roman Governor:**

**John 18: 28-31, 33-40; and 19: 1-16a**

It was now Friday, the day before the Great Feast.

Just before dawn Jesus was marched into the headquarters of Pilate, the Roman Governor. The Jewish leaders stayed outside the building [it was 'unclean' to them because it belonged to foreigners, and if they had gone inside they would not have been allowed by Jewish law to take part in the Great Feast]. So Pilate came outside. 'What's the charge against this man?' he asked. 'He's a criminal,' they said. 'Would we have brought him here if he wasn't?' 'Well, take him off and deal with him yourselves.' said Pilate. 'You've got your own laws and law courts.' 'But we can't pass the death sentence.' they replied. Pilate went back into the building and had Jesus brought before him. 'So you are the Jewish King, are you?' he said. 'Are those your own words,' asked Jesus, 'or are you just repeating what other people have told you?' 'Do I look like a Jew!' said Pilate. 'You've been brought here by your own leaders. What have you been up to?' 'I'm no nationalist,' said Jesus. 'My men would have been out on the streets fighting if I were – they wouldn't have let me be arrested so easily. My 'kingdom' has nothing to do with that sort of thing.' 'So you are a 'king', then.' Said Pilate. 'The word is yours,' said Jesus. 'I was born to defend the truth. Anybody who cares for the truth knows what I am talking about.' 'What is truth?' said Pilate. And with that he went outside again. 'As far as this court is concerned,' he told the crowd, 'there is nothing this man can be charged with. I've been in the habit of setting one prisoner free for you at the Feast. What about letting the 'Jewish King' go free this year?' The crowd broke into a roar. 'Not this man, but Barabbas!' [Barabbas was one of the terrorists in the Resistance Movement.] So Pilate had Jesus flogged, and the soldiers – as was often their custom with prisoners – made sport of him. They made a crown out of some thorn twigs and crowned him with it and dressed him in a soldier's purple cloak. Then they kept coming up to him, saluting him with 'Long live Your Majesty' and slapping him on the face. Pilate went out to the crowd again. 'Here he is,' he said. 'I'm going to bring him out to you to make it clear that there is nothing this court can charge him with.' Jesus was brought outside still wearing the mock crown and the purple cloak. 'There is the man!' said Pilate. When the Jewish leaders and their officers caught sight of him they started shouting, 'The cross! Let's have him on the gallows!' 'Take him and put him on a cross yourselves,' said Pilate. 'He has done nothing the court can deal with!' 'But we have a law of blasphemy,' they answered, 'and by that law he ought to be executed. – he claims to be equal with God himself!' The last sentence frightened Pilate. He went back again into the building 'Where were you born?' he asked Jesus. Jesus did not speak. 'I am the Governor, you know – why don't you say something?' said Pilate. 'Don't you know I can set you free or have you executed?' 'You would have no power over me at all,' said Jesus, 'if God had not given it to you. The man who handed me over to you is more guilty than you.' From that moment Pilate made up his mind to set him free. But the shouting of the crowd went on. 'If you let this man go you're no friend of the Emperor! Anybody who calls himself a king is an enemy of the Emperor!' Pilate heard what they were shouting. He brought Jesus outside again and took his seat as Governor and Judge at the place called 'the Pavement'. It was now just midday. 'Here is your King!' he said. 'Take him away! Hang him on a cross!' the crowd shouted. 'So it is your King I'm to hang on a cross?' he asked. 'The Emperor is the only King we've got!' they shouted back. Pilate handed him over for execution.

**At Skull Hill:**

**John 19: 16b-35 & 38-42**

The soldiers marched Jesus off, and with his own cross on his shoulders he went out of the building to Skull Hill – a place quite near the city. And there they hung him on the cross. Three men were hung on crosses that day – Jesus in the middle, the other two on either side of him.

Pilate had a notice written out in three languages, Jewish, Roman and Greek: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE JEWISH KING. He had it fastened on the cross. Crowds of citizens read it.

‘Don’t put THE JEWISH KING,’ the Jewish leaders protested to Pilate. ‘Put – HE SAID HE WAS THE JEWISH KING.’

‘It stays as I wrote it,’ said Pilate.

When the four soldiers had carried out their orders, they picked up the clothes of Jesus and made four bundles, one for each of them. Then they picked up his tunic. This was one piece of cloth, woven from top to bottom, not made up of several pieces.

‘We mustn’t tear it up,’ they said. ‘Let’s toss for it.’ That is what they did.

All this time his mother, his aunt Mary, the wife of Cleopas, and Mary from Magdala were standing near the cross itself. Jesus caught sight of his mother – and the friend he loved dearly standing by her side.

‘Mother,’ he said, ‘take my friend as your son.’

‘Take my mother as your mother,’ he said to his friend.

And from that time his friend took her into his own home.

‘I am thirsty,’ said Jesus.

A full jar of sour wine had been put nearby for the guard. The soldier soaked a sponge in it, stuck it on a javelin and put it up to his mouth. Jesus drank it.

‘My work is done,’ he said.

His head dropped and he died.

The Jewish leaders did not want the bodies on the crosses to stay there over the Saturday, the Holy Day of the Jews, especially since this was an important Saturday, the first day of the Great Feast. They asked Pilate to have the men’s legs broken to make them die quickly, and then to have the bodies taken away.

This is what the soldiers began to do. They broke the legs of the two men hanging on either side of Jesus, one after the other. They went up to Jesus but they found that he was already dead. They didn’t break his legs but one of the soldiers jabbed a lance into his side, and water and blood flowed out. [This is what happened; it is the evidence of an eyewitness who can be trusted.]

After all this, two men went to Pilate – Joseph from the village of Arimathea [he was a member of the Jewish Council; he had kept his friendship with Jesus secret for he was afraid of what the Council might do] and Nicodemus [who, as we have told, met Jesus at night].

Joseph asked Pilate to let him take the body of Jesus down from the cross and Pilate agreed. So the friends came and took his body away, and wrapped it in linen sheets with spices which Nicodemus had brought – more than seventy pounds weight of perfume mixture. [This is the Jewish method of burial].

There was a large garden nearby. In it there was a new tomb – nobody had yet been buried there.

It was now getting on for six o’clock in the evening, the time when Holy Day began. The tomb lay near at hand; they put Jesus there.



**Prayer:** Lord Jesus Christ, today of all days we are reminded just how much we owe you – how great a price you were willing to pay to give us the gift of life. Forgive us for giving you so little in return, for ever shying away from discipleship when there is any suggestion it may be costly. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We are reminded how you stayed true to your calling despite every attempt to deflect you from it. Forgive us that we so often take the way of least resistance, compromising our convictions for the sake of an easy life. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We are reminded how you stayed true to those who were to fail you, more concerned for their own safety than your welfare. Forgive us that we are so readily put self-interest before the interests of others, our loyalty often depending on how much is asked of us. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We are reminded of how you endured ridicule and violence without any attempt at retaliation, praying instead for those who persecuted you. Forgive us that we often seem to lash out at the slightest provocation, that we are more often concerned with exacting revenge than offering forgiveness. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We are reminded that you loved us so much that you died for us, willingly taking the Way of the Cross. Forgive us that we often find it hard to offer you anything of ourselves in return. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for this day and for all it calls to mind. Help us to hear its message and respond to its challenge.

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer for it is in your name that we ask it. Amen.**

**The words to 'O Sacred Head sore wounded' written by Paul Gerhardt [1607-1676] & translated by James Waddell Alexander [1804-1859] and Rupert E Davies [1909-1994]. StF 280**

1 O sacred head sore wounded, with grief and pain weighed down,  
How scornfully surrounded with thorns, thine only crown!  
How pale art thou with anguish, with sore abuse and scorn!  
How does that visage languish which once was bright as morn!

2 O Lord of life and glory, what bliss till now was thine!  
I read the wondrous story, I joy to call thee mine.  
Thy grief and thy compassion were all for sinners' gain;  
Mine, mine was the transgression, but thine the deadly pain.

3 What language shall I borrow to praise thee, dearest friend,  
For this, thy dying sorrow, thy pity without end?  
Lord, make me thine for ever, nor let me faithless prove;  
O let me never, never abuse such dying love!

4 Be near me, Lord, when dying; O show thy cross to me,  
That I, for succour flying, my eyes may fix on thee;  
And then, thy grace receiving, let faith my fears dispel,  
For whoso dies believing in thee, dear Lord, dies well.

Living God, in so many ways this is the blackest of days recalling the darkest of moments – a day on which hearts were broken and faith tested to the limit. A day of appalling suffering and agonising death – a day when all hell was let loose and love seemed overwhelmed.

Yet we call this day 'Good Friday', for in all that horror you were there.

In the despair, in the pain, in the humiliation, in the sorrow, you were supremely at work, demonstrating the immensity of your love.

Living God, as we recall these terrible yet wonderful events, give us new insight into what you did that day – for us and for all. **Amen.**

## **EASTER SATURDAY – VIGIL**

This holy night, we come before great mysteries.  
He, who made the earth, is buried within it.  
He, who gives life to all things, lies in the grave.  
He, who comes to set us free, is held by the tomb.  
He, who gives light to the world, has entered into darkness.  
He, who created the heavens, has descended into hell.  
All creation waits in expectation and longs for the redemption he brings.

This holy night we come in vigil and prayer, for this is the Passover of our Lord.  
He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.  
This holy night, the Lord of love is victorious over all hatred.  
This holy night, the Lord of light conquers the darkness.  
This holy night, the Lord of life triumphs over the dark.

This holy night, as we await the risen Christ,  
We hear again of God's saving acts in history.  
We recall how he redeemed his people in the past  
and in the fullness of time sent his Son to be our Redeemer.  
Let us pray that through our Easter celebration,  
we may know in our lives the presence and power of the risen Lord.

### **Collect:**

Lord God, giver of life and hope,  
Through the resurrection of your Son, death and hell are defeated  
And you have opened for us the way to everlasting life.  
Grant that we may know Christ and the power of his resurrection,  
and so rejoice in the fullness of life which is eternal.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus our risen Lord.

### **Blessing:**

May you find in Christ the risen Lord,  
a companion for all your journeys,  
a present help in trouble,  
a light in times of darkness,  
and the assurance that life is eternal:  
And the blessing of God Almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you  
and remain with you always. **Amen.**

## EASTER DAY

### ALLELUIA! CHRIST IS RISEN!

### HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!

The words to 'Christ the Lord is risen today!' written by Charles Wesley [1707-1788] StF 298

1 Christ the Lord is risen today: *Alleluia!*

All creation joins to say: *Alleluia!*

Raise your joys and triumphs high: *Alleluia!*

Sing, you heavens; let earth reply: *Alleluia!*

2 Love's redeeming work is done: *Alleluia!*

Fought the fight, the battle won: *Alleluia!*

Vain the stone, the search, the deal: *Alleluia!*

Christ has burst the gates of hell: *Alleluia!*

3 Lives again our glorious King: *Alleluia!*

Where, O death, is now your sting? *Alleluia!*

Once he died our souls to save; *Alleluia!*

Where's your victory, boasting grave? *Alleluia!*

4 Soar we now where Christ has led, *Alleluia!*

Following our exalted head: *Alleluia!*

Made like him, like him we rise; *Alleluia!*

Ours the cross, the grave, the skies: *Alleluia!*

5 King of Glory! Soul of bliss! *Alleluia!*

Everlasting life is this, *Alleluia!*

You to know, your power to prove, *Alleluia!*

Thus to sing, and thus to love: *Alleluia!*

**Prayer for Easter morning written by Peter Dainty:** Living God, we praise you on this Easter Day for the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We join with millions of our fellow Christians throughout the world to celebrate the victory of our Lord over sin and death.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

Even as the birds and trees and flowers utter a glad song of redemption from the grip of winter's death, so may we add our shout of praise for the light of hope that has dawned upon the world through the triumph of Christ over cross and grave.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

We were not there to see the empty tomb, but we thank you that we have our own evidence of the resurrection in the presence of the living Christ. We thank you for the times when we have triumphed over adversity; when the light of faith and hope has scattered the darkness of our doubt and fear; when we have been strengthened and guided by the Spirit at times when, left to our own resource, we would have been defeated and lost.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

We thank you that Christ's living presence has enable the Church to survive and grow through the centuries, proclaiming to the world the gospel of love and peace.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

We thank you that Christ still walks the earth, challenging, calling, inspiring, guiding and strengthening men and women of all races and nations to lives of holiness, service and joy.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

Praise to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who loved to the uttermost, died on the cross and rose again to live and work amongst us still through his body, the Church.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen! Praise the Lord! **Amen**

Living God, we look at the world and our lives and we are dismayed sometimes at how little seems to change. We go on making the same mistakes we have always made, and all around us there seems to be as much sorrow, suffering, hatred and evil as there has ever been. Help us to hold on to the conviction that life can change – to remember how, in the resurrection of Christ, you overcame the power of sin and death. Help us to remember that though everything may seem to conspire against you, you have won the victory through him – a victory that nothing can ever undo – and so may we trust in your ability to transform and renew all things by his grace.

Lord, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son and our Saviour who taught his followers 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. 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.**

#### **Reading: John 20: 1-18.**

Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone was rolled away from the entrance. She ran and found Simon Peter and John and said: 'They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and I don't know where they have put him!'

They ran to the tomb to see. John outran Peter and got there first, and stooped and looked in and saw the linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went on inside. He also noticed the cloth lying there, while the swath that had covered Jesus' head was rolled up in a bundle and lying at the side. Then John went in too, and saw, and believed that Jesus had risen – for until then they had not realised that the Scriptures said that he would come to life again!

The disciples went home, and by that time Mary had returned to the tomb and was standing outside crying. And as she wept, she stooped and looked in and saw two white-robed angels sitting at the head and the foot of the place where Jesus' body had been lying.

'Why are you crying?' the angels asked her.

'Because they have taken away my Lord,' she replied, 'and I don't know where they have put him.' She glanced over her shoulder and saw someone standing behind her. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognise him!

'Why are you crying?' he asked her. 'Whom are you looking for?'

She thought it was the gardener. 'Sir,' she said, 'if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him.'

'Mary!' Jesus said. She turned towards him.

'Master!' she exclaimed.

'Do not touch me,' he cautioned, 'for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go and find my brothers and tell them that I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.'

Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, 'I have seen the Lord!' Then she gave them his message.

**Comment:** After the harrowing events of Good Friday, Mary could not sleep. One of the things that troubled her was that Jesus didn't have the usual spices placed by his body. She rose early while it was still dark and made her way to the tomb. Throughout the journey – probably around two miles – Mary kept asking herself who would roll away the stone for her. It would take a few men and the tomb was sealed. She also wondered who would roll away the sorrow and heaviness that was in her heart; it would take a miracle for the weight to be lifted. Who *would* remove the stone? Yet when she saw that the stone had actually been rolled away it caused her to panic. Her reaction was to think that someone had stolen the body. She went right off to tell Peter. When she banged on his door that early in the morning he would have thought the authorities were after him! Now Peter and John ran to the tomb. The young John outran Peter but was afraid to enter the tomb until Peter arrived. Peter went into the tomb – then so did John. They saw the linen wrappings still there – and the cloth that had been wrapped around the head. It would have looked as if Jesus had just come through them. As yet they didn't understand that Jesus must rise again – though John 'saw and believed'. The disciples then went back home. Mary stayed there weeping and wondering. In a vision of angels she was asked why she was weeping. She was weeping because she had been separated from Jesus, first by his death and then by not being able to see his body. Now Jesus asked her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' Mary thought it was the gardener speaking to her as she looked up at him with tear-filled eyes. When Jesus said her name, 'Mary!' she knew. No-one spoke to her like that except Jesus. She replied 'Rabbouni!' [which means Teacher] and she reached out and clung to him. This was no ghost, this was a solid person! Mary was told not to stay there hugging Jesus but to go and tell the disciples that he was ascending to the Father. Yet another knock on Peter's door but this time Mary's words astounded them all. 'I have seen the Lord!' – and she meant the risen, living Lord Jesus. This new awareness would change Mary and the disciples – as it changes us when we too have seen the Lord.

### **The words to 'Christ is alive!' written by Brian Wren [b.1936] Singing the Faith 297**

1 Christ is alive! Let Christians sing. The cross stands empty to the sky.

Let streets and homes with praises ring. Love, drowned in death, shall never die.

2 Christ is alive! No longer bound to distant years in Palestine,

But saving, healing, here and now, and touching every place and time.

3 In every insult, rift and war, where colour, scorn or wealth divide,

Christ suffers still, yet loves the more, and lives, where even hope has died.

4 Women and men, in age and youth, can feel the Spirit, hear the call,

And find the way, the life, the truth, revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

5 Christ is alive and comes to bring good news to this and every age,

Till earth and sky and ocean ring with joy, with justice, love and praise.

### **Prayer: Intercessions – Joy from Sorrow**

Lord Jesus Christ, we remember the trauma which your suffering and death brought to your followers – a grief which went beyond words and which seemed beyond healing. We recall how Peter wept bitterly when he realised he had denied you as you predicted; how women sobbed on the way to the cross and as they watched you die; how Mary broke down in the garden, overwhelmed with grief – each one a symbol of the desolation and despair so many felt at your death.

But we recall also how Peter rejoiced as, three times, you repeated your call; how your followers celebrated as you stood among them, risen and victorious; how Mary's heart soared with wonder as you spoke her name.

We pray for those who suffer today – all who endure constant pain, who wrestle with illness, who are victims of violence or whose bodies are broken by accident or injury.

We pray for those who feel betrayed today – cheated by loved ones, deceived by those they trusted, hurt by those they counted as friends or let down by society.

We pray for those who grieve today, their hearts broken by tragedy and bereavement, their lives torn apart – many for whom tears are a constant companion where laughter and happiness seem like some distant memory.

Gracious Lord, wherever there is sorrow, grant your joy.

Lord Jesus Christ, reach out into our world of so much pain, heartache and sadness. May your light scatter the shadows – your love lift the burdens – and your grace bring life in all its fullness.

Gracious Lord, wherever there is sorrow, grant your joy for we ask it in your holy name. **Amen.**

**Meditation:** There was something in the air that morning, something special, extraordinary – almost out of this world. We couldn't put a finger on it, but even though our hearts were heavy within us, our eyes blinded by tears, we had this strange sense that the day was going to be different from any other; one we would never forget. We put it down at first to grief for we were going, don't forget, to anoint the body of our Lord – to bid our last farewells and say goodbye to our dreams. Yet though the time was all about endings, it seemed also to speak of new beginnings: of a new start - promise – hope for the future.

Was it just the sights and sounds of dawn: the chorus of birds greeting another day, the freshness of dew wet on the grass, life stirring again? Some say so, even now, despite everything – despite the stone rolled away, the folded grave clothes, the empty tomb – but though it took us a while to accept and longer still to understand, we know different, aware that there really was something in the air that morning – more special and out of this world than words can say.

What of you? Have you learnt that truth? Have you grasped the wonder of what God has somehow done? The sun was rising as we went to the tomb, but the Son had already risen!

**The words to 'Thine be the glory' written by Edmond Budry [1854-1932] and translated by Richard Birch Hoyle [1875-1939] Singing the Faith 313**

1 Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son, endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won;  
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away, kept the folded grave-clothes where thy body lay:

*Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son, endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

2 Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb; lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom;  
Let the Church with gladness hymns of triumph sing, for her Lord now liveth, death has lost its sting:

*Thine be the glory risen, conquering Son, endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

3 No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of Life; life is naught without thee: aid us in our strife;  
Make us more than conquerors through thy deathless love; bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above.

*Thine be the glory risen, conquering Son, endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

**Closing Prayer and Blessing:**

Jesus goes ahead of us in the world and calls us to follow in his footsteps. So we go, and love as he loved; forgive as he forgave; serve others as he served others to be his Easter disciples in the world today. **Amen**

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen us to walk with him in his risen life;

And may Almighty God bless us, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**