

# Daily Prayer

*Augustine, Archbishop of Canterbury*

*Wednesday, May 26, 2021*

*We enter into a time of quiet. We offer to God our selves and in the silence know that God embraces us as God's very own. We offer our hopes and our concerns through our prayers and in the silence listen for God. Today we hold in our prayers the ordinary moments in life—the trials and the joys—and remember Augustine, First Archbishop of Canterbury, 605.*

*We begin by saying*

I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. *2 Corinthians 12.9b*

## **The First Reading**

Look at what is before your eyes. If you are confident that you belong to Christ, remind yourself of this, that just as you belong to Christ, so also do we. Now, even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it. I do not want to seem as though I am trying to frighten you with my letters. For they say, 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.' Let such people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we will also do when present.

We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they do not show good sense. We, however, will not boast beyond limits, but will keep within the field that God has assigned to us, to reach out even as far as you. For we were not overstepping our limits when we reached you; we were the first to come all the way to you with the good news of Christ. We do not boast beyond limits, that is, in the labours of others; but our hope is that, as your faith increases, our

sphere of action among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may proclaim the good news in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in someone else's sphere of action. 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.' For it is not those who commend themselves that are approved, but those whom the Lord commends.

*2 Corinthians 10.7-18*

## **The Psalm**

Be joyful in God, all you lands; \*  
sing the glory of his name;  
sing the glory of his praise.

Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! \*  
because of your great strength your enemies  
cringe before you.

All the earth bows down before you, \*  
sings to you, sings out your name"

Come now and see the works of God, \*  
how wonderful he is in his doing toward all people.

He turned the sea into dry land,  
so that they went through the water on foot, \*  
and there we rejoiced in him.

In his might he rules for ever;  
his eyes keep watch over the nations; \*  
let no rebel rise up against him.

Bless our God, you peoples; \*  
make the voice of his praise to be heard;

Who holds our souls in life, \*  
and will not allow our feet to slip.

*Psalm 66.1-8*

## The Gospel Reading

Jesus put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'

Jesus told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.'

*Matthew 13.31-33*

*We continue with the reflection that follows. In silence, we ask what the reading has to say to us today. Is there something in the reflection that draws us more deeply into the reading? What does God have to say to us? What do we have to ask God?*

## The Reflection

*Paul MacLean*

Stephen Reynolds has written a short piece on St Augustine, which you can read at the end. My reflections are more personal and they are more on the place to which Augustine came and how it has evolved in meaning since his time at the end of the seventh century.

To begin in the present, many of us have discovered or rediscovered the cathedral of Canterbury and its worship through the daily morning prayer conducted by the present dean, Robert Willis, from a variety of spots in the ever-changing deanery garden, and available on YouTube. It is a rich experience based in a very simple act of Anglican worship. One recurring theme, and this is emphasized by the dean sharing the experience of the garden itself with the world-wide online congregation, is welcome and hospitality. 'Wherever you are, feel welcome ...' inevitably begins the service, and the invitation is often taken up by deanery cats, a family of pigs, and a surprising number of domestic fowl.

I've mentioned this service before. For now, my reflection is that Canterbury cathedral has recreated its role in a unique way as a spiritual centre for welcome and hospitality, not just for Anglicans but for people of all faiths and for spiritual seekers. And this is done in a setting that is redolent with natural creativity, a setting which reminds us of the gifts of creation, our care for those gifts and our love for the Creator.

Canterbury has always been a home base for Anglicans in that the mission established by Augustine there under the direction of Gregory the Great, bore fruit and eventually became a defining influence for English Christianity, a church which many centuries later spread around the world, and after the Roman Catholic church, became the most diverse of all branches of Christianity. But Canterbury never became the centralizing Rome of Anglicanism. Even in the days of Augustine there was present a second mission to the north of England coming from the monasteries of Ireland, known to us as Celtic Christianity and very different in tone and practice from the organized Roman version. So too, today, Anglicanism has many faces, and none of them can lay claim to an absolute truth or authority. The role of Canterbury has been to welcome and provide hospitality so that these many faces can meet each other and through prayer and respectful dialogue (not always achieved) can deepen relationships and understanding of each other and the Gospel. As Desmond Tutu memorably remarked, when asked to define the essence of Anglicanism, 'We meet!'

So, I take heart in the idea of 'welcome and hospitality' being at the centre of our Anglican identity, and having that expressed in a very practical way through the ministry of Canterbury cathedral.

But Canterbury cathedral doesn't just invite people in. It sends them out. The cathedral is, of course, a famous pilgrimage site, one of the

most popular in the Middle Ages, due to the murder of Thomas Beckett. It's also the beginning of another very popular pilgrimage route, one that has recently been revived with great success, called the Via Francigena, a route that winds its way from the cathedral city through the North Downs, across the English channel, then south through eastern France, across the Alps in Switzerland, and into the great plain of the Po valley, travelling south again through the various hilly regions of northern Italy to finally arrive at the church dedicated to the apostles Peter and Paul.

I recount this route with some sense of an unfinished adventure because Sally-Beth and I had travelled along it as far as Pavia in the Po valley, and had hoped to pick up the final leg of the journey two Springs ago when the pandemic struck with devastating force on Italy, then the rest of the world. But rather than dwell on the physical journey itself, I want to bring to mind the spiritual journey that is part of any pilgrimage. Timothy Egan set out on the Via Francigena to see if he could rediscover his faith through his daily encounters, travails and blessings, and recorded his experiences in 'A Journey to Eternity.' What stays with me from that affecting book is that it took all the time and effort and suffering of the pilgrimage to uncover finally the deeply traumatic experiences that lay at the heart of his loss of faith, and perhaps its rediscovery in a very different form. It began in Canterbury.

So, there is another aspect to our Anglican identity that we can associate with Canterbury and the legacy of Augustine, and which remains relevant today - a truly honest search for a meaningful faith, a journey that never ends but that gives us the time and occasion to uncover, heal and deepen our humanity, knowing that we are in the company of many Canterbury pilgrims.

From *For All the Saints*

Today we remember Augustine, the first archbishop of Canterbury. He enters history in the year 596, when he was deputy-abbot of a monastery in the city of Rome. He would have been quite happy to remain in that position, but Pope Gregory the Great chose him to lead a mission to the Anglo-Saxons of England. Augustine was to convert them to Christianity and to organize an English Church.

With a company of thirty or forty monks, Augustine landed on the coast of Kent in the spring of 597. The local king had married a Christian wife from France, and she convinced him to let the missionaries enter Canterbury and occupy a small, dilapidated church, abandoned by British Christians when they fled from the invading Anglo-Saxons. The pagan king also permitted the Roman missionaries to preach the gospel without hindrance.

Augustine was a reluctant missionary. Instead of actively proclaiming the gospel, he and his companions tried to become a normal part of the landscape, performing the liturgy and making processions much as if they were still in Rome. Those Anglo-Saxons who wished to join them were welcome, but the monks did not go looking for converts. This strategy worked — within four years the king of Kent and his chief retainers accepted baptism. Augustine was made an archbishop by the Pope and by the time he died, on May twenty-sixth in the year 605, the foundations of the English church were truly laid.

*When the time is right, we conclude our time of silence with the canticle*

## **The Canticle ~ A Song of the Word of the Lord**

Seek the Lord while he may be found, ♦  
call upon him while he is near;

Let the wicked abandon their ways, ♦  
and the unrighteous their thoughts;

Return to the Lord, who will have mercy; ♦  
to our God, who will richly pardon.

'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, ♦  
neither are your ways my ways,' says the Lord.

'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, ♦  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

'As the rain and the snow come down from above, ♦  
and return not again but water the earth,

'Bringing forth life and giving growth, ♦  
seed for sowing and bread to eat,

'So is my word that goes forth from my mouth; ♦  
it will not return to me fruitless,

'But it will accomplish that which I purpose, ♦  
and succeed in the task I gave it.'

*Isaiah 55.6-11*

*We continue in prayer for those people and situations that we hold up before God (The Intercessions)  
and continue with the concluding collect, the Lord's prayer and the closing sentences.*

## **The Intercessions**

Let us pray to God of creation.

God said, 'Let there be light.'

Eternal God, we thank you for your light and your truth.

We praise you for your tender care

in creating a universe which proclaims your glory.

Inspire us to worship you, the creator of all,

and let your light shine upon our world.

God of life:

**hear our prayer.**

God said, 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the heavens.'

We thank you for the vastness of the universe  
and the mysteries of space.

We pray for all scientists and astronomers  
who extend the boundaries of our knowledge.

As we contemplate the wonder of the heavens,  
confirm us in the truth that every human being is  
known and loved by you.

God of life:

**hear our prayer.**

God said, 'Let the waters be gathered together,  
and let dry land appear.'

We thank you for the beauty of the earth,  
for the diversity of land and sea,  
for the resources of the earth.

Give us the will to cherish this planet  
and to use its riches for the good and welfare of all.

God of life:

**hear our prayer.**

God said, 'Let there be lights in the sky  
to separate the day and the night.'

We thank you for the warmth of the sun,  
the light of the moon, the glory of the stars.  
We praise you for the formations of clouds,  
the radiance of dawn and sunset.

Save us from wasting or abusing the energy  
on which all life depends.

Open our eyes to behold your beauty,  
and our lips to praise your name.

God of life:

**hear our prayer.**



God said, 'Let the waters bring forth living creatures,  
and let birds fly across the sky.'

We thank you for the teeming life of the seas,  
and the flight of the birds.

Help us to protect the environment  
so that all life may flourish.

God of life:

**hear our prayer.**

God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind.'

We rejoice in the variety of animal life.

Grant us grace to treat all animals with respect and care;  
to protect endangered species,  
to preserve the variety of habitats,  
and to honour the delicate balance of nature.

God of life:

**hear our prayer.**

We pray for the human family.

We exult in its diversity and giftedness,  
we repent of its sins, divisions and violence.

By the power of your Spirit, restore your image within us,  
through Christ who came to remake us  
by his death and resurrection.

God of life:

**hear our prayer.**

Holy One, you have filled the world with beauty:  
open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in all your works;  
that, rejoicing in your whole creation,  
we may learn to serve you with gladness;  
for the sake of him through whom all things were made,  
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*Our prayers conclude*

Everliving God,  
you strengthened your servant Augustine,  
though he was fearful and laden with doubt,  
to lay the foundations of your Church  
among the English people.  
Grant us always to show forth the reason  
for all your gifts so freely bestowed upon us,  
by sharing with all peoples and races  
your infinite gift of salvation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

*[let us pray as our Saviour taught us,]*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen

*We conclude*

May God grant to the world justice, truth and peace.  
Amen.

Credits:

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The reflection: The Rev'd Paul MacLean with biographical information on Augustine from *For All the Saints* © 2007, General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada

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