

Daily Prayer

Nicholas Ferrar and the Community at Little Gidding

Wednesday, December 4, 2024

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. We begin by saying

O Lord, open our lips.

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Reveal among us the light of your presence

that we may behold your power and glory.

The First Reading

There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. He had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred donkeys, and very many servants; so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. His sons used to go and hold feasts in one another's houses in turn; and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. And when the feast days had run their course, Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt-offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, 'It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.' This is what Job always did.

Job 1.1-5

The Psalm

Princes have persecuted me without a cause, ♦
but my heart stands in awe of your word.

I am as glad of your word ♦
as one who finds great spoils.

As for lies, I hate and abhor them, ♦
but your law do I love.

Seven times a day do I praise you, ♦
because of your righteous judgements.

Great peace have they who love your law; ♦
nothing shall make them stumble.

Lord, I have looked for your salvation ♦
and I have fulfilled your commandments.

My soul has kept your testimonies ♦
and greatly have I loved them.

I have kept your commandments and testimonies, ♦
for all my ways are before you.

Psalm 119.161-168

The Gospel Reading

Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things;

Luke 10.38-41

In silence, we ask what the readings have to say to us today. Is there something that draws us more deeply into the reading? What does God have to say to us? What do we have to ask God?

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

The Canticle ~ A Song of Baruch

Lead us, O God, with joy
to walk in the light of glory.

Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height: ♦
look to the east and see your children,

Gathered from the west and the east ♦
at the word of the Holy One.

They rejoice that God has remembered them ♦
and has brought them back to you.

For God has ordered that every high mountain ♦
and the everlasting hills be made low,

And the valleys filled up to make level ground ♦
so that they may walk safely in the glory of God.

The woods and every fragrant tree ♦
have shaded them at God's command.

For God will lead his people with joy
in the light of his glory ♦
with the mercy and righteousness that comes from God.

Baruch 5.5,6c,7-9

*Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.*

Lead us, O God, with joy
to walk in the light of glory.

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

The Intercessions

Watchful at all times,
let us pray for strength to stand with confidence
before our Maker and Redeemer.
That God may bring in his kingdom with justice and mercy,
let us pray to the Lord:
Lord, have mercy.

That God may establish among the nations
his sceptre of righteousness,
let us pray to the Lord:
Lord, have mercy.

That we may seek Christ in the Scriptures
and recognize him in the breaking of the bread,
let us pray to the Lord:
Lord, have mercy.

That God may bind up the brokenhearted,
restore the sick
and raise up all who have fallen,
let us pray to the Lord:
Lord, have mercy.

That the light of God's coming may dawn
on all who live in darkness and the shadow of death,
let us pray to the Lord:
Lord, have mercy.

That, with all the saints in light,
we may shine forth as lights for the world,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

We commend ourselves and all for whom we pray
to the mercy and protection of our heavenly Father:

Almighty God,

as your blessed Son Jesus Christ

first came to seek and to save the lost;

so may he come again to find in us

the completion of his redeeming work;

for he is now alive

and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

God for ever and ever.

Amen.

Our prayers conclude

Lord God,

you gathered Nicholas Ferrar and his kinsfolk

in the household of Little Gidding,

and shaped their life as a family

into an image of your heavenly commonwealth.

May we follow their example by seeking true wisdom

and studying perfection in Christ Jesus,

not as masters

but as partners and fellow students with one other;

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 the Lord, when he comes,
find us watching and waiting.

Amen.

Nicholas Ferrar and the Community at Little Gidding

Deacon, 1637—Commemoration 4 December

Today we honour Nicholas Ferrar, a deacon of the English Church who died in 1637 after eleven years at Little Gidding, a place in Huntingdon where he shared his family's enterprise of a godly household.

When the Ferrars moved there from London, Little Gidding consisted of a derelict manor-house and a chapel which had been turned into a hay-barn. They restored the chapel and set the rest of the farm in order, so that it provided them with a livelihood as they practised their chief design, which was to live as a Christian community. The entire family gathered in the chapel twice a day for the Prayer Book Offices, and from dawn until after midnight they took turns offering intercessions and reciting the Psalter, while the others got together for discussions to build up one another's faith. The family also practised a constant round of service to their rural neighbours; they set up a school for the local children, relieved the destitute, and cared for the sick.

In all these activities Nicholas took his part, but he was by no means the only saint of the family. We should remember his mother Mary Ferrar, who purchased the manor of Little Gidding and was the true founder of the community; we should also honour his sister Susanna, and his nieces Mary and Anna Collett, who breathed life into the household's religious purpose. Nicholas himself well understood the communal nature of his family's experiment in godliness. As he wrote to one of his nieces in 1631: "I purpose and hope by God's grace to be to you-wards, in the search and study of true wisdom and perfection in Christ Jesus, not as a master but as a partner and fellow student with you." And that is how we remember Nicholas Ferrar today — not by himself but as "partner and fellow student" with all the rest of his family in their joint vocation, which was "the search and study of true wisdom and perfection in Christ Jesus."

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