

Daily Prayer

Richard Meux Benson

Wednesday, January 15, 2025

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.

You laid the foundation of the earth

and the heavens are the work of your hands.

The First Reading

But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!' But not all have obeyed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our message?' So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

Romans 10.14-17

The Psalm

Lord, who may dwell in your tabernacle? ♦

Who may rest upon your holy hill?

Whoever leads an uncorrupt life ♦

and does the thing that is right;

Who speaks the truth from the heart ♦
and bears no deceit on the tongue;
Who does no evil to a friend ♦
and pours no scorn on a neighbour;
In whose sight the wicked are not esteemed, ♦
but who honours those who fear the Lord.
Whoever has sworn to a neighbour ♦
and never goes back on that word;
Who does not lend money in hope of gain, ♦
nor takes a bribe against the innocent;
Whoever does these things ♦
shall never fall.

Psalm 15

The Gospel Reading

'No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more

clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6.24-33

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 the Covenant

I have given you as a light to the nations,
and I have called you in righteousness.

Thus says God, who created the heavens, ♦
who fashioned the earth and all that dwells in it;

Who gives breath to the people upon it ♦
and spirit to those who walk in it,

‘I am the Lord and I have called you in righteousness, ♦
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;

‘I have given you as a covenant to the people, ♦
a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind,

‘To bring out the captives from the dungeon, ♦
from the prison, those who sit in darkness.

‘I am the Lord, that is my name; ♦
my glory I give to no other.’

Isaiah 42.5-8a

*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.

I have given you as a light to the nations,
and I have called you in righteousness.

*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

We pray that Christ may be seen in the life of the Church.
You have called us into the family
of those who are the children of God.
May our love for our brothers, sisters and siblings in Christ
be strengthened by your grace.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be a temple
where the Holy Spirit can dwell.
so that our lives will reflect your holiness.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be a light to the world,
so that those in darkness come to you.
May our lives shine as a witness
to the saving grace you have given for all.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be members of your body,
so that when one suffers, all suffer together.
We ask for your comfort and healing power
to bring hope to those in distress.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,
you have called us into fellowship with all your saints.
We unite our prayers with theirs
and ask for grace to serve you with joy
where you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for all eternity.
Amen.

Our prayers conclude

Blessed are you, eternal God,
for your servant Richard Meux Benson,
who heeded your call to holiness
and nurtured in others, far and near,
the vocation of constant union with Christ.
Heal our intentions and transfigure our wills,
that our lives may be filled
with the harmony of your life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives 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, who has called us out of darkness
into his marvellous light,
bless us and fill us with peace.

Amen.

Richard Meux Benson

15 January

Religious, Founder of the Society of St John the Evangelist, 1915—Commemoration

Today we honour the memory of Richard Meux Benson, founder and first superior of the Society of St John the Evangelist, an Anglican religious community which began its life in 1866.

Benson belonged to the second generation of the Oxford Movement, and he shared one of its great hopes, which was the revival of monastic life in the Anglican communion. A number of Anglican sisterhoods were successfully established during the 1850s. A few attempts were made to found monastic brotherhoods, but they failed because the communities lacked any connection with the ordinary life of the Church of England. Benson was determined to avoid this mistake when he and two other priests began their experiment of a monastic community. The group tested its vocation by acting as a pastoral team in the parish of Cowley, a working-class suburb of Oxford, where Benson himself was the vicar. On December twenty-seventh, 1866, they knelt in the church of Cowley St John and took vows as mission priests of the Society of St John the Evangelist.

Benson remained vicar of Cowley for another twenty years, and he kept the Society firmly anchored in the life of the parish. But he was also quick to seize opportunities for work further afield, and when he resigned as superior in 1890 "the Cowley Fathers" had missions in the United States, India, and South Africa.

Benson himself was once described as having "a heart of steel towards self, a heart of flesh towards man, and a heart of flame towards God." Many who encountered him at a distance felt that he was caught up in a higher dimension, far beyond the reach of ordinary folk. But those who encountered him in more intimate settings, during retreats or while seeking spiritual nurture, discovered a passion and a tenderness which communicated the true light of God's glory. This light continued to shine in Benson even into his ninety-first year when, blind and crippled by rheumatism, he died in the Society's Mission House at Cowley.

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