

The Collect

Let us pray

Merciful Lord, absolve your people from their offences, that through your bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the chains of those sins which by our frailty we have committed; grant this, heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

First Reading: 1 Samuel 16.1-5, 10-13

¹The LORD said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.' ²Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.' And the LORD said, 'Take a heifer with you, and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the LORD."

³Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.' ⁴Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, 'Do you come peaceably?' ⁵He said, 'Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.'

And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. ¹⁰Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, 'The LORD has not chosen any of these.' ¹¹Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?' And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.' ¹²He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The LORD said, 'Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.' ¹³Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

For the gift of the word thanks be to God.

Second Reading Ephesians 5.8-14

⁸Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light - ⁹for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. ¹⁰Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; ¹³but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'

For the gift of the word thanks be to God.

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John (9.24 - 41)

Glory to you, O Lord.

²⁴ For the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, 'Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.' ²⁵He answered, 'I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.' ²⁶They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' ²⁷He answered them, 'I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?' ²⁸Then they reviled him, saying, 'You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.' ³⁰The man answered, 'Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.' ³⁴They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?' And they drove him out. ³⁵Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' ³⁶He answered, 'And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.' ³⁷Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.' ³⁸He said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshipped him. ³⁹Jesus said, 'I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.' ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, 'Surely we are not blind, are we?' ⁴¹Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, "We see", your sin remains.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ.

Post Communion Prayer

Let us pray

Lord God, whose blessed Son our Saviour gave his back to the smiters and did not hide his face from shame: give us grace to endure the sufferings of this present time with sure confidence in the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Intercessions

The Church

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, you promised through your Son Jesus Christ to hear us when we pray in faith. We thank you, Lord, for the worldwide Church and we pray for its peace and unity. We pray for our fellow Christians suffering hostility and persecution anywhere in the world.

We pray for all Christian leaders, especially Archbishop Justin, and here in our own diocese, we pray for Bishop Steven; and for Charles and Sarah, and those who minister here in our own church of St Peter's and at our partner churches. In the Deanery, we pray for retired clergy and non-stipendiary ministers, especially Joanna, Viv, William and Shei. May all in positions of responsibility have strength and wisdom as they face the challenges of this very difficult time.

Our local community

Here in our Deanery, we pray for South Hinksey with New Hinksey; for the Catholic church of Saints Gregory and Augustine; for the Orthodox church in Canterbury Road; for Churches Together in North Oxford; and for the Coptic congregation with Father Peter.

We give thanks for our local community, and we give special thanks for the way in which people are coming together to support each other. We pray especially for our neighbours who live or work in Cyprus Terrace, Pixey Place, Sheriffs Drive, Ulfgar Road, Osborne Close, First Turn, Sparsey Place and Dove House Close.

We pray for our children, all of them affected by Covid-19, including those at Wolvercote Primary School, Cherwell School, St Edward's School; those in the Beavers, Cubs, Brownies, and toddler groups; and those in Children's Church and the 10-plus group, including our servers.

We pray for all families whose members are separated from each other by Covid-19, and those who are forced together for a long period of time. We pray for all those who will go through extra suffering at this time, but we give thanks for mothers, and all who care for us and for others.

The world at large

Looking beyond our local community, we pray for people all over the world who are involved in trying to control the spread of the coronavirus; and for those researching into a vaccine or other solutions to the current crisis.

We pray too that international leaders may be committed to seeking a just and lasting peace in all countries and territories where war is being waged, whether declared or not; and for all those facing homelessness and famine as a result of war.

We remember victims of state-sponsored violence or terrorist activity, refugees and asylum seekers.

Our own country

In our own country, we pray for all in the health profession, who are having to face up to an unprecedented and tremendous challenge; and for carers and all who are working to support others. We continue to pray for the Prime Minister and his Cabinet; that they may be guided by the best advice and may act in the interests of all.

Those in need

We pray for all in need – and especially for all affected by the coronavirus and by other infectious diseases. We carry in our hearts all who will be isolated, lonely and afraid: lend them courage and hope, Lord.

Comfort and heal, Lord, all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Among the sick who have asked for our prayers are Tim Bravington; Margaret Williams; Jenny Gerard; Trixie Collier; Ray Voss; Marion Boulton; Vicki Shepstone; and Michael Stockford. Give them comfort in their troubles, Lord. We pray too for those cared for away from home.

The recently departed, and others we wish to commemorate

We remember the recently departed, and especially Christine Bower and Anne Kindersley. We pray for their family and friends and all who miss them. We pray too for those who died about this time in earlier years, and especially for Ronald Bond, Roy Williams, Bisi Solaru and Ann Weller. According to your promises, grant us with them a share in your eternal kingdom.

We give thanks for the Annunciation, celebrated this coming Wednesday, 25th March, and for Mary's obedience to God's will, however difficult the task seemed.

Rejoicing in the fellowship of Harriet Monsell, Founder of the Community of Saint John the Baptist; Clewer, whose commemoration falls on Thursday 26th March; of St Peter; and of all your saints, we commend ourselves and all people to your unfailing love.

Amen