

## Prayer

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Almighty and everlasting God,  
By whose Spirit the whole body of the Church  
is governed and sanctified:  
hear our prayer which we offer for your faithful people,  
that in their vocation and ministry  
they may serve you in holiness and truth  
to the glory of your name.

My theme may be found in a line from today's collect:

'hear our prayer which we offer for your faithful people'

Prayer is what we do. Prayer is a vital part of daily life. Prayer is talking to God; bringing to God, in words and in silence, in sighs too deep for words, what we want to say to him, to share with him. Prayer is part of a continuing conversation with God that makes up the Christian life.

I'm sorry not have been with you last week when Mark was celebrating 45 years as a priest. To be called to be a priest is good vocation and I'm sure it has brought not only Mark but all my colleagues who are priests countless opportunities for real service. I'd been invited to preach at my friend, Brian Davies's church in La Vendée so I was staying with him and his wife, Pam. The symbol of La Vendée is two hearts: one to live and one to love. Preaching at the 11.00am service that

Sunday morning to the folk of All Saints, come together at Sainte Marthe, Puy-de-Serre, it felt like I had two hearts: one with them and one with you.

I am in the middle of a sermon series looking at what we do in our service of Holy Communion. We've considered preparing for worship through silence; the Collect for Purity; the Confession; and Absolution. We've considered the Ministry of the Word, of hearing God speak to us through readings from the Bible and through the sermon. We've considered the Ministry of the Sacrament, remembering what God's love cost him; meeting God in sharing bread and drinking wine. And now today, I want to look at our time of petitionary prayer when we pray for the Church; for the needs of the world; for our community; and for ourselves.

In a way, the whole service of Holy Communion is an act of prayer. We are praying at moments throughout. The time of prayer which comes between the Creed and the peace is just one part of the whole and majors on thanking God and asking God and these prayers are called the Prayers of Intercession. But before asking God for what we would like to receive and thanking God for what we have received, we have praised God in the Gloria - a great prayer of adoration recognising how great God is and how wonderful he can be. And we have said sorry to God for our past wrong-doing in the prayer of confession. But now, in our Prayers of Intercession, is a time for asking.

To my mind, there are five prayers though in reality they can be as many or as few as the person leading prayer feels appropriate. To my mind, the five prayers are for the Church; for the world; for our community; for the sick; and for the dead.

The prayer for the church is rooted in the sermon: the point of the sermon is addressed in prayer, thanking God for what he has given and asking God what he wants to give. The prayer for the world is often for troubled places asking for peace where there is war, for order where there is chaos, especially in the case of a natural disaster. The prayer for our community may be for St Barts or for Dinard, the place where we live or the place where we worship. The prayer for the sick mentions by name those whom you bring to my attention and in the silence that follows there is an opportunity for us to name those close to us who are sick at the time. This prayer concludes with a petition for wholeness. Lastly, comes the prayer for the dead: for those who have recently died, for those whose funerals I may have taken or for those whose anniversary of death falls during the week to come. That prayer ends with traditional versicle and response

Rest eternal grant them O Lord

And let light perpetual shine on them.

In the film 'Shadowlands', C S Lewis is speaking to a fellow Oxford Don about prayer. He says he prays not to change God's mind but to change his own. God already knows what we are going to pray and will answer our prayers according to his will. But we still need to pray because it is in framing our prayers, in giving voice to what is in our thoughts and minds that we can open ourselves up to doing the will of God. Prayer is a conversation with God but it isn't the monologue it may seem but just one more way that God can speak to us in this service.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's Dinard*

*4<sup>th</sup> July, 2010*

H: Sermon 22: Prayer

