



## Opening Responses

As the day draws into its close,  
**we gather to watch and to pray.**

Open our hearts and ready our lips, O God,  
**and our mouths shall proclaim your praise.**

Our help is in the name of the Lord  
**who made heaven and earth.**

## Space for Silent Reflection on the Past Day

### Prayers of Renewal

Jesus told his disciples that if they wanted to follow him,  
they needed to deny themselves, and take up their crosses.

God calls us into that same movement  
of dying to sin and rising again with Christ.

In this quiet space for reflection,  
let us bring to God those things in need of renewal:

We bring to you those things for which we are sorry:  
**Restore us and heal us.**

We bring to you the times we've failed to love one another:  
**Restore us and heal us.**

We bring to you the burdens we carry and sorrows we bear:  
**Restore us and heal us.**

We bring to you the injustices and oppression in our world:  
**Restore us and heal us.**

We bring to you the failings and disunity of your Church:  
**Restore us and heal us.**

God of our journeys and false starts and new beginnings,  
you walk with us all of our days,  
and nothing in life or death or all creation  
can separate us from your love in Jesus Christ.

Thank you that you forgive us our faults and mistakes,  
share with us in our worries and struggles,  
and lead us onwards into fullness of life.

We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus.  
**Amen**

## An Evening Hymn

Before the ending of the day,  
Creator of the world, we pray  
That with thy wonted favour thou  
Wouldst be our guard and keeper now.

From all ill dreams defend our eyes  
From nightly fears and fantasies;  
Tread underfoot our ghostly foe  
That no pollution we may know.

O Father, that we ask be done  
Through Jesus Christ, thine only Son  
Who, with the Holy Ghost and thee,  
doth live and reign eternally.  
**Amen**

## Psalm of the Day – Psalm 70

*At the end of the psalm, the following is said:*

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

**Reading**     Matthew 26:3 – 16

### Reflection

Imagine being at a gathering of the Chief Priests and Scribes by the time we make it to the Wednesday of Holy Week. On Sunday, visitor and resident alike had welcomed Jesus of Nazareth into Jerusalem, with shouts of ‘Hosanna!’ and waving palm branches. That day also saw him march into the Temple courtyard with his gang of disciples, overturn tables, chase out moneychangers and livestock, and bring the ‘normal business’ to an abrupt halt, to the delight of those people captivated by his teaching as he termed a sacred place a sanctuary for unjust religious leaders. In those days afterwards, he came back and overcame multiple attempts to put him in his place, all the while cheered on by a crowd who had gathered there to hear him preach. It must have felt to the Temple Establishment that this situation was getting out of control, and was bound to attract unwelcome attention from the Roman governor if it carried on. They needed a way to stop Jesus in his tracks, but arresting him in public risked big trouble...

That’s where Judas Iscariot came into the picture. Today’s passage is an example of the way in which light can be shone upon one story by sandwiching it between the opening and closing parts of another. In this case, the two slices of bread come from the Chief Priests and Elders seeking a stealthy way to arrest Jesus without sparking a riot (26:3 – 5), and the emergence of Judas Iscariot as their mechanism

of choice (26:14 – 16). The filling (26:6 – 13) comes in the shape of a famous story told in slightly different ways by all of the four Gospel writers, concerning Jesus being anointed with costly ointment ready for crucifixion and burial. It sets up a real contrast between the grace literally poured out on him by the unnamed woman, and the faithless behaviour of the male disciples, exemplified by Judas as a betrayer.

To confront violent political power and unjust religious collaboration is dangerous in most times and most places, and this is still the case today. Lest we be tempted to rush to judgement on Judas and those other hapless disciples who struggled time and again to understand that we’re called to participate in a journey of death and resurrection with Jesus, today’s story reminds us that there’s something of Judas the betrayer in each of us. How often have we longed for the Gospel to be about heaven rather than earth, about security instead of risks, and always yielding benefits rather than demanding costs? Contrast this with the unnamed woman, who poured a jar of highly expensive anointment onto Jesus’s head, and as such was not simply the first one to really understand his teaching about what being the Messiah meant, but the model leader.

Perhaps, instead of writing him off simply as greedy, we might heed the challenge Judas brings, as his betrayal of Jesus sandwiches the startling contrast of the woman who gifted everything she had. Holy Week is not meant to be a warm and cosy week, but a time in which our hearts are completely exposed to God and we’re stripped naked before the heavenly throne. It is a time for reckoning with that Judas in all of us, and learning from the anonymous woman who prepared Jesus with her extravagant love for what was to come. May we have the courage to follow her example, and give him all that we have.

## Responding to the Word

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

**Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.**

For you have redeemed me, Lord God of truth.

**I commend my spirit.**

Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

**Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.**

Keep me as the apple of your eye.

**Hide me under the shadow of your wings.**

## Canticle – The Song of Simeon (Nunc Dimittis)

Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace:  
your word has been fulfilled.

My own eyes have seen the salvation  
which you have prepared in the sight of every people;  
A light to reveal you to the nations  
and the glory of your people Israel.

**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**

## Prayers of Intercession

*The following Collect is said at the end of the intercessions:*

Almighty God,  
as we stand at the foot of the cross of your Son,  
help us to see and know your love for us,  
so that in humility, love and joy  
we may place at his feet  
all that we have and all that we are;  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen**

## The Lord's Prayer

### A Prayer of Journeying On

As you journey onwards in God's love,  
towards the foot of the cross of Christ,  
may you step forward boldly and act justly,  
so that through you, all may know that they matter.  
And the blessing of God,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be upon you, and all whom you love and pray for,  
now and for ever. **Amen**