

# PRAYING HOLY WEEK WITH ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH 2023



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Wang

## FINDING THE WAY TO THE FATHER

Whatever the season of Lent has been like for me this year, Holy Week provides a renewed opportunity to stop and reflect. I resolve to find a little time each day to consider Jesus's last days as he journeys towards his Father, and to ponder what that means to me. Perhaps I'll find myself asking Jesus to show me that same Way as I accompany him this week.

Our booklet this year takes its inspiration from a reflection by Fr Tony Nye SJ (1933–2022) on 'The Way of Holy Week':

Jesus showed us the way throughout his whole life on earth, but this way becomes particularly clear and calls to us most profoundly in the events of Holy Week, not only by Jesus's words, however striking they are, but by his actions and what he suffered, beyond words.

Those events invite us to enter upon this way interiorly, through the words, actions and silences of the liturgy. Through that liturgy we make a commitment of faith to know Jesus more clearly, as individuals, but also as pilgrims together.

*Thinking Faith*, 11 April 2014

With these words as our guide, each daily reflection invites us to explore a particular way we can journey towards the Father. As we contemplate the readings and actions of the liturgy and ponder the images, we might ask ourselves anew: 'What is the meaning of this Way for me in my daily life?'



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## MONDAY: THE WAY OF OBEDIENCE AND COMMITMENT

**T**hus says God, the Lord,  
He who created the heavens and spread them out,  
who gave shape to the earth and what comes from it,  
who gave breath to its people  
and life to the creatures that move in it:  
'I, the Lord, have called you to serve the cause of right;  
I have taken you by the hand and formed you;  
I have appointed you as covenant of the people and light of the nations,  
to open the eyes of the blind,  
to free captives from prison,  
and those who live in darkness from the dungeon.'      Isaiah 42: 5-7

On this first day of Holy Week, I might consciously pause and become aware of the Lord's presence with me. Perhaps I sense God's loving gaze on me ... God's breath on my skin ... God's gentle touch as I reach out my hand. Or perhaps it's just that I know God is here with me.

When I feel ready, I read slowly through the text. I may want to speak the words out loud to help me notice their rhythm and flow.

Perhaps I pause and picture in my mind's eye the wonder of God's creation: the heavens, the earth, the people and creatures. What do I notice? What comes to mind? What moves me?

As I return to the text, I ponder the Lord's call to me. Perhaps I ask myself how it feels to know that the Lord has 'taken me by the hand and formed me'. Am I always aware of being held, or are there times when I feel lost and alone?

As I reflect on my life now, where do I see myself answering the invitation to 'serve the cause of right .... to open the eyes of the blind ... to free captives'?

I may ask the Lord to show me opportunities I'm not noticing. Maybe I feel inadequate to obey his call, or ill-prepared to commit myself fully to his Way?

I take whatever time I need to talk to the Lord as I would to a close friend.

As I bring my time of prayer to a close, I might take the response to today's Psalm, repeating a number of times, 'You, Lord, are my light and my help'.

## TUESDAY: THE WAY OF A SERVANT

**T**he Lord made my mouth a sharp sword,  
and hid me in the shadow of his hand.

He made me into a sharpened arrow,  
and concealed me in his quiver.

He said to me, 'You are my servant, Israel,  
in whom I shall be glorified';

while I was thinking, 'I have toiled in vain,

I have exhausted myself for nothing';

and all the while my cause was with the Lord,  
my reward with my God.

I was honoured in the eyes of the Lord,

my God was my strength.

Isaiah 49: 2–4

As I settle myself for prayer today, it may help to spend a little time noticing how my body feels. If I'm comfortable, I may want to sit up with my back a little straighter and my feet firmly in contact with the floor. I let myself relax into the Lord's presence in whatever way works for me – perhaps listening to music, focusing on my breathing, or simply sitting in silence.

I read through the scripture passage two or three times, paying attention to how I respond to particular words or phrases.

Returning to these, what do I notice? Am I challenged, puzzled, reassured ...?

I may want to ask the Holy Spirit to help throw some light on my reactions.

In my imagination I put myself in the prophet's place. How do I feel to be called a servant through whom God will be glorified? Am I comfortable with it, or challenged, fearful, or joyful even at the thought of this? Or perhaps there is something else altogether? I ponder.

I may also be aware of sharing the prophet's frustration – perhaps struggling to see my own worth, or doubting what I can achieve to glorify God.

I turn to the Lord and tell him what is in my heart.

It may help now to wonder how God sees me.

What does God say about the way I am living my life in his service?

As my prayer time comes to a close, I offer my gratitude to God for the rewards I have already received, and for those yet to come.



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## WEDNESDAY: THE WAY OF HUMILITY

**T**he Lord has opened my ear. For my part, I made no resistance, neither did I turn away. I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard; I did not cover my face against insult and spittle. The Lord comes to my help, so that I am untouched by the insults. So, too, I set my face like flint; I know I shall not be shamed.

Isaiah 50: 4–7

I settle down to pray today by focusing on my breathing. I don't try to change it, but just become aware of God's loving welcome. If I can, I let go of the cares I am carrying. I consciously place myself in God's presence, with open hands and an open heart. I wait and humbly acknowledge how utterly dependent I am on the God who created me to praise, love and serve.

I read slowly through the text, noting what strikes me.

It may be that I am drawn to look back on what it is that the Lord has opened my ear to hear.

Is it perhaps God's boundless love for me ... or all the blessings I've been given ... or God's call to me to serve others ...?

Or maybe something else comes to mind? I ponder.

I might want to talk to the Lord about how I've responded to what I've heard, and how I'm responding now.

Perhaps I'm aware of times when I resist and turn away, putting my own needs first, and seeking to rely on myself – especially when life is challenging? I share with the Lord what I'd like to do differently in the future.

What is it I need to help me walk more humbly with God?

I ask the Lord to show me.

As I read the text again, I am reminded of the profound humility of Jesus, as he accepts the injuries and insults inflicted on him during his journey to the cross. He shows me the way to greater humility.

I spend whatever time I need with the Lord, and then take my leave.

Perhaps I ask, in the words of St Richard of Chichester, for the grace to see him more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.





Image: Dieric Bouts (c.1420–75), *Christ Crowned with Thorns* (National Gallery, London)  
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## HOLY THURSDAY: THE WAY OF SELF-GIVING AND SHARING

**F**or this is what I received from the Lord, and in turn passed on to you: that on the same night that he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread, and thanked God for it and broke it, and he said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this as a memorial of me.' In the same way he took the cup after supper, and said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me.' Until the Lord comes, therefore, every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming his death. 1 Corinthians 11: 23–26

Today we are entering the Triduum, the three holy days before Easter.

Before beginning my prayer this Thursday, I may want to pause a while and ask the Lord that I might come even closer to him in the forthcoming days.

In time, I take a couple of deep breaths and then try to put aside all my worries in the way I know works best for me. If any distractions come, I acknowledge them and move on.

I read the Scripture text several times. It is familiar, of course, but maybe there's a phrase I haven't 'heard' before. I pause and reflect.

I may want to focus on Jesus giving of himself: his body, his blood.

Perhaps it will lead me to look at how this applies to my own life.

A few may have the opportunity to give of themselves physically in a very literal sense: a kidney, a lung, stem cells. But most of us can give our time, our concern, our love, our support.

In what ways could it be said that I give of myself? I ponder.

The very act of self-giving involves others. Jesus is sharing himself with his friends, with me. The liturgy of Maundy Thursday traditionally recalls this sharing and self-giving by remembering the institution of the Eucharist.

Whether I am able just now to partake of the Eucharist or not, I speak to the Lord, in my own words, about what it means to me.

When I am ready, I close my prayer with words of thanks to the Lord for showing me the way to come closer to God the Father today.





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## GOOD FRIDAY: THE WAY OF SILENCE

**B**ehold the wood of the Cross,  
on which hung the salvation of the world.  
Come, let us adore.

Adoration of the Cross, Good Friday Liturgy

Today I come to pray with a heavy heart. Maybe I try to cut down as much of the usual background noise in my life as I can. Jesus dies on the cross out of love for me. No words can express the immensity of that act.

Perhaps I am able to pray before a cross or a crucifix. Silently, I look at it, at what it means for me, and for the world. I ponder.

I may have been able to follow the liturgy of the Lord's Passion in church or online, or perhaps I simply remember the moments of moving silence as the priest lies prostrate before the bare altar at the beginning of the service.

What was in my heart then?

I recall the adoration of the cross later on in the liturgy, and the invitation, as the priest gradually reveals the cross, for me to come up close and adore.

I pause.

*'Behold the wood of the cross ... Come and adore.'*

I look at the cross and remain still and silent.

In time, I may feel drawn to venerate the cross with a tangible action: a bow, a genuflection, a kiss. How does this make me feel?

I rest in the silence.

I may have been present at the last moments of someone I loved: a parent, a child, a close friend. As they were making their way to the Father, what was the atmosphere around them like? How was I able to show them my love?

When the time comes to conclude my prayer, I express my silent gratitude for being shown this way of silence. I make a slow sign of the cross in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.



Image: Jean-Georges Cornélius (1880–1963), 'Jésus sur la croix'  
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This painting of Jesus on the cross suggests that God the Father suffers with his Son.  
The left arm of both Jesus and the Father are bound together.

## HOLY SATURDAY: THE WAY OF PROMISE AND RENEWAL

**D**o you believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was born of the Virgin Mary  
suffered death and was buried,  
rose again from the dead,  
and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?      **I do.**

From the Renewal of Baptismal Promises, Easter Vigil

Throughout this solemn week, we have been praying that Jesus, in his Passion, might show us the way to the Father. Tonight, the concluding liturgy of the Easter Vigil shows us, symbolically, through the lighting of the Paschal Candle, that New Life is here. In rising from the dead, Christ fulfils all the promises of the Covenant and of the relationship between God the Father and his people, between God and me.

In turn, tonight I renew the promises made for me at my Baptism.

I spend time reading slowly, stopping at each line and pondering the meaning for me. To what extent am I able to answer without reservation: 'I do'?

If I find it difficult, I tell the Lord about it, trusting that he knows me, loves me as I am, and will show me the way to the Father which is best for me.

As I consider the different 'ways' I have experienced this Holy Week, I see how they all lead to the Risen Christ now seated at the Father's right hand.

What feelings arise in my heart: joy, exultation, a sense of completion ...?

To conclude my prayer, I may want to join all Christians and sing or acclaim:

*Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Alleluia!*

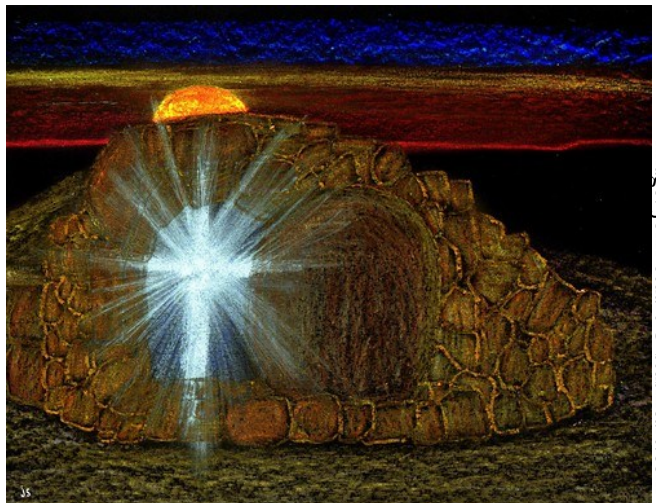


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