

# Intercessions on 21 March 2021

by Andrew Goodman

**Fifth Sunday in Lent**

*Readings: Psalm 119. 9-16; John 12. 20-33*

It's been a week of anniversaries:

Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March: The Syrian conflict started 10 years ago.

President Bashar al-Assad has:

*" turned his country into a graveyard. Hundred of thousands of people have been killed, including 25,000 children. Millions more forced to flee. Terrible crimes - war crimes, crimes against humanity, widespread torture, indiscriminate bombing, chemical attacks - have been committed in his name, and continue to this day. Syria lies in ruins." <sup>1</sup>*

Lord, we despair that the president is still in power, but:

*Please continue to give [the people of Syria] strength and faith to persevere through the difficult days, and to rebuild their country with love, peace and joy. We ask for an end to the conflict and for lasting peace and stability. Please give [NGO's] and [their] local partners wisdom, discernment, and strength as [they] seek to serve and support the people of Syria. <sup>2</sup>*

We thank you for everyone involved in the Herts Welcomes Refugees organisation which initially began with a focus on refugees from Syria coming to live in the county. Later today, a second film inspired by the refugees' stories will be premiered. May this story of human migration and connection through time and distance reach a wide audience.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

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<sup>1</sup> Observer editorial, 21st March 2021

<sup>2</sup> Tearfund, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March: Marked 1 year since Imperial College's Covid19 Response Team warned that the UK government's decisions at that time put the UK on course for 250,000 deaths.

There was a 7-day delay before the first lockdown was introduced on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March. This anniversary will be remembered next Tuesday, designated as a National Day of Reflection.

*Lord God, the maker and redeemer of all,  
as we come before you in thanksgiving for the gift of health and life,  
we grieve for the thousands who have died:  
comfort us with your presence,  
sustain us with the hope of your kingdom,  
and give us grace to live our lives well* <sup>3</sup>

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March: the feast of St Patrick.

Bill Church highlighted in the Wednesday morning service that:

*"We talk about the fire of the Holy Spirit, and like fire, the Christian faith can burn brightly or smoulder as embers. Bright faith can throw off sparks which start new fires. Smouldering embers of faith can be blown upon and revived."*

Lord,

*As we journey towards Easter, help us to live as people of hope, knowing that beyond the pain of the cross lies the joy of resurrection. Inspire us in our worship, through our churches and in our homes, that we may bring glory to you and joy to others. Be with those who are struggling in mind, body or spirit, and give courage to those who are facing uncertainty and change ahead. Help each of us to keep our eyes fixed on you, that we may reflect your light to all whom we meet.* <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> From 'An Act of Prayer for individuals or households to mark 23rd March: the beginning of the first lockdown' (Church of England)

<sup>4</sup> Church of England National Day of Reflection

Comfort and heal all those who are unwell, including:

Barbara, Andrée, Allan, Bernard, Douglas, Yvonne, Phil, Lilla,  
Susan, Susan, Dean, Alma, Tim, Imogen, Claire, Paul, Jo, Julie

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Not an anniversary as such, but today is Census Day, so it marks 10 years since the last census. As we complete this year's census, we remember those who will not be included, especially those known to us who have died recently:

Rose Elliott, Terry Miles, Sheila Bartlett, Marjorie Waterman, Ian Mulligan

We remember in Year's Mind those whose anniversaries fall at this time:

Evelyn Hayden, Francis Cecil Moody, Joan Bowyer, Charles Norman Smith (Priest), Greg Brown, Betty Holden, Harry Leslie Brogden

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Archbishop Justin Welby published a book in 2018 entitled 'Reimagining Britain'.

Lord, we long to see reimagining applied to:

- Caring for family and household at the centre of policy.
- Removing inequalities in education that threaten community.
- Removing the injustice in UK society evident in health inequalities and the neglect of public health, mental health and social care.
- Restructuring economics and finance to remove economic injustice, building a culture of service rather than exploitation.

Lord, we thank you that the book's chapter on housing and community initiated the Archbishops' report 'Coming Home - Tackling the housing crisis together' published in February. <sup>5</sup>

We thank you for its strong message about the need for a new approach in which:

*"Good housing should be sustainable, safe, stable, sociable and satisfying."*

There is a strong message, too, about the *Need for Sacrifice*:

*Lasting change does not come without sacrifice – the sacrifice of privilege, of power, and of potential profit. (p33)*

The prophet Isaiah shouted about false worship in which fasting served self-interest and oppressed workers. <sup>6</sup>

Lord, help us to practice true worship. In this world we've had time to burn, give us the imperative to:

- reduce our carbon footprints and alleviate the climate and ecological emergencies
- *"offer food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted"* (v10)
- reverse the 50% cut in the UK's overseas aid budget
- bring an end to the adversarial approach to vaccines that seeks competitive advantage
- share our vaccine with generosity and end vaccine poverty

As Isaiah says, as we do this Lord:

- may our light rise in the darkness
- guide us continually
- satisfy our needs in parched places
- make us like a well-watered garden

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<sup>5</sup> The Commission of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on Housing, Church and Community (February 2021)

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 58

- rebuild our ruins
- may we be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

A 14<sup>th</sup> century prayer of trust from Thomas à Kempis:

*O lord our God, do not be far from us.*

*Our God, have regard to help us.*

*We have many thoughts and great fears afflicting our souls.*

*How will we pass through unhurt?*

*How will we break them to pieces?*

*This is our hope, our only consolation,*

*to flee to you in every tribulation, to trust in you,*

*to call on you from our inmost hearts,*

*and to wait patiently for your consolation.*

Merciful Father.....**accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**