

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

Your justice has its source in strength. *First Reading*

You, God of mercy and compassion, turn and take pity on me. *Psalms*

The Spirit comes to help us in our weakness. *Second Reading*

I stand at the door and knock, says the Lord. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and sit down to supper with them. *Communion Antiphon*

Father, let the gift of your life continue to grow in us,
drawing us from death to faith, hope and love.

Keep us alive in Christ Jesus.

Keep us watchful in prayer and true to his teaching
till your glory is revealed in us.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you want to explore further:
Wisdom 12: 13.16–19; Ps. 85 (86); Romans 8: 26–27; Matthew 13: 24–43

Ganesh Patil, Mother and Child (indianartideas.in)



'But you are
the God of
mercy and
compassion,
abounding
in love
and truth.'

Psalms

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Year A, 23rd July 2023

The Spirit comes to help us
in our weakness

God's mercy and compassion are the themes running through today's readings.

The **First Reading** offers a description of God's divine nature. The author emphasises God's universal care and patience as signs of strength: characteristics that stand at odds with worldly values.

In the midst of his troubles, the **Psalms** also reflects on the qualities of the God of mercy and compassion.

In the **Second Reading**, St Paul tells of the consequences of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Christian prayer. Even when prayer is difficult for us as finite and limited human beings, Paul encourages us to hand over our struggles to the Spirit who prays deeply in our hearts to our Father.

The **Gospel** shares three parables about growth, each seen from a different perspective. The first tells of the wheat and the weeds. It challenges us to recognise that sometimes we must learn to live with situations we don't like, because the effort to remove or change them would do more harm than good. This is a shrewd picture of the patience and compassion needed to live with the ambiguities and complexities of human life.

Let us pray this week for a spirit of self-compassion in our frailty and limitations. We ask for the grace of deep humility and freedom to give of our best, and also to have faith in the God of surprises.



Opening Prayer

Show favour, O Lord, to your servants
and mercifully increase the gifts of your grace,
that, made fervent in hope, faith and charity,
they may be ever watchful in keeping your commands.

Second Reading Romans 8: 26–30

The Spirit comes to help us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, that same Spirit expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words, and God who knows everything in our hearts knows perfectly well what the Spirit means, and that the pleas of the saints expressed by the Spirit are according to the mind of God.

I begin my prayer time gently and slowly. I allow myself to become increasingly conscious of God's loving presence in this moment; of his living Spirit within me. In awe and wonder, I become aware that the God of all creation desires my company.

I ask the Holy Spirit for the freedom I need to encounter the Holy One in these moments of prayer.

In time, I read St Paul's message to the Roman community receptively a number of times, allowing the living word of God to enter my being.

I notice what images or phrases speak to me.

I ponder.

Then I read the words again, aware that I sit in the presence of the One who loves me deeply.

Can I allow myself to become more aware of the Spirit of truth and life within my being? ... the Spirit of Jesus who comes to help me in my vulnerability, my weakness, my limitations?

Perhaps I feel drawn to a time of silent contemplative prayer as I welcome the Holy Spirit within me. I sit in silence, empty before God, opening the doors of my heart and mind, and inviting God in.

Or perhaps I notice some fear or resistance to becoming so intimate with God ... the One who knows everything in my heart perfectly well?

I note and acknowledge anything that might lead me to resist the experience of the Spirit's life and power in my life.

I do not judge or criticise myself, but ask the Holy Spirit for help.

I pray for the grace to surrender my whole being to God's presence and action, that I may be his follower in all aspects of my life.

I close my prayer with a slow sign of the cross.

Gospel Matthew 13: 24–30 (shortened version)

Jesus put a parable before the crowds. "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in the field. While everybody was asleep, the enemy came, sowed darnel all among the wheat, and made off. When the new wheat sprouted and ripened, the darnel appeared as well. The owner's servants went to him and said, 'Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? If so, where does the darnel come from?' 'Some enemy has done this', the owner answered. And the servants said, 'Do you want us to go and weed it out?' But the owner said, 'No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it. Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers: first collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn.'"

If I can, I come to prayer with a whole-hearted desire to create a space for inner stillness and silence. I turn my attention to my body, noting and experiencing its sensations; its energy; its aliveness. I pray for a readiness to meet the Spirit of the risen Christ in the depth of my being.

Once I have slowed down enough to allow God to speak to me and within me, I read the Gospel slowly (whether this short extract or the full version). I take time to be nurtured through this teaching of Jesus. I sit and meditate on the holy word.

As I read the passage again, I may wonder what spiritual or moral lessons Jesus's parables have to teach me.

What is the wheat and darnel in my life?

What is life-giving, and what drains me of life ... both in my relationship with Jesus and my life in the world?

Like the disciples, I speak to Jesus and ask for his wisdom to grow within me.

It may be that my own life is very challenging at the moment, or I feel burdened by the many evils and injustices in the world.

In my weakness, I ask the Holy Spirit for the grace of humility and the freedom to accept my personal human limitations.

I also pray for the courage and wisdom to make a difference where I can.

I end my prayer time slowly. *Glory be ...*