

# ST. GILES' PRAYER WEEK – APRIL 2019

## PRAYING BOLDLY – FREQUENTLY – EXPECTANTLY

### United In Prayer

Welcome to the St. Giles' Prayer Week notes for April 2019! We hope our monthly notes will help you in your prayer life & encourage you to spend more regular time with God, whether with others or individually. Use them to help you wait on Him; listen to Him; & talk with Him – all of which are crucial to a healthy prayer life. When we seek - as a whole church - to go deeper together with Jesus Christ, prayer is at the heart of our discipleship journey. There's real spiritual power when we pray together in unity & agreement; these notes aim to help you to structure your prayer time well, with different themes & emphases each month, about which all of St. Giles' is praying together at the same time.

Although Easter comes late in April this year, on the 21<sup>st</sup>, it would seem strange not to base this month's Prayer Notes around this central celebration of the church calendar - the death and resurrection of Jesus that, as Christians, we believe is the centre-point of all human history.

There is a tradition in the church dating back centuries, especially to Medieval times when pilgrims no longer had access to the holy places of Jerusalem, of marking Good Friday through a series of images, each of which shows a scene in Christ's Passion – the Stations of the Cross, as they became known. Christians processed between each image in order, re-tracing the footsteps of Jesus on Good Friday, the Via Dolorosa (“Way of Sorrows”), stopping at each Station to reflect & pray.



Conventionally, especially in the Catholic Church but also in a more “high church” tradition in the Anglican Communion, there are fourteen Stations. However, several of these don't have a definitive scriptural basis, but rather have become traditional over time. To take the Stations back to their roots in the Gospel, Pope John Paul II introduced a new form of devotion, called the Scriptural Way of the Cross, on Good Friday, 1991. In this, there are fifteen Stations, all biblical, including the Resurrection. My suggestion for this month is that you structure your April prayer time around these fifteen Scriptural Stations of the Cross.

### Prayer Time Practicalities & Structuring Your Prayer Time

“Pray as you can; not as you can't!” Make it as easy as possible, whether as a group or as an individual, to pray. Choose a time and place that works well for you. Try your best to pray for an hour, and start with the same 3 areas of prayer in the first 15 minutes:

**PRAISE** - Praise God for who He is, and so bring His presence into your praying (Psalm 63:3)

**WAITING** - Bring God's peace into our prayer time, and focus ourselves on Him (Psalm 46:10)

**CONFESSION** - Before we raise our prayers, we need to be right with God. (Psalm 139:23)

And, at the end of this 15 minutes, thank God that He was with us during our Church Weekend Away; for Richard Wilson's teaching on the Kingdom; & for the way in which we're growing together as our St. Giles' family, both those who were at the Weekend & those who were not. This Prayer Week, spend the remaining  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour praying through the Scriptural Stations of the Cross – that's three minutes per station! – meditating on what was going through Christ's mind and heart at each of these moments. Bring before God the echoes in our own lives, or in the wider world, & pray through them.

For each of these Stations, read the verses of Scripture, and intercede for others and our world using the suggestions below, but also where the Stations may find particular echoes in your life, ask the Lord for his grace to help you, as your feelings echo those of Jesus at these moments of his Passion.

**First station: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-41).** Jesus is deserted by his closest friends. Pray for those who are lonely; who feel betrayed; who may feel that God is distant.

**Second station: Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested (Mark 14: 43-46).** Jesus is violently captured. Pray for conflicts around the world, that they might be brought to peaceful conclusions.

**Third station: Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin (Luke 22: 66-71).** Jesus is judged & found guilty in a mockery of justice. Pray for justice for all in our legal system & in those systems abroad.

**Fourth station: Jesus is denied by Peter (Matthew 26: 69-75).** Peter's courage fails him, as Jesus knew it would. Pray for courage to stand up for our Christian brothers & sisters; & for Christ himself.

**Fifth station: Jesus is judged by Pontius Pilate (Mark 15: 1-5, 15).** Pilate caves in to the crowd choosing to protect himself & his position. Pray that we follow Jesus's way in life, not that of the crowd.

**Sixth station: Jesus is scourged at the pillar and crowned with thorns (John 19: 1-3).** Jesus is humiliated and tortured. Pray for an end to torture and political violence across our whole world.

**Seventh station: Jesus bears the cross (John 19: 6, 15-17).** Jesus feels the weight of his great burden. Pray for those who carry great loads; ask God to carry you, if you're bearing burdens for others.

**Eighth station: Jesus is helped by Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross (Mark 15: 21).** Simon helps Jesus. Pray that we learn, like he did, to resist our own selfishness when we're asked to help others.



**Ninth station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem (Luke 23: 27-31)** Jesus weeps for the women; help us to walk with others in their suffering too.

**Tenth station: Jesus is crucified (Luke 23: 33-34).** The last vestiges of Jesus' dignity are stripped away. Pray that we always treat others with dignity.

**Eleventh station: Jesus promises his Kingdom to the repentant thief (Luke 23: 39-43).** Even in his agony, Jesus spoke words of kindness and forgiveness to this man. As we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us", even when it can be so hard to do.

**Twelfth station: Jesus speaks to his mother and the Beloved Disciple (John 19: 25-27).** Jesus draws together his mother and his disciple, both in the agony of terrible grief and fear. Give us the grace to be generous with our love and support for anyone we meet who is in pain.

**Thirteenth station: Jesus dies on the cross (Luke 23: 44-46).** Jesus gives up his life for us. Pray that we might fully appreciate the enormity of what God has done for us in Christ, and live accordingly.

**Fourteenth station: Jesus is placed in the tomb (Matthew 27: 57-60).** The desolation of Holy Saturday. Pray for those without hope, that they might know the greatest hope, in the person of Jesus.

**Fifteenth station: the Resurrection of Jesus (Luke 24:1-8).** "Alleluia, He is risen!" Thank the Lord that, through the risen Christ, we can be reconciled to him, despite all that we do to turn away. Pray for others in our community & throughout the world, that they too might turn to Christ, & know salvation.

If you receive responses from God in answer to your prayers, please do let Tim or Lee know - we'd love to share testimonies with all of St. Giles', about what God's doing in our lives. Pray well!