



Opening Prayer

I cry to God in distress, I cry to God, and he hears me. God, your ways are holy! What God is as great as our God?

You are the God who does marvelous deeds, brought nations to acknowledge your power, with your own arm redeeming your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph.

Psalm 77: 1, 13-15 **StF 473 Moses I**

know you're the man <https://youtu.be/yr7YZ203UVI>

'Moses, I know you're the man,' the Lord said.

'You're going to work out my plan,' the Lord said.

'Lead all the Israelites out of slavery, and I shall make them a wandering race called the People of God.'

*So, every day, we're on our way,
for we're a travelling, wandering race,
we're the People of God.*

'Don't get too set in your ways,' the Lord said.

'Each step is only a phase,' the Lord said.

'I'll go before you and I shall be a sign to guide my travelling, wandering race; you're the People of God.'

'No matter what you may do,' the Lord said.

'I shall be faithful and true,' the Lord said.

'My love will strengthen you as you go along, for you're my travelling, wandering race, you're the People of God.'

'Look at the birds in the air,' the Lord said.

'They fly unhampered by care,' the Lord said.

'You will move easier if you're travelling light, for you're a wandering, vagabond race, you're the People of God.'

'Foxes have places to go,' the Lord said.

'But I've no home here below,' the Lord said.

'So if you want to be with me all your days, keep up the moving and travelling on, you're the People of God.'

Estelle White (b. 1925)

A Prayer

God of Creation, you have always been on the move. You are faithful and sure, yet also constantly transforming, recreating, bringing fresh order out of chaos.

Humankind is looking, constantly, for an order which can be controlled but finding, constantly, that we are powerless in a world which is so much bigger than we are.

Thank you for the example of Jesus, who understood small world and vast universe. He showed us how to be true to ourselves and to you, even when it costs us. He taught us to love all that you have brought into being; even the mysteries of life.

Forgive and heal us of the arrogance which wants to be in charge. Grant us the assurance in our hearts that we are not only forgiven but healed and transformed by your loving mercy and grace. Amen.

Readings: Galatians 5: 1,13-25, and Luke 09: 51-62

Reflection:

I worked for a couple of years during the mid-nineties in Doncaster running courses on behalf of the Employment Service, working with people branded "the long term unemployed" two of the most challenging groups we used to encounter were ex squaddies and released prisoners. Both groups appeared to struggle with the responsibility of freedom, they had both been in an environment where decisions had been made for them, they had to live by a strict rule of conduct, and failure to comply would result in sanctions. Things were very different in the outside world, they were suddenly responsible for their own choices, some appeared to do fine, many others struggled.

We have just come through an experience of losing our freedom to come and go as we please, do what we want to do, be responsible for our own actions, and it hasn't been easy. On the other side of the worst of the pandemic, some people are struggling with getting back to normal and I am constantly reminding that while freedom is liberating for some, it is frightening for others.

Many of the first hearers of the letter of St Paul to the Galatians will have known what it was like living under the Jewish law. There appears to have been an understanding that if you identified every single misdemeanour an individual might fall victim to, list it in the book of God's law and insist on strict adherence, then God would be pleased and all would be well, disobey, and the wrath of God would fall from a great height. Jesus turns this idea on its head and teaches that if a person lives in the power of the Holy Spirit and keeps three simple commands, love God, love the whole of humankind, and follow the example set by Jesus, then the Kingdom of God would be near.

St Paul reminds us that with freedom comes responsibility, one of the problems Jesus encountered was that some of the law makers in the Jewish faith, were the law breakers and we see in the story from St Luke's gospel how long held feuds were still wrangling even as Jesus was heading to Jerusalem and ultimately to Calvary. The freedom Jesus talks about in the Spirit carries with it responsibility, some people find excuses, because freedom carries risk. Freedom is far more than us simply being allowed to do whatever we like, our recent study of the climate change issues has proved this, the caveat must always be to ensure that we are being responsible stewards of the world that God created and the rich variety of people who are our brothers and sister, who populate this planet.

- How much do you value your freedom? Pray for those who don't have the freedom we have.
- Do you only see benefit to yourself by being free? Are there changes to be made?
- Do you love your neighbour so much, that you are prepared to suffer for them?

A time of prayer

Loving God, thank you that Jesus was truly human, as we are, and not just human in form. That he had all the emotions we have and wrestled with them as we do.

Sometimes, in our distress, our priorities do get confused, and we miss the needs off. Thank you for those who make the time to notice others, and to be there for them.

We pray for the nations where there is division between different groups who despise one another, often because of their shared history. We hold in mind those who are suffering because of war and violence.

We pray for those whose experience of violence is hidden from view, unacknowledged, or imprisoned by fear. We pray for people who make themselves available to help those who hurt in private; and for those brave enough to speak out.

We pray for those who are enslaved by others, or by their society, or by their own habits, values, or expectations. We thank you for those who help to set them – and us - free.

We hold before you all who are unwell, and all who are grieving.

And we bring you such prayers as you inspire in our hearts with groans too deep for words. ... Thank you, Lord, that you hear our prayers. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Stf 673 Will you come and follow me <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-Bq1YtpQL8>

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?

Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known? Will

you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?

Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare? Will

you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?

Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same? Will
you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen, and
admit to what I mean in you and you in me?
Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?
Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In Your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show. Thus
I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

A prayer of blessing

May the road rise up to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields,
And until we meet again
May God hold you in the hollow of his hand.

Irish Traditional