



## **Easter Prayer Leaflet 2017**

Dear Friends,

This prayer leaflet comes to you from your new Prayer and Spirituality Coordinator, Lesley McLean. Worshipping with the members of Australian Council for the first time in November was a lively and heart-warming and stirring experience. Now we begin Lent and Easter together. It is a new start for all of us; which, when you come to think of it, it's just what Lent and Easter are about – getting ready, preparing for a new beginning and then welcoming new life.

With love and prayers,

Lesley

### **Getting off to a good start with Ash Wednesday**

Late in 2015 I decided to move house; from a small house with a large garden to a small unit with no garden to speak of. So began the process of purging.

In my house there was a combustion heater. It provided a place for the ritual burnings of old study material, old bills. The big rubbish bins received the wholesale ejection of items that even the OP Shops would not take.

The ash we receive on Ash Wednesday provides a potent symbol

the burning of the dross that encrust us: our petty sins, resentments, complainings. They are what we would like to get rid of. The really hard stuck-on habits that we really and don't want to get rid off even maybe like – they're the work for Lent.

P.S.

While many of us may not be able to attend the local service, the clearing out of some rubbish is vitally important. Consider asking a friend to share a time of prayer and readings such as the ones for Ash Wednesday in the Prayer Book

### ***For Reflection***

*I have a need*

*Of such a clearance*

*As the Saviour effected in the temple of Jerusalem*

*A riddance of the clutter*

*Of what is secondary*

*That blocks the way*

*To the all-important central emptiness*

*Which is filled*

*With the presence of God alone.*

*Jean Danielou* in *Esther de Waal Lost in Wonder*. Melbourne, John Garratt Publishing, 2003 p. 19

## **Getting ready to Move**

Day after day I looked at plates, clothes, ornaments, furniture and books and with each gaze my life was set out before me. The flood of memories was constant, but necessary for the decisions I had to make about what items were to stay with me. I needed to assess the worth of a plastic jug that had been a wedding shower present, the need for so many books, or to justify storing items because 'it's been with me all my life' or 'someone in the family might want it one day'.

Last year it seemed to me that Lent had begun in the November of 2015 and that it continued through until about December 2016. The clearing of one house and then fitting into the unit fill my life for months after Delivery Day on 30 January 2016. You would have thought the sorting, burning, giving away and the heartache involved would have been enough. Still the decisions and memories continued to be constant as some pictures were hung and others – well they're still in boxes. This unit was built in 1965. That was the era of my early married life and motherhood with all its trial and joys.

So there was more going on than material holding on or letting go. There was turmoil but there was also joy. I was 'in the desert' with the angels ministering to me.

### ***For Reflection***

*Look kindly upon my labours,      My striving to come to you  
for apart from you I can do nothing.*

*St Anselm* in Esther de Waal *Lost in Wonder*. Melbourne, John Garratt Publishing, 2003 p. 116.

## Discipline

The end (purpose) of our labours is Easter - new life, freedom, the lightness of joy and happiness. 'Prepare the Way of the Lord' Jesus spoke time and again to his followers about the necessity to prepare and to act. He urged them to 'Take up your Cross and follow me'. This is the catch cry of a leader who led from the front. Our Lord by his life and works, his death and rising, demonstrated faith in action.

Evelyn Underhill gives advice to those undertaking any Lenten discipline (which is what a disciple does)

'No discipline will be any use to us unless we keep in mind the reason why we are doing this – for the Glory of God, and not for the sake of our own self-improvement or other self-regarding purpose'. She goes on:

'Our object is to be what God wants of us, not what we want of Him. So all that we do must be grounded in worship. First lift up our eyes to the hills, then turn to our own potato field and lightly fork in the manure.' *Underhill, p. 18.*

Perhaps this Lent you might consider a lifting of your eyes, your mind your heart in your prayers. Gaze in wonder at God's creation; sing a hymn or psalm; and most important of all, gently put out of your mind any Negative thoughts. They are sure to come creeping in – you know the ones: the planet is doomed, the children don't go to church, I mightn't have enough money for my retirement. Pat them on the head, and say, there, there, don't worry. I am busy now worshipping God.

Then, Evelyn says, go and do what you have to do, and if it's the manure of your disturbing relationship, you will face digging that with a lighter heart and a more confident spirit.

## ***For Reflection***

*To appreciate so sublime a plan, so great a gift, we need his own light to dawn on us from the everlasting hills. It is to those hills that we must lift up our eyes to see how we were saved from hurtling down the path we now climb.*

*From a letter by St Paulinus of Nola in Esther de Waal Lost in Wonder. Melbourne, John Garratt Publishing, 2003 p. 92-3.*

## **Faithful in worship, Faithful in service**

I remember my teenage years when I learnt about the extra obligations I should perform in Lent such as going to the mid-week service. The habit of worship keeps us the presence of God and Underhill comments that: 'The fruit of God's presence and action in the soul is an enhancement of our quality'. Here are some of her words on Faithfulness:

You remember the noble figure of Faithful in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian's best friend. How he started from the City of Destruction some time after Christian, but soon passed him on the road because he never thought it necessary to linger, to ask for help or explanations in the House of the Interpreter, or worry about dangers in the way. He just plodded steadily on. Christian, who is the sort of excellent man who gets full value out of all obstacles, worries constantly and leaves nothing to chance; he is surprised to find how well Faithful has got on and says, "But what about the lions in the path?" Faithful said he had never noticed any lions, he thought they must have been having their after-dinner snooze. And when he got to the Valley of Humiliation, he *was* attacked by two temptations, one to shame and one to discontent, but made short work of both. After that he went all the way in the sunshine through the Valley of Humiliation and the terrible Valley of the Shadow of Death.

... Faithful is the least self-occupied of all the pilgrims... He is not thinking about saving his soul. He is thinking about God. And so he goes in the sunshine all the way. *Underhill, p. 88-9.*

### ***For Reflection***

#### *In Heaven Today*

*I am more in heaven than on earth,  
For I am the child that you gave birth.  
You made me possessing eternal life,  
Let me not lose it by sin or strife.*

*This is the world which dwells in you,  
Open my eyes to know this is true.  
All is enfolded, Lord, in your peace,  
Let me experience it and fears cease.*

*Help me to see that you, Lord, are here,  
Then brightness comes and daystars appear.  
Grant us to feel you are wit us now,  
Teach us in wonder before you to bow.*

*Everything created, you, lord, embrace.  
Help us to sense it in this very place.  
That we may know that whatever appear,  
You, Lord, are present and with us here.*

*Border Lands: the best of David Adam. London, SPCK, 1991. p.65.*

Other extracts are from *Lent with Evelyn Underhill* edited by GP Mellick Belshaw. London, Mowbray, 1964.