

## Sunday 'Spiritual Communion' in Ordinary Time

*You may wish to find a space for prayer in front of a cross, a candle, or a special place. The words in **bold** you are encouraged to say out loud as worship and prayer.*

### Opening Prayer

The Church of which we are members is not defined by the walls of a building but by the Body of Christ of which we are members.

**We are joining with Christians everywhere to be nourished by the one who tells us, 'I am the Bread of Life'.**

### Opening Sentences in the Season of Ordinary Time

To fulfill the ancient promise of salvation, O God,  
**you made a covenant with our ancestors  
and pledged them descendants more numerous than the stars.**  
Grant that all people may share in the blessings of your covenant,  
accomplished through the death and resurrection of your Son  
**and sealed by the gift of your Spirit.**



### Prayers of Preparation and Confession

**Almighty God to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen**

We exist in a complex web of relationships - links to nature, to people, to God.

Take a moment this morning to trace out these links,  
Giving thanks for the life that flows through them.  
Where some links are twisted or broken we may feel regret, anger, disappointment.

Let us pray for the gift of acceptance and forgiveness.

You may wish to pray:  
**Lord, have mercy.**  
**Christ, have mercy.**  
**Lord, have mercy.**



A reading from the Gospel Matthew 16:21-28 (A reflection is attached to the end of the service sheet)

### Intercessions

Let us pray for the needs of the world, for our local community, and for those close to you.

End with the Lord's Prayer.

### **Our Father...**

Through dreams and visions, O God,  
you broaden the horizon and hope of your people,  
that they may discover the meaning of your covenant,  
even in the midst of trial and exile.

Increase the number of those who believe in your word  
so that all people may joyfully respond to your call and share in your promises.

**O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,  
may I know you more clearly,  
love you more dearly,  
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.**

Holy One, hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards of the fragile bounty of this earth  
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven.

Life-giving God, heal our lives, that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds  
and offer you thanks from generation to generation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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### Blessing and Peace

May the Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,  
and keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**



The Peace of the Lord be always with you

## Reflection on Matthew 16 v 21-28

We have read the Gospel passage as part of this morning's service but I also want to refer to the Old Testament reading in the Church this morning which is the story of Moses and the burning bush (hence the image at the top of the prayer sheet). It is a story linked to the Gospel reading by the theme of inquisitive wondering!! Both I believe are stories of inquisitive wonder!

Consider Moses when he sees the strange sight. Rather than pass by he turns aside to look at the strange sight (the story is in Exodus 3 if you want to remind yourself of the events). His faith and devotion are displayed in an attitude of enquiry. He asks: What is happening here?; What does it mean?; What should I do? He is a person of questions and interest and wonder. It could be said that without such traits he would never have met with and heard from God.

I think this message is linked to the Gospel story because Peter took Jesus aside after the Lord had been talking about events to come and asks him .. Lord really? Are you sure? It doesn't sound right to me!! It seems he displays a similar attitude of question and wonder and quizzical interest as Moses. It would seem to me that these persons of faith had a deep sense of inquisitive wonder which wanted to probe and ask and reflect on the world and its events.

My question to you this morning is whether you nurture such a sense of intrigue and wonder in your own journey through this world? Or have you given up asking questions? Have time and circumstance led to a reticence to turn aside and see what is going on beyond your tunnel vision of your own narrow life? Are you prepared like Jesus says to give up focusing on what's going on in your own life and look at what God is doing? Have you got the peripheral vision of a person of faith who looks around and ahead and wonders what it's all about?

I have no doubt that the Church has been at fault to some degree in curbing the enthusiasm of Christians for asking questions and being inquisitive. We have developed a culture which conflates wonder with doubt and then views doubt as a bad thing. We could see Peter as a doubter when he asks Jesus 'is this really what is going to happen to you? Surely not!'. But perhaps the attitude was one of needing to understand and to fully engage with what was being said and done. So don't feel bad about wondering and enquiring of God and of the Church. When you see things in our world which don't make sense let us be ready to turn aside and stop and engage because we might find God within these strange events as Moses did. Let us, like Peter, question what we are being told about things. Let us have an opinion on what the Church says and about its role and its future and even be ready to say 'surely not!'.

We may face a reaction to our wonder. Like Moses we might feel we are told to 'take off our shoes as this is Holy Ground'. We may find ourselves drawn into a conversation which will be costly .. I wonder whether Moses ever found himself wishing he had never turned aside to see what was going on with that bush? We might like Peter be admonished for our views but in such interaction may find ourselves made stronger in faith and conviction and become more 'rock like' in our sense of self and of Divine acceptance. What seems clear is that inquisitive wonder is at the heart of faith and it is something we might need to recover in the Church going forward if we want to stay in relationship with God.