

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

Cast your burden upon the Lord and he will sustain you.

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Lord, in all times of fear and dread, grant that we may cast our burdens upon you,

Cast your burden upon the Lord and he will sustain you.

For you will bear us on the holy wings of the Spirit to the stronghold of your peace;

Cast your burden upon the Lord and he will sustain you.

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

Read Matthew 11:25-30 (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...

Father I know you care about all the concerns in my life.
Teach me to live in the knowledge that you who care for me today,
will care for me tomorrow and all the days of my life.

Keep us all, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen

**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.**

Lord of creation, whose glory is around and within us:
open our eyes to these wonders that we may serve you
and know your peace 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 11 v 25-30

In this morning's Bible reading we are told if we follow Jesus we will find 'rest'! Is that right? Is it right that we are restful as Christians? Does that ring true to you? If not perhaps we need to consider the passage in a little more detail. Perhaps we need to do this more with the Bible on the whole! Bible study after all is part of the Christians tradition but how many of us truly study the words we read? When we make cursory readings of the Bible we can become confused and indeed eventually dismiss things which do not fit with our experiences. So when we read 'come to me and I will give you rest' we can be conflicted between the teaching and our experience.

So let us consider the reading with a little more nuance. What Jesus actually says is 'I will give you rest .. rest for your souls'. The added detail that it is our 'souls' which will find rest is so important. For in the midst of the sometimes harrowing and often exhausting journey through the Christian pilgrimage we need to know Jesus understands. He does not say 'take a break' , 'have some rest' but rather 'let your soul be at peace'. What is important then is to ask what is our soul?

Jesus tells us elsewhere that the soul is the most important part of our entire life. He says in another Gospel.. 'what good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?' (Mark 8 v 36) And yet so often we pay no attention to our soul and give it no care or concern.

Allow yourself to picture your soul now coming into focus through the dust of your physical life. Take a moment and wonder to yourself 'what does my soul look like as it comes into view?'. Ask yourself if you had to paint a picture of your soul this morning .. what colours would you use? What shapes would you use? These are not rhetorical questions .. I invite you to actually do this exercise. The picture might not have human form or even any form .. artists paint the abstract, the impressionistic, the surreal .. paint your own picture of your soul in your minds eye but allow it to tell something of the story or your soul ... let it enable you to answer the question 'is your soul at rest this morning'?

Jesus says 'come to me you who are weary .. and you will find rest for your souls'. As we read that Bible passage now can we hear a subtle difference having paid heed to its subtleties .. having studied it more fully. It is a truth that the theologian Augustine of Hippo wrote about in his *Confessions* when he writes: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." Where he says the heart Augustine means the soul. And he understands that it is this restless soul that Jesus teaches will find rest in Him.

So as you have read the passage about rest this morning I invite you not to laugh off or dismiss the suggestion of rest out of hand. Instead try this exercise of painting yourself a picture of your soul. Decide what colours your life is reflecting into the world .. ask yourself how your soul is as it comes into focus ... that precious soul which is beyond price and which is eternal and not fleeting. This is what we are invited to attend to when we read today's Gospel passage. Is that soul heavy laden or burdened ... come to Jesus and find rest ... for your soul!