

## **Prayer for the Time of Coronavirus**

### *Introduction*

Is there a Christian way of facing the Covid-19 crisis? Yes, of course there is. I can think of at least four characteristics:

1. The first is the move from "I" to "we". This is a frightening situation that we face together. The common good – the good of us all – must be given first place. That is a very Christian, even a very Catholic virtue.
2. The second is an attitude of concern and compassion. Even if we must be isolated in our own homes or work places, modern communications allow to stay in touch in a way impossible before. This is a great benefit. But, we need to choose to stay in contact, perhaps with a greater frequency so that people don't feel abandoned.
3. The third is a respect for truth. In recent years, truth has suffered in public discourse, giving rise to a horrible expression, the post-truth era. In these days, we need to pay attention to science and medicine and less attention to opinion makers and rumours. A society without truth cannot last. Today, right now, we need truth more than ever before.
4. Lastly, as Christians, we can pray. We can pray in particular for scientists, medical personnel and politicians. These are wonderful people with a huge job of work before them. As we pray for ourselves and our families and friends, we pray too for all who look after the common good.

So, there is indeed a "spirituality" for these challenging days.

### **Prayer**

Almighty and all-loving God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we pray to you through Christ the Healer for those who suffer from the Coronavirus Covid-19 in Ireland and across the world.

We pray too for all who reach out to those who mourn the loss of each and every person who has died as a result of contracting the disease.

Give wisdom to policymakers, skill to healthcare professionals and researchers, comfort to everyone in distress and a sense of calm to us all in these days of uncertainty and distress.

This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord who showed compassion to the outcast, acceptance to the rejected and love to those to whom no love was shown. Amen.

*Archbishop Michael Jackson*

## **Psalm 4**

Ps 4:0 For the music director, to be accompanied by stringed instruments; a psalm of David.

- Ps 4:1           When I call out, answer me,  
                  O God who vindicates me.  
                  Though I am hemmed in, you will lead me into a wide, open place.  
                  Have mercy on me and respond to my prayer.
- 2           You men, how long will you try to turn my honour into shame?  
                  How long will you love what is worthless  
                  and search for what is deceptive?
- 3           Realise that the LORD shows the godly special favour;  
                  the LORD responds when I cry out to him.
- 4           Tremble with fear and do not sin.  
                  Meditate as you lie in bed, and repent of your ways.
- 5           Offer the prescribed sacrifices  
                  and trust in the LORD.
- 6           Many say, "Who can show us anything good?"  
                  Smile upon us, LORD!
- 7           You make me happier  
                  than those who have abundant grain and wine.
- 8           I will lie down and sleep peacefully,  
                  for you, LORD, make me safe and secure.

## **Psalm 91**

- Ps 91:1           As for you, the one who lives in the shelter of the Most High,  
                  and resides in the protective shadow of the Sovereign One –
- 2           I say this about the LORD, my shelter and my stronghold,  
                  my God in whom I trust–
- 3           he will certainly rescue you from the snare of the hunter  
                  and from the destructive plague.
- 4           He will shelter you with his wings;  
                  you will find safety under his wings.  
                  His faithfulness is like a shield or a protective wall.
- 5           You need not fear the terrors of the night,  
                  the arrow that flies by day,
- 6           the plague that stalks in the darkness,  
                  or the disease that ravages at noon.
- 7           Though a thousand may fall beside you,  
                  and a multitude on your right side,  
                  it will not reach you.
- 8           Certainly you will see it with your very own eyes–  
                  you will see the wicked paid back.
- 9           For you have taken refuge in the LORD,  
                  my shelter, the Most High.

- 10 No harm will overtake you;  
no illness will come near your home.
- 11 For he will order his angels  
to protect you in all you do.
- 12 They will lift you up in their hands,  
so you will not slip and fall on a stone.
- 13 You will subdue a lion and a snake;  
you will trample underfoot a young lion and a serpent.
- 14 The LORD says,  
"Because he is devoted to me, I will deliver him;  
I will protect him because he is loyal to me.
- 15 When he calls out to me, I will answer him.  
I will be with him when he is in trouble;  
I will rescue him and bring him honour.
- 16 I will satisfy him with long life,  
and will let him see my salvation."

### **Psalm 143**

Ps 143:0 A psalm of David.

- Ps 143:1 O LORD, hear my prayer.  
Pay attention to my plea for help.  
Because of your faithfulness and justice, answer me.
- 2 Do not sit in judgment on your servant,  
for no one alive is innocent before you.
- 3 Certainly my enemies chase me.  
They smash me into the ground.  
They force me to live in dark regions,  
like those who have been dead for ages.
- 4 My strength leaves me;  
I am absolutely shocked.
- 5 I recall the old days.  
I meditate on all you have done;  
I reflect on your accomplishments.
- 6 I spread my hands out to you in prayer;  
my soul thirsts for you in a parched land.
- 7 Answer me quickly, LORD.  
My strength is fading.  
Do not reject me,  
or I will join those descending into the grave.
- 8 May I hear about your loyal love in the morning,  
for I trust in you.  
Show me the way I should go,  
because I long for you.
- 9 Rescue me from my enemies, O LORD.

- I run to you for protection.
- 10 Teach me to do what pleases you,  
for you are my God.  
May your kind presence  
lead me into a level land.
- 11 O LORD, for the sake of your reputation, revive me.  
Because of your justice, rescue me from trouble.
- 12 As a demonstration of your loyal love, destroy my enemies.  
Annihilate all who threaten my life,  
for I am your servant.

### **St Patrick's Breastplate**

I arise today  
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,  
Through belief in the Threeness,  
Through confession of the Oneness  
of the Creator of creation.

I arise today  
Through the strength of Christ's birth with His baptism,  
Through the strength of His crucifixion with His burial,  
Through the strength of His resurrection with His ascension,  
Through the strength of His descent for the judgment of doom.

I arise today  
Through the strength of the love of cherubim,  
In the obedience of angels,  
In the service of archangels,  
In the hope of resurrection to meet with reward,  
In the prayers of patriarchs,  
In the predictions of prophets,  
In the preaching of apostles,  
In the faith of confessors,  
In the innocence of holy virgins,  
In the deeds of righteous men.

I arise today, through  
The strength of heaven,  
The light of the sun,  
The radiance of the moon,  
The splendor of fire,  
The speed of lightning,  
The swiftness of wind,  
The depth of the sea,  
The stability of the earth,  
The firmness of rock.

I arise today, through  
God's strength to pilot me,  
God's might to uphold me,  
God's wisdom to guide me,  
God's eye to look before me,  
God's ear to hear me,  
God's word to speak for me,  
God's hand to guard me,  
God's shield to protect me,  
God's host to save me  
From snares of devils,  
From temptation of vices,  
From everyone who shall wish me ill,  
afar and near.

I summon today  
All these powers between me and those evils,  
Against every cruel and merciless power  
that may oppose my body and soul,  
Against incantations of false prophets,  
Against black laws of pagandom,  
Against false laws of heretics,  
Against craft of idolatry,  
Against spells of witches and smiths and wizards,  
Against every knowledge that corrupts man's body and soul;  
Christ to shield me today  
Against poison, against burning,  
Against drowning, against wounding,  
So that there may come to me an abundance of reward.  
Christ with me,  
Christ before me,  
Christ behind me,  
Christ in me,  
Christ beneath me,  
Christ above me,  
Christ on my right,  
Christ on my left,  
Christ when I lie down,  
Christ when I sit down,  
Christ when I arise,  
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.

I arise today  
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,  
Through belief in the Threeness,  
Through confession of the Oneness  
of the Creator of creation.

## **Readings**

*The letter to the Philippians is especially useful in these days. St Paul was under house arrest, confined like ourselves. Epaphroditus brought him support from Philippi and then nearly died himself. Any one of these passages could give us courage in these days.*

But for now I have considered it necessary to send Epaphroditus to you. For he is my brother, coworker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to me in my need. Indeed, he greatly missed all of you and was distressed because you heard that he had been ill. In fact he became so ill that he nearly died. But God showed mercy to him—and not to him only, but also to me—so that I would not have grief on top of grief. Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you can rejoice and I can be free from anxiety. So welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, since it was because of the work of Christ that he almost died. He risked his life so that he could make up for your inability to serve me. (Philippians 2:25–30)

Not that I have already attained this—that is, I have not already been perfected—but I strive to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus also laid hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have attained this. Instead I am single-minded: Forgetting the things that are behind and reaching out for the things that are ahead, with this goal in mind, I strive toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let those of us who are “perfect” embrace this point of view. If you think otherwise, God will reveal to you the error of your ways. Nevertheless, let us live up to the standard that we have already attained. (Philippians 3:12–16)

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if something is excellent or praiseworthy, think about these things. And what you learned and received and heard and saw in me, do these things. And the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:8–9)

I have great joy in the Lord because now at last you have again expressed your concern for me. (Now I know you were concerned before but had no opportunity to do anything.) I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content in any circumstance. I have experienced times of need and times of abundance. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of contentment, whether I go satisfied or hungry, have plenty or nothing. I am able to do all things through the one who strengthens me. Nevertheless, you did well to share with me in my trouble. (Philippians 4:10–14)