

Intercessions, 21/02/2021 1st of Lent

Lord, as we enter the season of Lent, help us to focus on Christ your son who was tempted by evil and who chose the harder path that led to humiliation and death to save us from the evil that besets the world. As we reflect on and share this journey, encourage our faith and renew our commitment to Your way.

Lord, hear our prayer.

With joy, we give you thanks, Lord, for Martha's preaching and spiritual guidance, for Virginia's loving and steadfast support - and for David's inspiration, rejuvenating our worship and engaging with us both online and in person. Be close to all who find spiritual nurture here at St Mary's, when attending services in person and online, or visiting the church for a moment of private prayer: help them to know You through what they find here.

Lord, hear our prayer.

As our journey through Lent starts while we are still in lockdown, help us to use our experience of enforced separation from some of the activities we would normally be doing and many of the people we long to see in person, to identify - if only through a tiny glimpse - with the fear, hunger and loneliness You experienced in the wilderness. They are not the same, but we are now reminded how much we take for granted in 'normal' times and how much we have been so graciously given. Be close to those who are suffering most through the lockdown - people living in poor accommodation, those trapped in abusive relationships, young people whose education has been disrupted, families dependent on FoodBanks and those whose mental health is threatened by loneliness and fear.

Lord, hear our prayer.

As the Gospel of Mark reminds us today, You are the God of the wilderness, the wild, disruptive force for good that changes lives and challenges assumptions. Help us to respond to Your call and, in our turn, to challenge the things that are wrong in the world – to call out the selfish and greedy and the perpetrators of evil, wherever they dominate and oppress others and wherever they deplete the environment for corporate and personal profit. We pray that there will always be wilderness areas on the planet, where the natural world is unharmed and can survive, even despite the threats of climate change.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Bring courage and hope to all who suffer at this time – to those who are sick and those who mourn. We ask you to give them your strength; be close to them. In a moment of quiet, we pray for those known personally to us who are suffering at this time. *[Keep silence]*

Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord, as we reflect upon your unbounding love for us, and Your rejoicing when we turn again to you after we have lost our way, help us to see more clearly the path that leads our lives to follow you.

Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*