

ICONS OF GLORY

Prayers for Festivals and
Major Saints' Days

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About the author

David Adam was the Vicar of Lindisfarne, off the Northumbrian coast, for thirteen years until he retired in March 2003. His work involved ministering to thousands of pilgrims and other visitors. He is the author of many inspiring books on spirituality and prayer, and his Celtic writings have rekindled a keen interest in our Christian heritage. For details of all David Adam's books published by Kevin Mayhew, please see our website: www.kevinmayhew.com

Introduction

While on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, I was approached by a lady who told me how privileged I was. 'You are so fortunate to be surrounded by so many icons of glory. Not only Aidan, Cuthbert and the other saints, but the people who come as pilgrims, the birds, the flowers, the beauty: for all are icons of God.'

We appear too busy to allow glory to break into our lives. We are offered icon after icon of glory and yet we fail to see: it is as if our hearts are hardened and our eyes are blind. We do not create glory, it is all about us, and we need to open ourselves to it. God's world is full of his glory, he is ever present and within it (see Psalm 19:1-2). The world and all who live upon it are in the heart of God, and God is within the heart of every piece of his creation. If you have not experienced this, it is because you have not looked deep enough or long enough.

There is still more: 'God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them' (Genesis 1:27). We are the icon of God. On the computer screen, an icon serves to lead us to what is behind the icon, to what it represents. You may like to keep this in mind when you consider how we learn to approach the mystery of God: it is through the mystery of ourselves. When we discover that our own being, in all its fullness, is simply beyond our human understanding, we can begin to find within us – and to see in others – the mystery of God. This should fill us with awe but not arrogance. As icons, we cannot treat each other with disrespect or neglect; rather, we should celebrate the special nature each of us has individually been given, our 'otherness', which reflects the great 'other' who is God. If you fail to be yourself, a light goes out on the earth, a light that only you can give. You can certainly learn from others and thereby gain insights and expand your talents, but God does not want you to be a copy of another person. We each of us experience life in our own way and have our own story to tell, our own song to sing and our own love to share. The icon explains nothing away: it points you to greater depths, into mysteries and reveals glory to you. Icons are able to tell you more than words can say. It is only when we realise we are a deep mystery and capable of revealing glory that we begin to discover our true nature.

Intercession is a good way to share with God all that is in your heart, knowing it is already in his heart, so your heart and his heart are one,

you abide in him and he abides in you. Often, intercession is an opening of our heart to God and so getting a glimpse of glory. I believe that deep intercession begins in the heart. Go out from your prayers knowing that God is in your heart and in the hearts of all that you meet; return to your prayers with all that you have met and experienced in your heart to be joined to the heart of God. It is amazing how many situations are suddenly washed with a new brightness when we know that God is there and that God cares; intercession is a method of stopping and receiving icons of the hidden glory of God. Do remember that silence after any petition is important. Give people space to hold the prayer before God in love. Though I have offered a few ideas for each section, make them your own, and perhaps slim them down so that there is time for silence and being aware of God's love.

This book is to help you rise above the gloom and be open to the glory that is ever seeking to break through into your life. It is not a running away from reality but seeing that there is a greater depth to reality than we normally notice or feel. It is written for you to use at home or at church and so enrich your own prayers. The material for each saint's day or festival begins with a short introduction, and I would hope that you will find hints from the Bible readings to extend your own prayers.

The readings for each festival are from the Common Worship Lectionary as used by the Church of England, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Church in Wales, and other churches within the Anglican Communion. This is very close to the Common Lectionary of the Roman Catholic Church, and is used by other denominations. I have written an opening prayer or 'collect' that is a prayer to help us collect and centre our thoughts, a list of intercessions, an offering of the peace and the blessing. All this could be used for a short service in a house group or in your home. Remember intercessions do not belong to the priests and ministers alone, but are very much your sharing in the prayers of the Church. The intercessions follow the pattern of many books of prayer: we pray in turn for the Church, the world, our homes and loved ones, for the sick and the needy, and finally we remember the saints and the departed. If you add the readings from the Lectionary to the prayers, spending some time in quiet and meditation, it will transform your worship at home, in church, and it will transform you also. Use this book as a means of opening up to the presence of God. May God help you to see you are yourself an icon of glory.

JANUARY

1 JANUARY

The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus

This festival is on the eighth day of the life of the child born of the Virgin Mary, and it is celebrated for three reasons. The first is the parents of Jesus fulfilling the covenant that God made with Abraham and having their child circumcised. The second is the naming of their child 'Jesus': the name means 'Yahweh saves'. The third is to note that this is the first shedding of the blood of Jesus.

Readings

Numbers 6:22-27

Psalm 8

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:15-21

Opening prayer

Jesus, the only Son of the Father,

Our Lord and our God:

Jesus, we adore you.

Jesus, promised by the prophets,

Our Lord and our God:

Jesus, we adore you.

Jesus, proclaimed by the angels,

Our Lord and our God:

Jesus, we adore you.

Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary,

Our Lord and our God:

Jesus, we adore you.

Jesus, in your name we have life, and life eternal,

Our Lord and our God:

Jesus, we adore you.

Intercessions

Jesus, you are the Vine, we are the branches: may we know our common union with you, that you dwell in us and we dwell in you.

Jesus, empower us to go out in your name and bear fruit: may we tell of your presence and your love.

As you were poured out for others, may your Church give itself in the service of all.

We pray especially for your Church in [. . .]

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God:

hear our prayer.

Jesus, Bread of Life, broken for us, we remember all who work for little reward.

We pray for all who are hungry and without food, resources or help.

We ask your blessing upon all who have been uprooted from their homes by war or disaster.

We remember those who are rich in material things but poor in spirit.

We come with our inner hunger to be filled, refreshed and restored.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God:

hear our prayer.

Jesus, the Gate and protector of your sheep, we ask your blessing upon our homes and families, upon our neighbours and our friends.

We pray for all who act as guardians or foster parents and for all children's homes.

We remember all who look after our communities and our cities.

We pray for all who risk their lives caring for others.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God:

hear our prayer.

Jesus, Good Shepherd, seeking out and caring for the lost, we pray for all who feel confused and lost.

We remember those who are without any helper and all whose lives are in danger.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God:

hear our prayer.

Jesus, Light of the World, shining in the darkness, we remember all whose lives are darkened by pain, sorrow or distress.

We pray for all who seek to bring comfort and relief to those who suffer.

We remember friends and loved ones who are ill, especially [. . .]

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God:

hear our prayer.

Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life, in you are life, and life eternal.

You, Lord, are the hope of us all.

We remember before you our loved ones departed, and all your saints.

Merciful Father,

accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The peace

Jesus Christ is our Saviour; in his name are our hope and our peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Blessing

Go out in the mighty Name of the Father,

in the saving name of the Son,

in the powerful name of the Spirit:

and the blessing of God Almighty,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,

be upon you and remain with you always.

Amen.

25 JANUARY

The Conversion of St Paul

We celebrate the conversion of Saul, from being the persecutor of the Church to Paul the Apostle. This is related in the reading from Acts that is included in today's readings. There was the awareness of Jesus speaking to him, giving him the knowledge that to persecute the Church was to persecute its Lord. Paul would later tell of how we abide in the Lord and he in us. Then there was his temporary blindness and his healing. Though this was all of a sudden, his actual realisation of his call to proclaim Jesus to Jew and Gentile alike would take a while to develop. Yet he did act on the vision that he saw and so Saul became Paul.

Readings

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Psalm 67

Acts 9:1-22

Matthew 19:27-30

or

Acts 9:1-22

Psalm 67

Galatians 1:11-16a

Matthew 19:27-30

Opening prayer

Lord God, you call us into your light;
help us to be aware of you:
and to proclaim your love.

God, as we rejoice in your presence,
help us to be aware of you:
and to proclaim your love.

Open our eyes to behold you;
 help us to be aware of you:
and to proclaim your love.

Open our ears to your call;
 help us to be aware of you:
and to proclaim your love.

Open our whole being to your glory;
 help us to be aware of you:
and to proclaim your love.

Intercessions

Lord our God, as we celebrate the life and witness of St Paul, we thank you for all who have helped us to know you, for all who have revealed your love and saving power to us.

We ask your blessing upon those who translate and provide the Scriptures, upon preachers and evangelists and all who witness to your love by their lives.

We remember all who are being persecuted or mocked and scorned for their faith.

We pray for those who are struggling with their faith at this time.

We ask your blessing upon all who support people in times of darkness and doubt.

Good and gracious God:
grant us a glimpse of your glory.

Lord our God, we remember all places where there is hatred and violence, where people's rights are denied and their freedom restricted; all who suffer under law where there is no love.

We pray for all freedom workers, all who work for liberty, compassion and peace.

We ask your blessing upon all who work in the transport of people or of produce.

We pray for all who travel by land, sea or air.

Good and gracious God:
grant us a glimpse of your glory.

Lord our God, we pray that our homes may reflect your love,
that our relationships may show your peace,
and that our lives may reveal your presence.

Lord, in all our dealings, free us from narrowness of vision.
Keep us from hardness of heart and give us compassion towards all.
Good and gracious God:
grant us a glimpse of your glory.

Lord our God, we remember all who suffer from blindness.
We pray for opticians, eye hospitals and the work of The Royal National
Institute of Blind People, and for Sightsavers.
We remember all who are disabled in any way, especially any who
live alone.
We pray for friends and loved ones who are ill at this time, especially
[. . .]
Good and gracious God:
grant us a glimpse of your glory.

Lord our God, make us aware of your saving power and grant us a
vision of life eternal.
We pray for all our loved ones departed, especially today for [. . .]
Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The peace

The light of Christ shines in the darkness
and the darkness cannot overcome it.
The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

Blessing

The God of grace open your eyes to his presence
that you may live to his glory:
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always.
Amen.

FEBRUARY

2 FEBRUARY

Presentation in the Temple (Candlemas)

It is now 40 days since the birth of Jesus. Mary and Joseph took the child to the Temple in Jerusalem for the first time. As was required by Levitical law, Mary came to be 'cleansed' after the birth of a male child. Until that day Mary was not allowed to touch anything holy, or to enter a holy place. This is a common event in the Temple, yet it is transformed by two people. Simeon, a devout man, had a vision that he would not die until he had seen the Christ. He took Jesus in his arms and praised God that his eyes had seen God's salvation and declared Jesus as the 'Light to lighten the nations and for the glory of Israel'. The other person was Anna who was 84 years old. She also gave thanks, speaking about Jesus and redemption. It is the describing of Jesus as the Light that has made this day a celebration of Light conquering darkness.

Readings

Malachi 3:1-5

Psalm 24:1-6, 7-10

Hebrews 2:14-18

Luke 2:22-40

Opening prayer

Light of Christ:
shine upon us.

Lighten our eyes,
warm our hearts.

Light of Christ:
shine upon us.

Still our minds,
brighten our lives.

Light of Christ:
shine upon us.

Scatter the darkness
about us and within us.
Light of Christ:
shine upon us.

Intercessions

Lord God, as Jesus was brought into the Temple, may we know him in this place.

Bless our churches with an awareness of his presence.

Give us grace to show the light of Christ in our lives and to see his presence in each other.

We remember all who are being baptised or confirmed at this time, and all lives which are dedicated to God.

As Joseph and Mary brought the infant Jesus to the Temple, we pray that we may bring our young people to know and love you.

Jesus, light of the world:

fill our lives with your light.

As Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God, proclaiming Jesus as the light to the nations:

we remember all who walk in darkness of war and violence,
all who suffer through the dark deeds of others.

We pray for all oppressed peoples, for the homeless, the refugees and all unjustly imprisoned.

Jesus, light of the world:

fill our lives with your light.

As Anna awaited your coming and proclaimed you as the redeemer:
we pray for all who patiently wait for an awareness of you and your love.

We ask your light to shine in our homes and in all our dealings: that your presence may be known to be among us.

We remember especially today all who feel rejected or unwanted.

Jesus, light of the world:

fill our lives with your light.

We remember before you, Lord, all whose lives are clouded with fear or anxiety, all who are worried or troubled or distressed.

We pray for all who suffer from depression and those tempted to end their lives.

We ask your blessing upon all who are ill at this time. We pray especially for [. . .]

Jesus, light of the world,
fill our lives with your light.

We rejoice with all who have discovered the glorious liberty of the children of God.

We give thanks for the saints in light.

May our loved ones departed dwell in the fullness of light eternal.

We pray especially for [. . .]

Merciful Father,

accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The peace

Jesus is the Light of the World.

Let him fill your lives with his light and grant you peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Blessing

The light of Christ scatter the darkness from your hearts and minds;

the light of Christ shine in your hearts and homes;

the light of Christ guide you into the way of peace:

and the blessing of God Almighty,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,

be upon you and remain with you always.

Amen.

