

Ecclesiasticus 15: 16 – 21

Ecclesiasticus is one of the Wisdom books, written towards the end of the Old Testament period, when prophecy had come to an end. The word of the Lord came in collections of wise sayings to guide conduct, inspired by acute awareness that the Lord was the source of all wisdom. This collection of wisdom was brought together by a sage and experienced scribe of the Law at Jerusalem named Ben Sira. It was taken by the author's grandson to Alexandria in Egypt and translated into Greek for the Greek-speaking Jews there. Only recently have manuscripts been discovered containing most of the Hebrew original.

In this passage Ben Sira sets out the contrasting choices which face us, to which we can freely reach out our hands. It is one of the chief passages in the Bible stressing our own free will. Of our own volition we may turn to good or to ill. God calls for our love and response, but does not force us, for love must be a free act.

Prayer

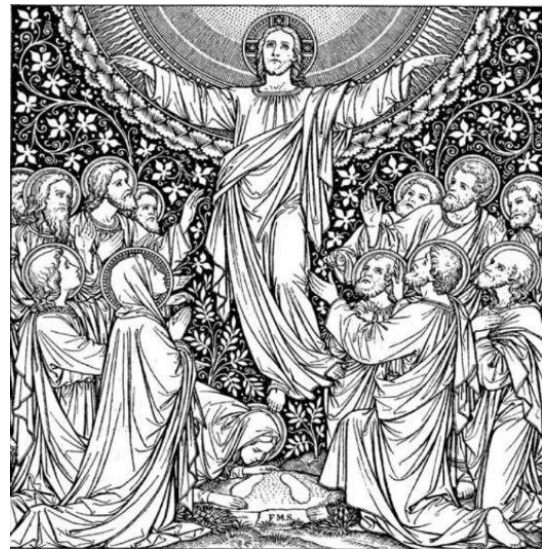
Prayer is the blood that runs round the veins of the body of the Church. As a work of the Spirit, it brings the body to life, it animates it. In prayer we seek to communicate with God – both speaking and listening.

The Lord's Prayer is the prayer which Jesus Himself taught us and instructed us to say. We would do well to repeat this often, at least daily.

The Mass is the prayer or offering of Jesus on the Cross, made present to us in our particular situation.

Both prayers remind us of the supreme importance of 'Thy will be done'.

Sunday 8th February 2026 **2nd Sunday before Lent /** **5th in Ordinary Time** **Gospel: Matt. 5: 13 – 16**



Jesus's message is very clear; He comes to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. By this he means that he is the result of thousands of years of revelation as revealed in all the books of the Old Testament. Jesus is the key that unlocks the fullest of meaning of everything written in the Prophets and the Psalms, He is the final chapter in all the books of history, He is the Wisdom which the books of Wisdom seek. When we say in the Nicene Creed 'on the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures' we are confessing the belief that the saving death and resurrection of Jesus was foreseen and recorded in the Old Testament. Jesus fulfils the Law and the Prophets because, as the Eternal Word of God, He is their origin and inspiration. We proclaim that Jesus is the light of the world.