

## Mid -Week Morning Prayers, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Good Morning and Welcome to this time of Prayer and reflection.

I wonder if you had taken particular notice of the weather on Wednesday? That was the day we remember St. Swithun, the Patron Saint of Winchester Cathedral.

Tradition has it, that on this day in 971, his remains were moved from their original resting place, outside of the building where, I quote "The feet of ordinary men could pass over him," and brought inside the Old Minster . A terrible storm broke out, apparently lasting for 40 days and nights. And that is where we still have the saying that if it rains on this 15<sup>th</sup> day of July it will rain for 40 days.

Whatever the weather our God is with us as we join together in prayer and hear His Word for us today.

*So let us pray.*

*Let us be still for a moment as we draw near to Him. A little while to remind ourselves that even though we are distanced, God is with us and will speak with us even through the background of the noise of the world around us.*

***Lord God, in this short time together, open our eyes to see your vision for us in this place; open our ears that we might hear your words and enable us to serve you to your praise and glory. Amen***

*So let us firstly make our confession and ask for and receive God's promised forgiveness.*

***Loving God, forgive us when we, too quickly, choose the easy and convenient path which suits our daily life. Increase our courage to step out beyond the comfortable and familiar spaces, where we feel safe, and follow you instead to unfamiliar places, where we can engage more fully with a world that you love enough to die for.***

*Forgive us for believing that in our own strength and by our own wisdom all things are possible and reveal to us instead what you would have us do and then equip us for that task.*

*May our God of love and power, forgive us and free us from our wrongs, heal and strengthen us by his Spirit and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. Amen*

*A reading from the book of Proverbs ch 3 vv1-8*

My Child, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for the length of days and years of life and abundant welfare they will give you. Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favour and good repute in the sight of God and of people. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, turn away from evil. It will be a healing for your flesh and a refreshment for your body.

*A word for today*

As with many saints and Holy men and women only a handful of truthful facts are known, but with each, many legends have grown in to so called truths.

So firstly some facts about St. Swithun.

He was born in Winchester around 800 ad. He became a counsellor to the saxon kings Egbert and Ethelwulf and was the Bishop of Winchester for the last 10 years of his life. He died at the age of 63 and was buried in front of the west door of the Old Minster at his request. The brick outlines of his resting place can still be seen , next to the Norman Cathedral. He rested here for over 100 years.

A new patron Saint was needed for the new community of Benedictine monks and it was decided that Swithun's bones were

exhumed and placed in a precious reliquary inside the building even though this was against his wishes.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, he was moved again with great ceremony into its new position behind the high altar where it stayed until 1450. This site became very popular for pilgrims seeking healing. A short tunnel called the Holy Hole allowed pilgrims to crawl right under this shrine as close as possible to the healing powers. It was so popular that yet another shrine was inaugurated at the far end of the building which became festooned with gifts of silver, gold and jewels by grateful pilgrims.

Many legends were spoken of; that he tutored the young Alfred the great; that he built the first stone bridge over the River Itchen at Winchester, and that he showed a simple act of kindness to an old woman who when crossing the bridge was jostled so much that she dropped her basket of eggs. He took pity on her, the story goes, and made her broken eggs whole.

Nothing today remains of his great shrine, but there is a modern memorial to mark the spot and we still have the original saying about the weather.

It would seem that even in his death his followers would not adhere to his wishes.

In our reading today we are given very clear instructions of how God wants us to live, to behave; and we say at the end; This is the Word of the Lord. Not a second hand message from a Holy man or woman, but the actual words of God. He calls us to write them on the tablet of our hearts, and bind them around our necks. In other words to carry them with and close to us always. Then we will be able to turn away from the things we know are wrong, we will be healed as we are forgiven and he will help us walk the straight paths rather than the convoluted way we often make for ourselves. We will be refreshed. Not just a body being moved from one place to another, but will feel the life giving love of God flowing through us and reaching all those

we come into contact with. We probably will not be given sainthoods, but will be held safe in God's love having shared his love with others.  
Amen

*The collect for St Swithun's day*

***Almighty God, by whose grace we celebrate again this feast of your servant Swithun; grant that, as he governed with gentleness the committed to his care, so we, rejoicing in our Christian inheritance, may always seek to build up your church in unity and love; through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen***

*Time for our prayers*

*Let us take a little time to notice how many good things surround us, be aware of how much we take for granted and how we have been blessed this week.*

*We pray for people and places in the news that have touched our hearts and hold them in God's love*

*We pray for our Church as it faces the challenges of today's world, asking for guidance and grace in finding answers to the problems set before us*

*We bring to God in quietness and trust all those known to us who are struggling today with mental or physical illness, those who carry heavy burdens of responsibility for themselves and others, especially the leaders of governments and nations.*

*We bring to our loving Heavenly Father those things that weigh heavily on our hearts that we hesitate to share with anyone else. Trusting that we will be heard, comforted and encouraged, accepting that God only wants the best outcome for these situations.*

*These are our prayers this morning. Take them and answer them in your time and your way and give us expectant and trustful hearts  
For Jesus' sake, Amen*

*The Lord's Prayer*

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen**

*We affirm our faith*

**I believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.**

**I believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith and fills us with his love.**

**I believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.**

**I believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

*Closing prayer and blessing*

*May this day be a blessing through the people we meet, conversations that take place, opportunities we embrace, challenges we overcome and your living presence be with us to strengthen and inspire.*

*And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and all those for whom we care, today and always. Amen*