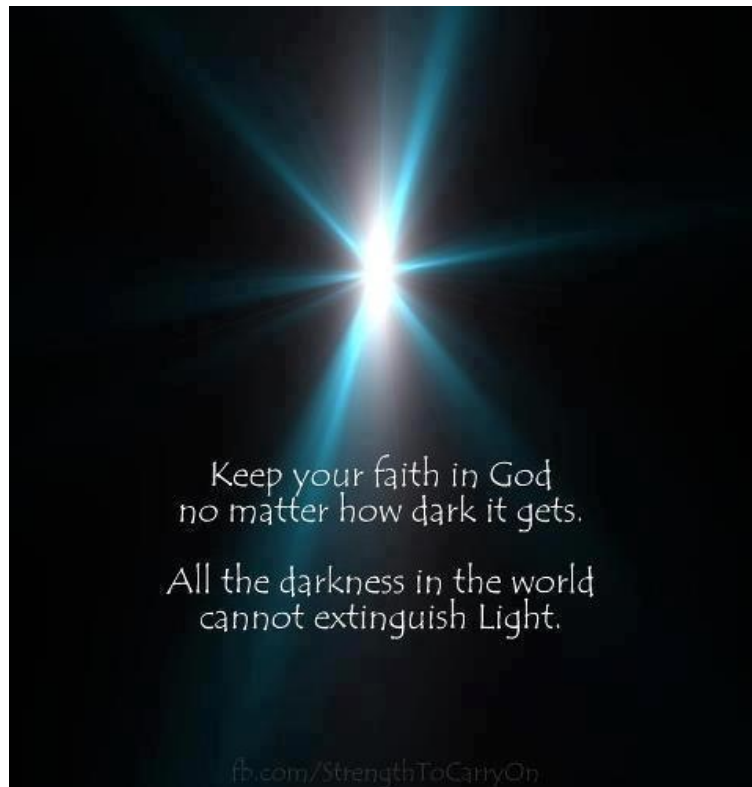


# Weekly Theme

**W/C 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2017**



**“A Light in the darkness”**

## **Matthew 4:12-23**

*When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. ...From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father mending nets. He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him. He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people.*

In this week's Gospel Jesus makes his appearance as a great light that has arisen in Galilee of the Gentiles. He is the light for a people who have lived in darkness and the shadow of death and oppression. He then calls four fishermen to follow him, to join him on his mission. They "immediately" leave their boat and their father and follow him.

At times we need to distance ourselves from material things and sometimes even revisit our values for the sake of the gospel.

This week Jesus is asking each one of us if we will turn our lives around and leave behind the darkness and whatever gets in the way and stops us from bringing the Good News of Jesus and his Kingdom of justice and peace into our world today.

**For the grace to "repent," turning from ourselves toward those in need,**

**Merciful God, hear us!**

**For the grace to respond to the call of discipleship, quickly and decisively,**

**Merciful God, hear us!**

**For the grace of healing to all who are ill and alone,**

**Merciful God, hear us!**

**Amen**

## **Friday, 27 January, 2017 is Holocaust Memorial Day**

This year's theme is "How can life go on?"

The aftermath of the Holocaust and of subsequent genocides continues to raise challenging questions for individuals, communities and nations. HMD 2017 asks people to think about what happens after genocide and of our own responsibilities in the wake of such a crime. This year's theme is broad and open ended, there are few known answers.

Author and survivor of the Holocaust Elie Wiesel has said:

*'For the survivor death is not the problem. Death was an everyday occurrence. We learned to live with Death. The problem is to adjust to life, to living. You must teach us about living.'*

This year HMD is asking people to consider how individuals and nations who have survived the horrors of genocide can begin to come to terms with the trauma and their past.

**Displacement and refugees:** Times of genocide are always times of acute social upheaval; tens of thousands, sometimes millions, of people are forced from or flee their homes. The question of how life can go on is bound up with where it goes on.

**Justice:** Some claim there is no such thing as justice after genocide. The theme will encourage thinking about what the concept of justice means and who gets to decide what form it takes.

**Rebuilding communities:** Genocide destroys and divides communities. The theme will challenge people to think about how communities can rebuild when whole sections are missing or when survivors and perpetrators live side-by-side

**Reconciliation and forgiveness:** Is true reconciliation and forgiveness possible or even desirable? The theme will explore attitudes towards forgiveness.

**Remembering:** The theme asks the questions: Why is remembering important to helping life go on? How do we remember when there is nobody left to tell the story?

**Facing hate - denial and trivialisation:** Denial is the final stage of genocide. The theme will call on everybody to fight denial and ask the question of how

life can go on after the Holocaust and genocide whilst denial and trivialisation exist.

**Facing hate - today:** Antisemitism and other forms of hate continue today. The theme will help people to consider individual, organisational, community and governmental responsibilities for protecting the rights of marginalised communities.

**Teach us about living:** Everyone will be asked the question: 'what can you do to help those who have survived genocide, as well as all those from persecuted groups ensure that life goes on?'

Form Tutor

The aim of this week's theme:

In this week's Gospel we hear Jesus calling the fisherman to give up everything that they have and follow him. Jesus is often described as "The Light of the World". He asks people to walk in his light. This week we also celebrate Holocaust Memorial Day. It is a reminder to each one of us of what can happen, when people turn away from the light of Jesus and walk towards the darkness and towards evil.

## **Day1**

### **Tutor**

Read the Scripture

### **Student Prayer**

Lord, help me not to be afraid to walk in your light today.

Amen

St John Plessington  
Pray for us

## **Day 2**

Think about: The society in which we live.

**Tutor:**

Sometimes it's easier, much easier to follow the crowd rather than standing up for what is right. Jesus called his first disciples to stand up and follow him. They did not know where their journey would take them. But they put their faith and trust in Jesus and followed him.

**Student prayer**

Lord, give me the faith that I need to follow you.

Amen

St John Plessington

Pray for us

**Day 3**

Think about: The world in which we live

**Tutor:**

Evil things happen when good people let them. We need to be on our guard against evil. Today we want to remember all those who suffer at the hands of those who are evil.

**Student Prayer**

Loving Father, lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil

Amen.

St John Plessington

Pray for us

**Day Four**

Think about our college community

**Tutor**

As a Christian community we should be a beacon of light shining in what can be a dark world. So just how will people recognise us as followers of Jesus?

## **Student Prayer**

Jesus, help me to be faithful to you today, in the things that I do and say.

Amen

St John Plessington  
Pray for us

## **Day Five**

Think about our families

### **Tutor**

Our families are so important to us, today we want you to think about families who have been separated or lost people that they love through war and violence.

## **Student Prayer**

Today loving Father, bring peace to each member of my family.

Amen.

St John Plessington  
Pray for us

## **Other prayers you may like to use.**

**Celebrate difference** *Holocaust survivor, Rabbi Hugo Gryn, wrote:*

“You can only be safe and secure in a society that practices tolerance, cherishes harmony and can celebrate difference.”

*Think about how you treat other people. Are there certain people that you consider to be ‘different’? Be honest with yourself - do you have any hidden prejudices? Reflect for a moment, and pray that you will be accepting of everyone, no matter what they look like, where they come from, or what they believe.*

## Having hope

*A reflection from Chief Rabbi Jonathan Saks*

One of the most important distinctions I have learned in the course of reflection on Jewish history is the difference between 'optimism' and 'hope'. Optimism is the belief that things will get better. Hope is the faith that, together, we can make things better... It takes a great deal of courage to have hope. Knowing what we do of our past, no Jew can be an optimist. But Jews have never – despite a history of sometimes awesome suffering – given up hope.

God who is unchanging and eternal,  
Keep before us the remembrance of the sufferings of humanity;  
May we not seek to forget;  
May we learn the lessons for the sake of our society today,  
And seek to lay the sure foundations of our future.  
As we remember the victims of the Holocaust,  
let their suffering inspire our desire to change our world.

Amen.

## I Believe

*Translated from the French by Hilda Schiff. Text from an unsigned inscription found on the wall of a cave in Cologne where Jews had been hiding.*

I Believe  
I believe in the sun though it is late in rising.  
I believe in love, though it is absent  
I believe in God though he is silent...

### **A prayer seeking forgiveness**

*From St George's Cathedral, Cape Town*

Lord we confess our day-to-day failure to be human:  
**Lord have mercy.**

Lord we confess that we often fail to love with all we have and are,  
often because we do not fully understand what loving means,  
often because we are afraid of risking ourselves:  
**Lord have mercy.**

Lord we confess that by silence and ill considered words  
we have built up walls of prejudice:

**Lord have mercy.**

Lord we confess that by selfishness and lack of sympathy  
we have stifled generosity and left little time for others:

**Lord have mercy.**

Holy Spirit, speak to us.

Help us to listen to your word of forgiveness, for we are very deaf.

Come fill this moment and free us from sin.

Lord, remember not only the men and women of goodwill, but also those of ill will. Do not remember all the sufferings they have inflicted upon us; remember the fruits we bear, thanks to this suffering – our comradeship, our loyalty, our humanity, courage, generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of all this. And when they come to judgement, let all the fruits that we have borne be their forgiveness.

*Prayers said on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the death of Anne Frank: Reproduced with kind permission of the Anne Frank Educational Trust and the Council of Christians and Jews*

God, you created us all in your own likeness.

We thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in your world.

Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellow feeling and understanding; show us your presence in those most different from us, so that in all our relationships,

both by what we have in common and by things in which we differ,

we may come to know you more fully in your creation;

for you are Father, Son and Holy Spirit forever.

Amen

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of life you gave  
and continue to give to all of us.

Merciful God, we ask your pardon and forgiveness

for our own failure and the failure of all people

to respect and foster all forms of life in our universe.

Gracious God, we pray that with your grace,

we will reverence, protect, and promote all life

and that we will be especially sensitive to the life of the unborn,

the abused, neglected, disabled, prisoners, sick and the elderly.

We pray, too, that all who make decisions about life



in any form will do so with wisdom, love, and courage.  
Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

How great is your name, O Lord our God, through all the earth!

When I see the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars  
which you arranged, what are we that you should keep us in mind, men and  
women that you care for us?

Yet you have made us little less than gods; and crowned us with glory and  
honour, gave us power over the works of your hands, put all things under our  
feet.

How great is your name, O Lord our God through all the earth!

(Psalm 8)

God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.

God of mercy and compassion,  
weave your dream for the world  
into the fabric of our lives.  
Remove the scales from our eyes  
and lift the indifference from our hearts,  
so that we may see your vision –  
a new reign of justice and compassion  
that will transform the earth.

Transform our lives, so that we may accomplish your purpose.

Anoint us with your Spirit  
that we might bring good news to the oppressed,  
bind up the broken hearted,  
and proclaim release to the captive.

Give us a new urgency  
and a new commitment  
to feed the hungry,  
clothe the naked,  
shelter the homeless,  
and visit those who live in isolation.  
Help us to reach out to those

whom no one else will touch,  
to accept the unacceptable,  
and to embrace the enemy.

Surround us with your love,  
fill us with your grace,  
and strengthen us for your service.

Empower us to respond to the call of Jesus –  
to deny ourselves,  
to take up our crosses,  
and to follow.

Make us your disciples.  
Amen.

Lord, when you walked on earth, you fed the hungry, you healed the sick,  
you blessed the poor and you called people to follow you. Lord, as your  
disciple on earth, open my eyes, my mind and my heart to those in need and  
help me share your gift of love with others, that they might follow you.

Amen

Lord, help me to love you, as you have always loved me  
help me to have faith in you, as you have faith in me  
help me to trust you, as you trust me  
and help me always to be aware of your awesome presence in my life.

Amen

Lord, we thank you for the opportunities that this new day offers:  
A day to begin afresh and renew our relationship with you;  
A day to share your love with others;  
A day to sing your praise with our whole being;  
A day to read your Word with fresh vision;  
And a day to grow ever closer to you.

Amen

As we come to you in prayer, Lord, we thank you that you are already  
waiting for us and as we delight in your presence, calm our busy minds, help  
us listen to your voice in the stillness and act on your prompting.

Amen

Lord, I pray that as I receive your blessings this day, I may be a blessing to  
others.

Amen

Today, may I be an instrument of your peace. Where there is discord may I sew seeds that bring the possibility of your harmony.

Amen

Lord, give me an opportunity to pass on your love to someone today and open my ears to listen, my eyes to see and my heart to love those I meet.

Amen