

PRAYER OF APPROACH, CONFESSION & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Eternal God,
You hear our prayers, you hear our cries.
Through your advocating Spirit, you listen and know.
This confirms your love for us, and we are grateful.
We want to worship; we sing your praise!

Life is not always easy, God,
but you make known that you have not abandoned us.
Your hand steadies us as we lean too close to fire,
or slip unexpectedly close to deep waters.
You are with us: everywhere and right beside us.
Remind us in times of difficulty to turn to you in trust,
Not away from you in despair and bitterness.

It is not enough to say that you see our pain;
You, Lord, who was betrayed,
who hung from a cross,
you *feel* our pain. You *know* our suffering.
Though we confess, Lord,
that there are times when this is tough for us to acknowledge.
Sometimes we have to look hard for you
and it can be difficult to trust that you are there
when so much tempts us to think otherwise.

These lives of faith we lead,
they can be challenging to accept when we are in pain,
when there is suffering that seems so unfair, so unjust.
Forgive us for those times when we have turned from your love
in favour of something that seems more present, more immediate.
Forgive our desire to choose anger, resentment, and bitterness
and remind us always that our faith is not set against a distant triumphant warrior,
but a crucified Saviour who knows only too well
what we are going through.

Transform us by your Spirit.
Thaw away our numbness;
Resurrect our faith;
Help us to hold in balance those feelings of suffering, of pain, of lament,
with our understanding of your love, your peace, and your joy.
Journey with us, we pray.
This we ask in the name of Jesus, our Risen and ever-present Saviour,
Who taught us to pray, saying,
Our Father . . .