

# Celtic Morning Prayer for 24<sup>th</sup> April

## - led by Steve Sheldon

In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

### **Hymn – Low in the grave he lay**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kowN2rxc0M>

Low in the grave He lay  
Jesus my Saviour;  
Waiting the coming day  
Jesus my Lord.

*Up from the grave He arose  
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes  
He arose a victor from the dark domain  
And He lives forever with His saints to reign  
He arose! He arose!  
Hallelujah! Christ arose!*

Vainly they watch His bed  
Jesus, my Saviour;  
Vainly they seal the dead  
Jesus my Lord.

*Up from the grave He arose...*

Death cannot keep his prey  
Jesus, my Saviour;  
He tore the bars away  
Jesus my Lord.

*Up from the grave He arose  
He arose a Victor from the dark domain  
And He lives forever with His saints to reign  
He arose! (He arose)  
He arose! (He arose)  
Hallelujah! Christ arose!*

Robert Lowry  
(1826 – 1899)

## ***Opening sentences***

**One thing I have asked of the Lord,  
this is what I seek:  
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life;  
to behold the beauty of the Lord  
and to seek Him in His temple.**

*Call:* Who is it that you seek?

*Response:* **We seek the Lord our God.**

*Call:* Do you seek Him with all your heart?

*Response:* **Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

*Call:* Do you seek Him with all your soul?

*Response:* **Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

*Call:* Do you seek Him with all your mind?

*Response:* **Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

*Call:* Do you seek Him with all your strength?

*Response:* **Amen. Christ, have mercy.**

## ***Declaration of faith***

**To whom shall we go?  
You have the words of eternal life,  
and we have believed and have come to know  
that You are the Holy One of God.**

**Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ,  
King of endless glory.**

## ***Collect***

Almighty Father,  
you have given your only Son to die for our sins  
and to rise again for our justification:  
grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness  
that we may always serve you  
in pureness of living and truth;  
through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

## ***Old Testament Reading***

### *Isaiah 53:3-15*

He was despised and rejected by others;  
a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;  
and as one from whom others hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him of no account.

Surely he has borne our infirmities  
and carried our diseases;  
yet we accounted him stricken,  
struck down by God, and afflicted.  
But he was wounded for our transgressions,  
crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,  
and by his bruises we are healed.  
All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have all turned to our own way,  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.

By a perversion of justice he was taken away.

Who could have imagined his future?

For he was cut off from the land of the living,  
stricken for the transgression of my people.

They made his grave with the wicked  
and his tomb with the rich,  
although he had done no violence,  
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain.

When you make his life an offering for sin,  
he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days;  
through him the will of the Lord shall prosper.

Out of his anguish he shall see light;

he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge.

The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous,  
and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great,

and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;

because he poured out himself to death,

and was numbered with the transgressors;

yet he bore the sin of many,

and made intercession for the transgressors.

### ***New Testament Reading***

*John 20:19-31*

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

***Hymn – The strife is o'er the battle done***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIXjJNbLgw8>

The strife is o'er, the battle done;  
now is the Victor's triumph won;  
O let the song of praise be sung.  
Alleluia!

Death's mightiest powers have done their worst,  
and Jesus hath his foes dispersed;  
let shouts of praise and joy outburst.  
Alleluia!

On the third morn he rose again  
glorious in majesty to reign;  
Oh, let us swell the joyful strain!  
Alleluia!

Lord, by the stripes which wounded thee.  
from death's dread sting thy servants free  
that we may live and sing to thee.  
Alleluia!

Francis Pott  
(1832-1909)

***Sermon***

So here we are once again in that lonely room with the disciples huddled in fear and confusion. Here we are once again with Thomas.

Thomas who was the first Christian to vocalise in public his doubts about Jesus, to speak aloud the difficulty he was having with faith in the resurrection. Not doubts in Jesus, whom he knew and loved, but he's dead; Thomas had doubts in the resurrection.

Having doubts, but none the less willing to struggle with those doubts, and wish that he could be a better believer. Thomas didn't run away, he kept faith with his friends.

Doubt is an important subject that can touch all of our lives. Few of us feel able to openly express our doubts like Thomas, we don't wear 'Doubter' tattooed on our foreheads. No matter how secure we are with our faith today, inevitably there will come a time when some tragedy in our life or in the world can shatter our faith like glass and doubts swallow us whole. The subject of doubting is always with us in the Church.

Some say that faith, belief, is a gift, gracefully given, and that we just have to accept it. And we sit around, and sit around, and wait for 'it' to happen, that magic moment of undiluted pure easy faith; that tingly glow of absolute certainty.

When 'it' doesn't come, that tingle, we sit around some more; and we get frustrated and we get impatient. We especially get impatient when we see others around us for whom 'faith' has been ever so easy and struggle-free.

Thomas wanted a miracle and so do we. And then we feel guilty or we feel broken and imperfect, we feel like failed believers, and our doubts swell up into enormous room-filling monsters.

Where's my miracle? Where's my proof? Bob Dylan once wrote, *'Many try to stop me, shake me up in my mind, saying "Prove to me that he is Lord, show me a sign." What kind of sign they need, when it all comes from within, when what's lost has been found, what's to Come has already been.'*

So what kind of sign **do** we need? Thomas got his sign; he got to physically touch the resurrected Christ. But before that touch came the simplicity of Jesus saying, 'Peace be with you.'

Sometimes we get the answers to all of our arguments and rationality only after we have let them go. We allow Jesus to enter our lives just as he entered that lonely room with the doors shut.

Faith is *sometimes* more than just wanting to believe, striving and struggling to believe. It is letting go and letting the reality of God enter into that space in our hearts that was made just for him.

Yeah, but how do we do that? Well, it's not like Thomas, just sitting around waiting.

If faith is a gift, it's still a gift that has to be unwrapped. You can't sit around with your Christmas present all wrapped up in paper and bows and ribbons and make use of it. You have to do something yourself if the Peace that Jesus bestows is going to find its way into your heart.

The Christian life is not passively waiting around for something to be done to you, but an **active response**, a response of love which we make to the living God whom we can encounter in the Church, in the Bible, in the Eucharist, in Creation, within ourselves and in other people. We can have life-transforming encounters with Jesus and the living God through our engagement with ordinary sinners like ourselves, encounters that can give us hope that God has us in his keeping. That's why Jesus lingered after his resurrection, to plant that assurance firmly in the hearts and minds of those who were going to have to continue with his teachings, so that those teachings can still reach us today 2000 years later.

These encounters which we can have with the World serve to assure us that Jesus is the way, the truth, the life, making us confident, certain, comfortable, and at peace with the Christian gospel. The more we seek out Jesus in the World, to see his presence wherever we may be, the closer we become and the more eager we are to respond with even greater love and devotion.

These encounters with Jesus in the World, in the Church, in Creation must be pursued. Thomas was lucky in that Jesus was still physically around at his great moment of doubt.

We have to open up a bit more and allow the presence of Jesus in the World to come to us through our Christian lifestyle. That's the unwrapping of the gift. It's a bit like training children too young to understand the importance of certain safety lessons, like looking

both ways and holding Mummy's hand before crossing the road. They learn to do things through habit and discipline.

Sometimes we just have to take our doubts out onto the road, carry them with us and be disciplined enough to carry on as though we believed. God didn't reject Thomas for his doubt; God honoured it with the gift of Jesus' presence. Thomas wasn't punished or scorned by Jesus, he was transformed.

God's loving grace means that he will, over time, honour our doubt with the faith that we might be pretending to have, and maybe give us an extra dollop for good measure. Think of a young child wanting to run about and do her own thing out in the streets, but trusts Mummy just enough to hold her hand and wait until it is safe. In the end she will grow to understand the need for safety on the street, and it will gradually be a normal part of her life.

Faith can be acquired in the same way, through trusting, going out on the street under proper guidance, going along with it until the time comes when it is a perfectly normal part of life, full of confidence and certainty. No magic 'boom' moment, just a gradual unwrapping of that gift.

Thomas wanted his own personal Jesus; he wanted his own special miracle, experienced first hand, not like anybody else's. Jesus says to us: Happy are you who have never seen or touched me, but have unwrapped the gift and found Faith within.

*Thank you Jesus for your patience with us; thank you for that steadfast enduring love that sustains us and carries us through times of doubt and darkness. Thank you for showing us the Father. Amen.*



## **Hymn – My God I love thee**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4132Stb2Zw>

My God, I love thee; not because  
I hope for heaven thereby,  
nor yet because who love thee not  
are lost eternally.

Thou, O Lord Jesus, thou didst me  
upon the cross embrace;  
for me didst bear the nails and spear,  
and manifold disgrace,

And griefs and torments numberless,  
and sweat of agony;  
yea, death itself; and all for me  
who was thine enemy.

Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,  
should I not love thee well,  
not for the sake of winning heaven,  
nor of escaping hell;

Not with the hope of gaining aught,  
not seeking a reward;  
but as thyself hast loved me,  
O ever loving Lord!

So would I love thee, dearest Lord,  
and in thy praise will sing,  
solely because thou art my God  
and my most loving King.

Edward Caswell  
(1814 – 1878)

## ***Intercessions***

## *The Lord's Prayer*

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

## *Canticle*

Christ, as a light  
illumine and guide me.  
Christ, as a shield  
overshadow me.  
Christ under me;  
Christ over me;  
Christ beside me  
on my left and my right.  
This day be within and without me,  
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.  
Be in the heart of each to whom I speak;  
in the mouth of each who speaks unto me.  
This day be within and without me,  
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.  
Christ as a light;  
Christ as a shield;  
Christ beside me  
on my left and my right.

## **Hymn – From Heaven you came**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHYFFQJNa\\_I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHYFFQJNa_I)

From heaven you came, helpless babe,  
Entered our world, your glory veiled;  
Not to be served but to serve,  
And give your life that we might live.

*This is our God, the Servant King,  
He calls us now to follow him,  
To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship to the Servant King.*

There in the garden of tears,  
My heavy load he chose to bear;  
His heart with sorrow was torn,  
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.

*This is our God, the Servant King,*

Come, see his hands and his feet,  
The scars that speak of sacrifice,  
Hands that flung stars into space  
To cruel nails surrendered.

*This is our God, the Servant King,*

So let us learn how to serve,  
And in our lives enthrone him;  
Each other's needs to prefer,  
For it is Christ we're serving.

*This is our God, the Servant King.*

Graham Kendrick  
(b1950)

## ***Blessing***

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,  
wherever He may send you.**

**May He guide you through the wilderness,  
protect you through the storm.**

**May He bring you home rejoicing  
at the wonders He has shown you.**

**May He bring you home rejoicing  
once again into our doors.**

*Taken from Morning Prayer, from Northumbria Community's Celtic  
Daily Prayer, published by Collins.*

<https://www.northumbriacommunity.org/offices/morning-prayer/>

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