

## Intercessions September 19<sup>th</sup>

The theme of today's prayers has arisen from my own personal recent thought processes which, in turn, have been generated by the pandemic and the way in which it has brought our faith into sharp focus, together with often very challenging questions about it. We live in a changing, challenging world where old certainties are being shaken and many, many people are suffering from confusion and a sense of loss as they try to make sense of it all and find security. My prayers try to look at aspects of this theme at all levels, ranging from the personal to the worldwide. The response is based on our reading from James 4.

*May we seek God, holding firm to the promise,  
**when we come near to God He will come near to us.***

We bring before you, Lord, ourselves and our questions about the huge, world-changing events that have fundamentally shaken our understanding of life – most obviously, but not exclusively, 9.11 and the Covid pandemic – and also the less publicised but equally traumatic ongoing situations of war, famine and persecution, both political and religious. We cry out to You, where are You and what are You doing in all this? Such questions are asked around the world, by believers and non-believers alike. We pray for all those beset by doubt and fear who do not know where to put their trust. We pray for a strengthening of our own belief.

*May we seek God, holding firm to the promise,  
**when we come near to God He will come near to us.***

We pray for all those seeking faith, that You, Lord, will guide and encourage them in their quest; and for those who have lost faith for whatever reason, that You will bring healing and comfort into empty and disillusioned hearts. We pray for those whose search has led them to destructive places – to addictions and false ideologies – that You will reveal yourself to them as the true source of life.

*May we seek God, holding firm to the promise,  
**when we come near to God He will come near to us.***

Lord, we ask that Your loving presence may be felt by all those suffering loss, not only of faith but of family and friends who gave life warmth and meaning, through death or other separation. We think here of individuals known to us in our own families and community. We think also of those whose bereavement is compounded by the loss of home and country; of asylum seekers risking life and limb to find a better future, often at the mercy of criminals; and of the people of Afghanistan as they endure unbelievable trauma and upheaval. We remember too those many people who have lost peace of mind through mental ill health and all those whose hopes and dreams have been dashed by the cruelties of life.

*May we seek God, holding firm to the promise,  
**when we come near to God He will come near to us.***

Lord, we bring before You the governments of the world, seeking to navigate their way through new circumstances such as the pandemic and climate change without the guidance of precedent. We pray for integrity, and concern for the best interests of the populations they serve; for cleansing of self-interest and corruption wherever it may exist; and, above all, for recognition that the solution of the world's problems is beyond the ability of human beings in their own strength and that this will lead to a willingness to seek Your guidance.

*May we seek God, holding firm to the promise,  
**when we come near to God He will come near to us.***

Finally, we pray for the future of Your church, thanking You for those countries where Christianity is growing, notably Iran, Afghanistan and amongst an increasing number of the Jewish population (source: Prophecy Today magazine), but asking for Your guidance for the Western world where Christianity is increasingly seen as an outmoded, older person's faith, irrelevant to the needs of the contemporary world, and where, perhaps, the traditions of the past and even church buildings themselves may be hampering the spreading of the Gospel and the radical change that is, perhaps, needed to meet the needs of the present day.

*May we seek God, holding firm to the promise,  
**when we come near to God He will come near to us.***

These words are easy to say but hard to carry out! Lord, help us to encourage one another and grow in faith together through honest and open discussion of our fears and doubts in the full knowledge that You will never leave us or forsake us, even when it may not feel that way. We ask this in Your most precious Name. Amen