

Sunday 21st September 2025 Trinity 14. Benefice Holy Communion Ampleforth.

“I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for everyone”, says St Paul in his letter today.

The news this week has highlighted probably our most significant leaders. The King and Royal Family and the state visit by President Trump. There has been much written in the media speculating about how they all actually get on, if at all! In such public view these leaders have to be seen to at least be polite to one another, but we can only guess beyond that.

It is a bit easier for us of course who live our lives not quite as publicly. We can voice our opinions and thoughts in the privacy of our homes to our families, and it may not go further than that, but what should we be doing regarding our leaders, people in positions of authority who carry out their roles under the constant public spotlight, for good or ill? It is often easier to criticize rather than praise? What else can we do?

In the reading we heard from 1 Timothy, St Paul tells us to pray for those in authority. Generally, however, we still default to complaining or criticizing people in authority because that is easy, rather than pray for them. These prayers should include requests for the peaceable and wise rule by our leaders, and their welfare.

‘The Book of Common Prayer’ and ‘Common Worship’ contain and recommend prayers to be said for the Royal Family, the Government, and world leaders,

Furthermore, St Paul tells us in today’s reading we should pray for everyone, even those who seem unreachable. Scripture clearly states that God wants everyone to be saved; there are no exceptions. No-one is beyond God’s saving love, because salvation is available because of the one person who was both man and God and who could represent humanity and reconcile humanity to God. Jesus Christ served, and continues to serve, as a mediator between these two otherwise irreconcilable parties. What we are called to do is to pray.

St Paul

tells us to ‘pray without ceasing’, to come to God on behalf of all people from kings and leaders to who those have no standing.

Prayer then, is more than just a religious duty; it is an ongoing and intimate conversation with our Creator. Prayer not only helps us surrender our worries and issues to God but invites His peace into our hearts and lives.

My mentor and inspiration to priesthood, the late Rev Tom Willis always used to make a comment when something entirely unexpected occurred, or something that changed a situation for the good such as an unexpected improvement in someone's health or welfare. He would say simply, "Someone has been praying about this!"

There are some who say that we don't just say prayer, *we are* prayer. Things do not happen in this world *because* we decide to pray, they happen *when* we pray, because when we pray, God *acts*. We and the world are then changed as we discover that the deepest desires of our hearts become God's and the world is changed in some way because of God's action. When we pray, God acts, even when we don't particularly feel like praying. In fact, to pray in those moments are probably the best times to pray.

Julian of Norwich said, "*Pray, even if you feel nothing, see nothing. For when you are dry, empty, sick, or weak, at such a time is your prayer most pleasing to God, even though you may find little joy in it. This is true of all believing prayer.*"

Martin Luther said, "*To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.*"

Prayer should be like our very breath. As we breathe, we pray; sometimes articulated consciously through, word or tear, sometimes unconsciously from our deep selves where words are not needed but how ever we pray, those prayers are always directed to God and He always, always, acts.

Thanks be to God. Amen.