

REMEMBERING, REFLECTING, RESPONDING

A SUGGESTED 60 MINUTE PRAYER GUIDE

Below you will find a centring prayer, scripture, story, poetry, a guided Examen and a blessing. Use what you want at your own pace, or follow the suggested timings. You may need a pen, notebook, Bible and a device with an internet connection.

INTRO

We join with Churches Together in Britain & Ireland to mark Racial Justice Sunday, 14th Feb 2021, and to recognise these steps on the journey to racial justice:

- Using story to **remember** the importance of racial justice.
- Using poetry to **reflect** on human diversity and thank God for it.
- Using Examen to **respond** by working to end injustice, racism and ignorance through prayer and action.

May you meet with your maker, as you remember, reflect and respond.

CENTRING & SILENCE [3 min]

Get into a comfortable posture and pray,

'As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still, slow my breathing, and centre myself in the abiding presence of Christ'

Bring your attention to your breath. Treat each breath in as an arrival. Breathe in God's presence. As you breath out, imagine letting go of future worries and responsibilities to God. Become present.

Spend 3 minutes in silence. Breathe deeply.

OPENING SCRIPTURES [2 min]

Read slowly, aloud or in your head. You may like to read these several times.

"So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" - Genesis 1:27 [NRSV]

“Starting from scratch, he [God] made the entire human race and made the earth hospitable, with plenty of time and space for living so we could seek after God, and not just grope around in the dark but actually find him... We live and move in him” – Acts 17:26-28 [MSG]

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” – Galatians 3:28 [NIV]

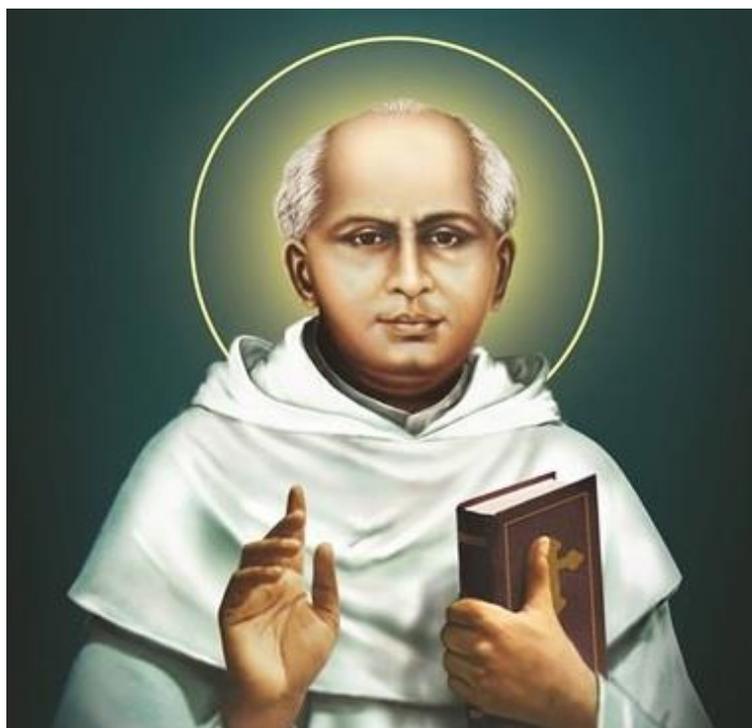
“After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands” - Revelation 7:9-10 [NRSV]

// STEP ONE. REMEMBERING

ST KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA (1805-71)

His feast day is celebrated on the 18th February.

Born in Kianakary, India, Chavara’s ministry was marked by contemplation, mysticism and poetry which all informed his outward struggle for justice and unity. Chavara co-founded the first congregations for indigenous men and women, especially encouraging the women within these congregations to develop their ministry by offering education. As Tricia Hillas writes: ‘a man of steely courage and divine understanding, Chavara’s contemplative practise enabled him to envision new possibilities for the common good.’



Had Time and Space for Everyone

St. Chavara had space in his heart for everyone - for the rich, for the poor, for the downtrodden and for the members of other caste and religion. He had space in his heart even for those who tried to harass him. This is well illustrated in his last testament. There was a man called Mathen who unjustly appropriated the land of Mannanam monastery and filed cases against St. Chavara in the court. In spite of all the troubles this man created, St. Chavara still loved him, and in his last testament instructed the members of his religious community to do all good to him.

- via blogpost > <https://www.indiancatholicmatters.org/st-chavara-an-indian-saint-who-was-ahead-of-his-time>

QUOTES, QUESTIONS & JOURNAL [10 min]

Chavara's prayer life inspired him to constantly change and challenge the church where it excluded and denied people the right to, fully flourish in faith. Use the questions as a prompt to journal, scribble, draw, and list or daydream...

Do we see our prayer as having the ability to change and refine us in the way that we live our lives?

I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us, and we change things – Mother Teresa

Do we see prayer as a conversation with God, which has the potential to transform?

// STEP TWO. REFLECTING

WATCH. LISTEN. READ [10 min]

Follow the links below to watch, listen to, or read 'The Hill We Climb'. A poem written by Amanda Gorman and recited by her at the inauguration of Joe Biden on January 20, 2021.

Watch / Listen > <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ055illiN4>

Read > <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/20/amanda-gorman-poem-biden-inauguration-transcript>

Read > There is a transcript of 'The Hill We Climb' at the end of this document

PRAYER-POEM (OR PICTURE) [10 min]

As you watched, listened to or read this poem, what words jumped out at you? What lines resonated? What phrases challenged you? Revisit the poem and scribble them down.

Use these words and phrases to fashion a short prayer, thanking God for human diversity. Permission to play and use 'poetic license'. Your prayer-poem does not have to make sense or be grammatically correct. God hears you.

Alternatively, draw a 'prayer-picture', make a list or sit silently with these prophetic words.

// STEP THREE. RESPONDING

PRAYER OF EXAMEN [15 min]

The prayer of Examen is a spiritual practice created by priest and theologian St Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century. It is a prayer of thankful reflection.

In the Examen, there is an invitation to take an imaginative walk through your recent past with God. The opportunity to notice and name God's presence in both joyful and difficult moments. The space to ask God to help you resolve how to live well in the future.

Here are some simple steps to lead you through the practice of Examen [Times are only suggestions. Please take as little or as long as you need during each step]:

STEP ONE: RELISH [2 min]

Take a moment to find a comfortable position. Bring your attention back to your breath. Treat each breath in as an arrival. Breathe in God's presence. As you breath out, imagine letting go of future worries and responsibilities to God.

When you are ready, begin to give God thanks for the diversity that you see in your own life and the blessings that that brings.

STEP TWO: REQUEST [1 min]

Ask God to lead you through this practice.

You may like to use this prayer; *'God, I ask you to lead me through this practice. May I begin to see things through Your loving eyes'*.

Spend a minute in silence.

STEP THREE: REVIEW PART ONE [3 min]

Looking back, can you remember a time that human diversity was particularly pertinent for you? Take a few moments to relive this situation in your mind.

In this situation, was diversity flourishing or lacking? Speak with God about what you remember. What happened? Who was there? What were you feeling in this situation? What was the outcome? Imagine yourself and God watching this moment together side by side.

STEP FOUR: REVIEW PART TWO [3 min]

Reflecting on your experience of 'step three'. Ask, "Did it feel free or unfree?"

Ask, "Was I being led by fear, desire for control, and entitlement, or by love, hope and humility? Did I make space for another's voice to be heard? Did I relinquish control for the sake of others? Was space made for me?"

STEP FIVE: REPENT [3 min]

Speak to God about what you see. Acknowledge any discomfort you may be feeling. Lean into the difficult emotions and missed opportunities, and ask for God's forgiveness or healing.

STEP SIX: RESOLVE [3 min]

Noticing and naming your deepest emotions, what is God saying? How is God asking you to reimagine your responses to diversity? How can your actions lead to others' freedom and flourishing?

You may like to write down your responses or journal your reimagining. You may like to share your reflections or commitment to action with a trusted friend.

Thank God for being present in this practice.

Blessing [5 min]

Spend a few minutes in silence. Then pray this blessing,

Generous God,

We give thanks to you for the example of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara,
whose intimacy with you, gave rise to compassion for those longing for freedom.

As we continue to work for racial justice,

May we sense you, in our rage, hurt and despair.

May we see your glory, breaking through injustice.

And may prayer and action sustain our hope and lead to the renewing of your church.

Amen

We would love your feedback on these prayer resources. Please go to <https://us19.list-manage.com/survey?u=cbd6384064124b364f971d785&id=86cdc9720a> to complete a two-minute survey.

'The Hill We Climb', Amanda Gorman.

When day comes, we ask ourselves, where can we find light in this never-ending shade?
The loss we carry. A sea we must wade.
We braved the belly of the beast.
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace, and the norms and notions of what "just" is
isn't always justice.
And yet the dawn is ours before we knew it.
Somehow we do it.
Somehow we weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken, but simply unfinished.
We, the successors of a country and a time where a skinny Black girl descended from slaves
and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president, only to find herself reciting
for one.
And, yes, we are far from polished, far from pristine, but that doesn't mean we are striving
to form a union that is perfect.
We are striving to forge our union with purpose.
To compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and conditions of man.
And so we lift our gaze, not to what stands between us, but what stands before us.
We close the divide because we know to put our future first, we must first put our
differences aside.
We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another.
We seek harm to none and harmony for all.
Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true.
That even as we grieved, we grew.
That even as we hurt, we hoped.
That even as we tired, we tried.
That we'll forever be tied together, victorious.
Not because we will never again know defeat, but because we will never again sow division.
Scripture tells us to envision that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree, and no
one shall make them afraid.
If we're to live up to our own time, then victory won't lie in the blade, but in all the bridges
we've made.
That is the promise to glade, the hill we climb, if only we dare.
It's because being American is more than a pride we inherit.
It's the past we step into and how we repair it.
We've seen a force that would shatter our nation, rather than share it.
Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy.
And this effort very nearly succeeded.
But while democracy can be periodically delayed, it can never be permanently defeated.
In this truth, in this faith we trust, for while we have our eyes on the future, history has its
eyes on us.
This is the era of just redemption.
We feared at its inception.
We did not feel prepared to be the heirs of such a terrifying hour.
But within it we found the power to author a new chapter, to offer hope and laughter to
ourselves.

So, while once we asked, how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe, now we assert, how could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?
We will not march back to what was, but move to what shall be: a country that is bruised but whole, benevolent but bold, fierce and free.
We will not be turned around or interrupted by intimidation because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation, become the future.
Our blunders become their burdens.
But one thing is certain.
If we merge mercy with might, and might with right, then love becomes our legacy and change our children's birthright.
So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left.
Every breath from my bronze-pounded chest, we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one.
We will rise from the golden hills of the West.
We will rise from the windswept Northeast where our forefathers first realized revolution.
We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the Midwestern states.
We will rise from the sun-baked South.
We will rebuild, reconcile, and recover.
And every known nook of our nation and every corner called our country, our people diverse and beautiful, will emerge battered and beautiful.
When day comes, we step out of the shade of flame and unafraid.
The new dawn balloons as we free it.
For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it.