

## Evening Prayer at St Faith's

Evening is a time which has definitively changed its meaning in our culture.

It used to be a time of running-down and stopping, the time when the sun's last rays dominated the human scene. Because of their very diminishing, they drew our eyes to the west and the heavens. Because of the hard labour of our lives we accepted gratefully the invitation to rest.

We may think that life which is busy, vigorous, open, and powerful is what sets the tone of the world. But in the evening, it is a dying light which puts the waking, working world into new perspective, and draws us to think of what remains when we can no longer work, or make things, or travel. In case we are tempted to defer such thoughts to the uncertain arrival of old age, the solar system and our bodily reality unite to give us, every evening, a little experience of death.

But we have learned how to avoid this experience. By turning night into day, we have turned our backs on this reflective moment, frantically prolonging our freedom to act and work until we drop, as if that were our only value. When we do finally "call it a day", it is not in obedience to any natural rhythm, but in surrender to our incapacity to turn the treadmill any more. It is in this spirit that we have called from the darkness of unbeing revolting realities like the alarm clock, which robs us of repose at the other end of night, and of creative readiness for a new dawn.

The Church prays in order to consecrate time to God, and because the Church is always at prayer, all time is his. We come this evening to give our time to God, and to see what he will do with it. So let us begin by taking our hands off our minds and hearts, and letting them open to the living Presence of Christ, who is wherever we gather in his name.

### Reading 1

*Genesis 1:14-19*

God said, Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to divide day from night, and let them indicate festivals, days, and years. Let them be lights in the vault of heaven to shine on the earth.

God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, the smaller light to govern the night, and the stars. God set them in the vault of heaven to shine upon the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to divide light from darkness.

God saw that it was good. Evening came and morning came, the fourth day.

This is the Word of the Lord.

*Response: Thanks be to God*

## **Psalm 89**

**O Lord, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
before the mountains were born, or the earth or the world brought forth,  
you are God, without beginning or end.**

**You turn us back into dust,  
and say: Go back, sons of men;  
to your eyes a thousand years are like yesterday come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**

**You sweep us away like a dream,  
like grass which springs up in the morning;  
in the morning it springs up and flowers,  
by evening it withers and fades.**

**So we are destroyed in your anger,  
struck with terror in your fury;  
our guilt lies open before you,  
our secrets in the light of your face.**

**All our days pass away in your anger,  
our life is over like a sigh;  
our span is seventy years,  
or eighty for those who are strong.**

**And most of these are emptiness and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone;  
who understands the power of your anger,  
and fears the strength of your fury?**

**Make us know the shortness of our life,  
that we may gain wisdom of heart;  
Lord, relent! Is your anger for ever?  
Show pity to your servants.**

**In the morning fill us with your love;  
we shall exult and rejoice all our days.  
Give us joy to balance our affliction,  
for the years when we knew misfortune.**

**Show forth your work to your servants,  
Let your glory shine on your children.  
Let the favour of the Lord be upon us,  
give success to the work of our hands.**

## Reading 2

*Ephesians 5:8*

You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord. Behave as children of the light, for the effects of the light are seen in complete goodness, and uprightness, and truth. Try to discover what the Lord wants of you; take no part in the futile works of darkness but, on the contrary, show them up for what they are. The things that are done in secret are shameful even to speak of. But anything shown up by the light will be illuminated; and anything illuminated turns into a light. That is why it is said: *Awake, sleeper: rise from the dead: and Christ will shine on you.*

This is the Word of the Lord.

*Response: Thanks be to God*

## Hymn Christ, Be Our Light

### Intercessions

Let us pray to Christ, who shines in our darkness, and who rises as the morning-star of the new and eternal Day.

Father, by your grace we live in a world of light and darkness, with a power of choice to use.

*Response: Fill us with your wisdom, and make us bearers of your light to the world.*

Let us pray for all who suffer the appalling acts of terrorism.

*Response: Give us a share of your tender love for all your children.*

Let us pray for those whose lives are in the power of darkness.

*Response: Be our Shepherd, and carry us home to live in the Light.*

We remember those who are sick or afraid, alone or unloved tonight.

*Response: Lighten their way through the dark, until the morning comes.*

We remember the faithful departed, and those whose faith is known to God alone.

*Response: May they rest in your peace, and rise in your glory.*

We pray to our Father in the confident words of the Son: **Our Father....**

May the Lord support us all the day long,  
until the evening comes,  
and the busy world is hushed,  
and the fever of life is over,  
and our work is done.

Then in his mercy may he give us  
a safe lodging,  
and a holy rest,  
and peace at the last.

**Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.

*Response: Thanks be to God.*