

Prayers June 21

Dear God,  
Thank you for being here among us.

Through today's Gospel of Matthew you have told us that the disciples were asked to go out into the world and spread the teachings of Christ. You have told us that they faced a daunting task and were going to have to bear the cross of persecution and disbelief. You said that they might lose their lives but would retain their souls.

Today, Lord, although, as Christians, you're not sending us out into the world to convert our neighbours, please show us how you expect us to become worthy examples of your teachings. Please help us to think of others' needs before our own. Please help us to be more thoughtful, to be more patient and loving. Please let us recognize that we are blessed in that we don't have to bear the trials of those early Christians in order to sit in these pews this morning.

Please help us to carry out what you ask us to do in today's world, and that is to love you with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and our neighbours as ourselves. This is not an easy thing to do either. But this is what we've come to expect as our responsibility in being Christian. We don't have to convert our neighbours, we just have to love them. That, sometimes, isn't easy.

Please help us to take our responsibilities seriously, God, and to subsume our famous human will to your will and do our utmost best to be a force of good in the world. Please help us to love our neighbour and do good to those who hate us. That is the job you have given us in this Christianity and we will be our very best at it for your sake because we do love you and we look for your support.

We pray that you also will support those in the world who lack food or water. We pray that you will be with them to teach them about loving each other. Help them set aside violence. Help them co-operate in the sharing of scarce resources. We pray that wars may cease, that Arab communities may learn to live alongside Jewish ones without hostility. We pray that factions in the Sudan and Somalia may live in peace. Please bring peace to Iran and the United States and to the Ukraine and Russia. And God, please bring peace to us and, especially, to the families of the two policemen who were killed last week in the line of duty.

We ask you to be with those who are ill in our community. Please relieve their suffering and ease the pain of those who love and care for them. Please also be with those who are facing the Ebola virus with very few resources. Please be with their families. We remember the family in Elmira who lost five of their children last week. Please give them strength to bear their sorrow, God.

As we go out the church door into another week, let us recognize all of the Christians who have gone before us, accepting persecution and martyrdom, so that we might enjoy the support of your love and the love of one another.

Amen