

# Good Friday Pilgrimage 2026

Rendcomb  
North Cerney  
Bagendon  
Baunton  
Stratton



Our meditations this year are built around the scriptural account of events leading up to Jesus' death. The Biblical texts are complemented by excerpts from two musical works, namely the "Mystery Sonatas" by Heinrich von Biber and the "St John Passion" by J.S. Bach. Additional reflections are provided by extracts from "A table in the Wilderness" by Watchman Nee.

The sonnets are by Malcolm Guite; other poems are individually attributed. Graphics are from Heartlight, Bible Images and Seiger Koder,

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Use the music as a foil as you meditate on the scriptures and the words by Bach and Watchman Nee.

The Biblical texts will be read aloud, while the Reflections are provided for quiet contemplation. Do join with us in saying the prayers.

*J.S. Bach needs little introduction. His two passions, according to St Matthew and St John, are recognised as being some of the finest choral works ever written. The version used today is sung in German, but English translations of the relevant choruses have been included.*

*Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber (1644 - 1704) is much less familiar. He lived and worked in what is modern day Germany. His Mystery Sonatas were unknown until their publication in 1905. They consist of 15 "mysteries" or meditations on the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary, and are scored for violin and continuo. The sonatas are extremely difficult to play and utilise highly unusual violin tunings to change the sonority of the instrument. However, they do convey through music the awe and wonder of the mysteries they seek to describe.*

*Nee To-sheng, or Watchman Nee as he preferred to be called, became a Christian in mainland China in 1920 at the age of seventeen and began writing in the same year. In 1952 he was imprisoned for his faith; he remained in prison until his death in 1972. His words remain an abundant source of spiritual revelation, challenge and comfort to Christians throughout the world.*

## St Peter, Rendcomb

### Jesus' ministry and passion foretold

**Reading:** Luke 2, 21 - 35

*Biber: Sonata No. 4, "Presentation of the infant Jesus"*



**Reflection:** *Be it unto me according to thy word. Luke 1, 38*

How essential it was that in the virgin Mary the living Word should find a free way if God's purposes in sending it was to be fulfilled. God spoke, and because her faith responded, His miracle took place. Alas, many of us think it quite enough if we are orthodox in doctrine and give unqualified mental assent to the Word of Truth. But unless that Truth is taking effect inwardly, there may be really no great difference between assent to it and dissent from it. The difference only comes when it begins to play a vital, transforming part in a life. How tragic to have a vast knowledge of the Bible, yet little experience of its working. If we are to be of use to God in His great purposes it is essential that we respond not merely with our head but with our heart when His word comes to us in a present, personal way. Can we echo Mary's prayer?



## Sonnet: The Naming of Jesus

I name you now, from whom all names derive  
Who uttered forth the name of everything,  
And in that naming made the world alive,  
Sprung from the breath and essence of your being,  
The very word that gave us words to speak,  
You drank in language with your mother's milk  
And learned through touch before you learned to talk.  
You wove our week-day world, and still one week  
Within that world, you took your saving name,  
A given name, the gift of that good angel,  
Whose gospel breathes in good news for us all.  
We call your name that we might hear a call  
That carries from your cradle to our graves:  
*Yeshua, Living Jesus, Yahweh Saves.*

**Reading:** Luke 2, 36 - 38

*Biber: Sonata No. 5, "The twelve-year old Jesus in the temple"*



**Prayer** (from the opening chorus of *St John's Passion*)

Lord, our master, whose glory fills the whole earth, show us by your passion that you, the true, eternal Son of God, triumph even in the deepest humiliation.

Give us the willingness to accept your divine will, both with our heads and with our hearts. Be it unto us according to your word. Amen

## All Saints, North Cerney

### The Garden of Gethsemane

**Reading:** Matthew 26, 36 - 41

*Biber: Sonata No. 6, "Christ on the Mount of Olives"*

**Reading:** Matthew 26, 42 - 46



#### Poem

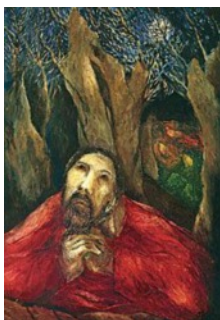
I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day,  
What hours, O what black hours we have spent  
This night! what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!  
And more must, in yet longer light's delay.  
With witness I speak this. But where I say  
Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament  
Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent  
To dearest him that lives alas! away.

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree  
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;  
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.  
Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see  
The lost are like this, and their scourge to be  
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

*G M Hopkins*

**Reflection:** *When therefore he said to them “I am he”, they went backward and fell to the ground. John 18, 6*

On that last night before Calvary, everything seemed to be going wrong. Betrayal and denial were in the air; people were hiding, or running away naked in their eagerness to escape. But to those who had come to take Him Jesus said so peacefully and quietly “I am he”. It was they who were nervous and who fell backward. This inward peace always marked Him. He could sleep through the storm. He could register the touch of faith amidst the jostlings of an impatient crowd, and ask who it was had touched Him. “My peace” He terms it.



This peace, He said, “I leave with you”. He did not take it away, for he is here. So the martyrs of old displayed it too. They might be tortured or burnt, but they had about them a quiet dignity none could gainsay. Yes, in the world we shall have our troubles, but we shall also have His peace, which the apostle Paul affirms, is beyond understanding. We have our troubles, but we shall also have His peace, which the apostle Paul affirms, is beyond understanding.

*Bach: “O gross Lieb, o Lieb ohn’ alle Masse”*

*O measureless love, to have brought you to this way of the cross  
To suffer while I lived heedless in the world of pleasure.*

*May your will be done, on earth as in heaven Lord God  
Make us patient in suffering, obedient in everything,  
Guide and protect all rebellious flesh and blood.*



## **Prayer**

Father, may your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Make us patient in suffering, obedient in everything, Make us steadfast witnesses of our Saviour's reign, that we may live in the pattern of Christ, who was faithful in all things, even death, and whose darkest hour gives light and hope. Amen.

## St Magaret, Bagendon

### Barabbas freed and Jesus flogged

**Reading:** Matthew 27, 15 - 26

*Biber: Sonata No. 7, "The scourging at the pillar"*



### Sonnet: Forgive as we forgive

*Forgive as we forgive:* the prayer you give us,  
Comes home so close yet radiates so far.  
We set the limits on our own forgiveness;  
As generous or grudging as we are.  
The wounds we give and take in all our weakness,  
The injuries that smoulder, burning slow,  
The sins that others visited upon us,  
Are ours to hold or utterly let go.

You tell the story of the wretched debtor,  
The one forgiven everything he owed,  
Who then exacted payment, to the letter,  
From one who could not bear the given load.  
Oh lift my given load that I, forgiven,  
Might give away forgiveness, free as heaven.

**Reading:** Isaiah 53, 4 - 6

*Bach: “Wer hat dich so geschlagen”*

*Who has hit you like that, my saviour, and ill-treated you?  
After all, you are not a sinner, like us and our children  
You have never done anything wrong  
It is I with my sins, countless as grains of sand  
who have brought down on you  
this host of sorrows and torments.*



**Reflection:** *Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Habakkuk 3, 18.*

When the Galilean boy brought his bread to Jesus, what did Jesus do with it? He broke it. God will always break what is offered to him. He breaks what he takes, then blesses it and uses it to meet men's needs. Is not this true to your experience and mine? You give yourself to the Lord and at once everything goes so badly wrong that you are tempted to find fault with His ways. To persist in such an attitude is to be broken, yes indeed, but to what purpose? You have gone too far for the world to use you, but you have not gone far enough for God. This is the tragedy of many a Christian. Do we want Him to use us? Then day by day let us go on giving to Him, not finding fault with His methods, but accepting of His handling of us with praise and expectation.

## **Prayer**

Loving God, I am beginning to realize how much you love us. Your son, Jesus, was humble and obedient. He fulfilled your will for Him by becoming human and suffering with us and for us. I ask you for the desire to become more humble so that my own life might also bear witness to you. Break me as you need to so that in this world I can fulfil your purposes and bring you glory. Amen

# St Mary Magdalene, Baunton

## The anointing and the mocking

**Reading:** Mark 14, 3 - 9

### **Sonnet: The anointing at Bethany**

Come close with Mary, Martha , Lazarus  
So close the candles stir with their soft breath  
And kindle heart and soul to flame within us  
Lit by these mysteries of life and death.  
For beauty now begins the final movement  
In quietness and intimate encounter  
The alabaster jar of precious ointment  
Is broken open for the world's true lover,  
The whole room richly fills to feast the senses  
With all the yearning such a fragrance brings,  
The heart is mourning but the spirit dances,  
Here at the very centre of all things,  
Here at the meeting place of love and loss  
We all foresee, and see beyond the cross.



**Reflection:** *The house was filled with the odour of the ointment.  
John 12, 3.*

By the breaking of that flask for the Lord's sake, the home in Bethany was pervaded with the sweetest fragrance. Something was set free for all to appreciate, and none could be unaware of it. What is the significance of this? Have you ever met someone who has suffered deeply, and whose experiences have compelled him to find satisfaction in the Lord alone?

Then immediately you have become aware of something. Immediately your spiritual senses detect a fragrance – what Paul terms “a sweet savour of Christ”. Something has been broken in that life in order to release what is there within of God Himself, and you cannot mistake it. Yes, the odour that filled the house that day in Bethany still fills the Church today. Mary’s fragrance never passes.



*Biber: Sonata No. 8, “The crown of thorns”*

**Reading:** Matthew 27, 27 - 31

*Bach: “Christus, cher uns selig macht”, “Ach grosser Konig”*

*Christ who brings us joy  
And has done no wrong  
Was for our sake  
Seized like a thief in the night  
Taken before unbelievers  
And falsely accused  
He was derided, spat upon, vilely  
Mocked, as the scripture tells*

*O mighty king, great forever  
how can I ever express my allegiance  
no human heart can think of a gift  
fit to offer you  
Nor can I find anything to compare  
with your merciful goodness  
What can I do then to be worthy  
of your loving deeds?*



## **Prayer**

Merciful God, release us from the time of trial and oppression, that we may witness to the eternal hope of grief becoming joy and life rising from death. Grant us grace to show the sweet savour of Christ in all areas of our lives. Amen.

# St Peter, Stratton

## Christ crucified

**Reading:** Luke 23, 32 - 46

*Biber: Sonata No. 10, "The crucifixion"*



**Reflection:** *When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said "It is finished". John 19, 30*

The Christian faith begins not with a big "do" but with a big "done". Of course our reason protests against this. If we do not get moving, how can we ever reach the goal? What can we attain without effort? How can we ever achieve anything if we do not work for it? But Christianity is a queer business! It begins from rest. If at the outset we try to do anything, we get nothing; if we seek to attain, we miss it all. "It is finished" said Jesus, and Paul opens his letter to the Ephesians with the statement that God *has* blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. We are invited at the very outset therefore to rest and enjoy what God has done; not to try to attain it for ourselves.



*Bach:*

*Lie in peace, sacred body  
for which I weep no longer  
and bring me also to my rest.  
The grave that is yours  
and holds no further suffering  
for me opens Heaven and closes hell.*

**Reading:** John 17, 4 - 5

**Poem: Battles at Easter-time**

Good Friday and its prelude are their chance.  
They can mock and scoff and jeer,  
Blaspheme and hate with practised ease.  
With press-ganged, programmed victims  
They can re-enact scourging, lynching,  
Crucifixion and betrayal.  
All these are Satan's stock in trade.

But Easter they can never show –  
Life, resurrection, cleansing, love,  
These are God's only.  
Look up! Christ is risen!  
Jesus is with us!  
In captive, liberating power,  
He reigns.



*Adrienne Winter*

## **Prayer**

Christ our God, your love poured out in death has closed hell and opened heaven for us. Hold us in your embrace as we wait for Easter's dawn. Comfort us with the promise that no power on earth, not even death itself, can separate us from your love; and strengthen us to wait until you are revealed to us in all your risen glory. We thank you for what you have done for us. Amen.

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## **The Blessing**

