

DAILY SCRIPTURE & PRAYER RESOURCE
for the
WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
16 MAY—23 MAY 2010

DAY 5—THURSDAY 20 MAY

**Witness
through
suffering**

Isaiah 50:5-9 *The one who vindicates me is near.*
Psalm 124 *Our help is in the name of the Lord.*
Romans 8:35-39 *God's love shown forth in Jesus Christ.*
Luke 24:25-27 *He interpreted to them the things about himself.*

Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory? (Luke 24:26)

Reflection

In recent years two events in Scotland led to this small country suddenly grabbing the notice of the world's media. The bomb attack on the plane above Lockerbie and the massacre of children in Dunblane school brought attention to this nation which will always remember these terrible losses of human life. The two events caused suffering and unimaginable anguish to a large number of people and the consequences were felt well beyond these two places. Innocent people met their death in horrifying circumstances. Equally we can think in Australia of similarly harrowing events, especially when we reflect on the destruction of Indigenous people and culture.



The reality of suffering is something that the Prophet Isaiah speaks about forcefully in today's text, reminding us that God is never resigned to seeing humanity suffer. Similarly the letter to the Romans proclaims the certainty that love is always strongest and that suffering and sorrow will never prevail. For before offering the resurrection to the world, Christ entered into a terrible death and into the dark depths of the tomb so as to be completely with us at our very lowest ebb. In the Lord's footsteps, Christians who seek full unity show their solidarity to those amongst them who are confronted in their lives with tragic situations of suffering, by confessing that love is stronger than death. And that it was from the extreme humiliation of the tomb that resurrection came like a new sun for humanity; a clamouring annunciation of life, forgiveness and immortality.

Reflection questions

1. *How can we show empathy to those who suffer and are in difficulties?*
2. *What wisdom and deeper understanding have you gained through suffering you have known in your own life?*
3. *How do you live out solidarity with the suffering and oppression which so many people living in poverty in our Indigenous communities and wider world experience?*
4. *How can we bear witness to the mercy of God and to the hope you find in the light of the cross of Christ?*

Prayer points

- * Give thanks for the power of God to bring new life out of suffering and tragedy
- * Pray for the witness of Christians in situations of great suffering and for greater solidarity with them in the Body of Christ
- * Pray for the churches of Aotearoa-New Zealand and the Pacific; for the Pacific Conference of Churches
- * Pray for those who find their home in the Churches of Christ

Prayer for the Day

God our Father, look with compassion on our situations of poverty, suffering, sin and death. We ask you for forgiveness, healing, comfort and support in our ordeals. We give you thanks for all who manage to see light in their affliction. May your divine Spirit teach us the greatness of your compassion and help us stand alongside our sisters and brothers in difficulty. Filled with its blessings, may we in unity proclaim and share with the world the victory of your Son who lives for ever. Amen.

