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ORDINARY 22A

30th August 2026

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Hymn / Song:

20 STF – Be still for the presence of the lord – [YouTube](#)

Opening Prayers

Be still, in the midst of the noise.

Be still, in the midst of the business.

Be still, in the midst of all the distractions and the other places you could be today.

Be still, for the Spirit of God is here, and is calling you to notice,

If you can just be still.

When all around is noisy and busy, help me in this moment to be still with you, O God.

Silence

When my mind is chaotic and full of wondering, help me in this moment to be sure of you, O God.

Silence

When my soul is troubled, help me in this moment to be calmed by you, O God.

Silence

If you feel able speak these words aloud:

Still, calm and sure I come to worship you, O God.

Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Reading: Matthew 16:21-28 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

There is a noticeable shift in Matthew's Gospel at this point. Until now, Jesus has been travelling, teaching, healing, and revealing God's kingdom. But now he begins to speak openly about where this journey is leading: Jerusalem, rejection, suffering, and death.

Peter, for one, cannot bear to hear it: "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you."

Who can blame him? Peter loves Jesus. He wants to protect him. He imagines that God's purposes should lead to victory, not vulnerability. Yet Jesus responds with surprising sharpness: "Get behind me, Satan!"

These words can sound shocking. But perhaps Jesus is recognising something deeper than Peter's mistake. Peter is offering a vision of success that avoids sacrifice, a kingdom without cost, glory without love's vulnerability. Jesus knows there is another way. Then he

turns to all the disciples and says: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

These words have sometimes been misunderstood. They have even been used to encourage people to remain in abusive situations or to accept injustice without protest. That cannot be what Jesus intends.

The cross was not a symbol of private suffering or quiet resignation. It was the Roman Empire's instrument of public oppression. To "take up your cross" is not to seek suffering for its own sake. It is to choose the path of courageous love, even when that love comes at a cost.

It means refusing to let fear, ego, or the pursuit of comfort become the centre of our lives. Jesus continues: "Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

Perhaps another way of hearing this is that we lose the life built on self-protection in order to discover the life built on love. Every one of us constructs identities around success, reputation, certainty, or control. We spend enormous energy protecting these fragile versions of ourselves.

But Jesus invites us into something freer. He invites us to let go of the false self that is driven by fear and discover the true self that already belongs to God. For those of us seeking to follow Christ today, this is deeply challenging.

The world often tells us to put ourselves first, to win every argument, to protect our own interests, to avoid discomfort at all costs. Jesus asks something different. He asks us to become people whose lives are shaped by compassion rather than competition, by service rather than status, by love rather than fear.

This does not make us weak. It makes us profoundly free. So today, reflect on these questions:

- What are you holding onto so tightly that it prevents you from living more freely?
- Where might Christ be inviting you to choose courageous love, even if it costs you something?
- What does it mean for you to "take up your cross" in a way that brings life to others rather than burden to yourself?

Following Jesus is not about becoming less fully human. It is about becoming more fully alive. As we loosen our grip on fear, pride, and self-protection, we discover that God's grace has been holding us all along.

May you have the wisdom to let go of what cannot truly satisfy, the courage to follow the way of self-giving love, and the deep assurance that in losing yourself to the grace of God, you will discover the life you were created to live.

Hymn / Song:

239 STF – Sent by the Lord am I – [YouTube](#)

Blessing

You go from this time, knowing yourself loved.

Try not to forget that, in the days and weeks to come.

You go from this place, called by the living, loving God to follow the path of discipleship.

Try not to stray from that path, in the days and weeks to come.

You go from this place, with the Spirit of God going ahead, within and around you.

May you know that to be true, this and every day,

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers For This Week

Monday 31st August

- As you get ready to pray, picture yourself weighed down with suitcases and bags. Imagine the feeling of laying them down, and enjoy the feeling of lightness as you massage your aching limbs and stretch out your back. You know you're not leaving the luggage behind, never to see it again, but next time you pick it up, you won't have to carry it alone.

Tuesday 1st September

- At the beginning of this new church and academic year, Lord God, I hand over new beginnings to you. May there be green shoots where there is dry land, may there be streams of water where there is thirst, may there be love where there has been isolation.
- Come, by your Spirit, O God, and let your peace flow to all who need to encounter it this year.
- Amen.

Wednesday 2nd September

- Picture a butterfly - perhaps you're lucky enough to be able to see one at some point today.
- Butterflies begin life as caterpillars, then undergo a change and emerge more beautiful than ever. How is the Spirit breathing new life into you today?

Thursday 3rd September

- Take a moment to slowly rub your palms together. Allow the gentle pressure, contact and motion to ground you in this moment and calm you.

Friday 4th September

- Today, whenever you can, repeat the simple mantra:
I am loved, loved by God.
- Use this as a simple way to guide you through the day – does it help to shift your focus or the way you think about yourself and others?

Saturday 5th September

- Today is marked by the UN as the International Day of Charity. Why not use this as an opportunity to pray for all involved in the work of charities around the world, and to give thanks for all the good work they do.
- You might like to get in touch with someone you know who works for or volunteers at a charity and let them know you have been praying for them, if it is appropriate to do so.