

# THE CANDLE IN ISOLATION

A pilgrimage of seventeen prayers

MICHAEL MCGIRR

Easter has been different this year. We missed that wonderful moment when the Easter Candle is lit from a new fire and brought into a darkened church. Slowly the flame spreads from taper to taper, from young to old, from tall to short, from the foolish to the wise — and vice versa. The Church becomes a cradle of light. This is our faith.

This year, I decided that if we could not come to the candle, the candle might come out and meet us where we were. Here are 17 images and prayers from recent days. Each one is a reminder to me that Jesus is alive among us wherever we happen to be, whoever we happen to be. They have all been moments of prayer for me.



## THE STATION

Loving God, you made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. This year, we have been forced to be a little more still, to take fewer journeys. Our railway stations are quiet. May we learn the lesson in these days that it is not what we do that makes us unique. It is who we are and how we love.



## THE DRIVE-THROUGH

Loving God, at Easter we remember the story of the disciples on their way to Emmaus. May we recognise you in every meal, even one from a drive-through takeaway. May we accept the unusual ways you nurture us and feed our spirit.



## THE RETIREMENT HOME

Loving God, we pray for those who are old and lonely. We pray for those family and friends who pay them 'window visits.' May we have hearts large enough to hold all your people. May we treasure our parents and grandparents. We pray for all the sick throughout the world.



## THE LOCAL SHOPS

Loving God, the streets are quiet, even in the middle of the day. May we think about what we truly need in life. May we desire love, not things. May we think of those who are struggling because they have too little work, and those, especially health workers, who are struggling because they have too much work.



## GARBAGE

Loving God, you are present in the things we throw away, the things we don't value. Nothing is rubbish to you. You are also present in the people we throw away, the people we don't value. No-one is rubbish to God. Most of all, you are present in the parts of ourselves we throw away, the parts of ourselves we don't value. God loves every part of us. God calls us to really live. To be ourselves! God accepts us often more than we accept ourselves.

*'The stone the builders rejected has become the corner stone.'*



## THE BUSH

Loving God, the world is alive with your presence. May we be sensitive to you in everything that lives. All creatures tell of your wonder. May we focus less on ourselves and more on the whole of creation, the expression to us of your great love.





## THE LITTLE LIBRARY

Loving God, when you appeared to your disciples, you prepared a barbeque of fish for them at the side of the lake. In these days, we are seeing many signs of people sharing simple things with each other – neighbours caring for neighbours. May we enjoy your presence in ordinary moments of giving.



## THE BUS STOP

Loving God, you ask us to wait. Your disciples did not know what to expect. After you rose, you told them they were not to 'know the day or the hour'. Nor do we. The same applies to us. Waiting can feel very vulnerable, exposed. Like standing on a bus stop with no shelter. May we find the freedom to wait in joyful hope.



## SPECIAL DELIVERY

Loving God, we never know what you will bring us. You always deliver but not always what we expect. You showed Thomas the open wounds in your hands and feet before he could be open. May we accept whatever you bring into our lives with gratitude.



## THE ROAD

Loving God, the stories of your resurrection are full of running. The women who found the empty tomb ran to tell the disciples. Peter and the beloved disciple ran to the tomb. Was all this running about excitement or anxiety? Perhaps, at first, the latter. We all spend time running around. May we realise that our running is ultimately in search of you.



## LETTERS

Loving God, our scriptures are full of letters. At Easter, we are especially drawn to the First letter to the Corinthians. May we be open to the mysterious ways you reach into our lives through scripture. May we quietly spend time with the word of God and, through it, be open to all the words people send us in one way or another.



## THE KITCHEN

Loving God, we thank you for the ways you make your home with us. You are alive in our daily routine. Even when we spend a great deal of time at home, your presence always enlarges our vision. May we be grateful for places of safety in our lives.



## ANZAC

Loving God, we thank you for those who have fought to defend us and especially those who have died in war, especially the young. We pray for those in military services today and those caught up in war throughout the world. May we all pray the words of St Francis, 'Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.' After your resurrection, your message to your friends was 'peace be with you'.



## FOR THOSE IN NEED

Loving God, we count our blessings. We hold in our hearts all who suffer, especially the sick and those whose businesses have taken a bruising. May we move beyond the idea of 'everyone for themselves'. May the world become more like what you imagined when you spoke of the kingdom of God. May we feel the pain of others.





## SPACE

Loving God, our fields are quiet. People long for physical community. May people soon enjoy sport once more. And may our lives be open spaces in which you play to our delight.



## THE RIVER

Loving God, you said to Mary in the garden, 'do not cling to me'. May our faith keep moving, like the river. Timeless, profound, teeming with life. May we allow the mystery of your love to carry us towards the vast ocean.



## THE FLAME

May the risen Christ, rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our minds and hearts.

Amen

