

**St Mary's Scottish Episcopal Church
Broughty Ferry**

**A
NEW TESTAMENT
ODYSSEY**

**A twenty-eight day journey in the company
of the earliest followers of Jesus
who left us the writings that constitute
the Christian Scriptures.**

William G Neill

The New Testament is not a single book, but a diverse collection of writings that together record:

- all that is essential for us to know of the life and teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ
- the earliest years of the Christian Church and the rapid spread of the Good News of Jesus through wide tracts of the Roman Empire
- the spiritual and practical teachings contained in the letters that circulated among the churches
- the endeavours of the earliest Christians to describe the glories of heaven to which we are called in union with Christ.

The purpose of this booklet is to enable us, over a period of twenty-eight days, to gain an overview of the entire New Testament. We will get the most out of this booklet if, each day, we:

- read the verses of scripture printed in italics
- look these passages up in our own bibles to see them in their wider context
- let the comments under each passage draw our attention to points of information, interest or challenge
- add to these comments our own thoughts on the passages
- conclude our time of study in prayer, following the suggestions in the comments.

The New Testament passages, one from each book of the New Testament (two from the Gospel of John), are taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible, the translation we use in our main Eucharist Sunday by Sunday.

You may find it a valuable exercise to compare the NRSV translation with another version of the text. The original New Testament was written in Greek, and each fresh translation carries its own unique insights regarding the love of God revealed to us in and through Jesus.

First Sunday: John 20, 26-31

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.' Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

John's purpose in writing his Gospel was the same as for all the New Testament writers: to encourage us to believe in Jesus and to help us to discover the new life that Jesus shares with all who follow him. Ask Jesus to make himself more and more real to you as you walk with him in the path of discipleship.

First Monday: Matthew 11, 2-6

When John [the Baptist] heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

The first followers of Jesus believed in him because of the things he did and said, and because they found themselves totally convinced that in him was to be found God's gracious answer to our deepest human need. But some of the religious leaders, convinced that they knew the answers already, took offence at this upstart of a village carpenter who showed them up for the ineffectual windbags that they were. Bring before Jesus what you know to be your deepest needs, and if, like John the Baptist, you find yourself still searching for the answers you need, ask Jesus to give you a deepened knowledge and understanding of all that he can be for you.

First Tuesday: Mark 8, 31-33

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

Some who, like Peter initially, set out to follow Jesus, think of him only as a wise teacher who went about doing good, setting us an example for the living of our own lives. For them the death of Jesus was an avoidable and pointless tragedy, and the reports of his resurrection little more than the product of wishful thinking. But there was far more to Jesus than this, and Peter would eventually learn that 'far more' for himself. Thank Jesus, of course, for his wise teaching and good example, but ask for his help to focus ever more clearly on the central importance for you of his death and resurrection.

First Wednesday: Luke 24, 28-32

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?'

It is the first Easter Day, and two disillusioned followers of Jesus, unconvinced by the reports of his having risen from the dead, have set out wearily for home. The risen Jesus joins them in the guise of an unknown stranger, and his living presence is mysteriously revealed to them only as he breaks bread at their table. This is the first-ever Eucharist, and will be followed by countless others to the end of time. Ask Jesus, whenever you 'draw near with faith', to make himself just as truly and mysteriously real to you as you receive in your hands the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation.

First Thursday: John 21, 15-19

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.' (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'

Three times Peter had denied Jesus, so three times the risen Lord graciously invites him to renew his discipleship. But Peter must be under no illusions: the way ahead for him was challenging, and so it is for all who follow Jesus. Offer to Jesus your love, but be prepared to walk with him through whatever may be asked of you as his disciple.

First Friday: Acts 16, 13-15

On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. A certain woman named Lydia, a worshipper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.'

Paul and his missionary companions are visiting the city of Philippi, and seize the opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus with Lydia and her household. The risen Lord opens their hearts to his unseen presence, and they pledge themselves to him in Holy Baptism. Ask Jesus to give you an ever-open heart to respond to his call to faith and discipleship.

First Saturday: Romans 8, 35-39

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There is no greater certainty than the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord, but it is easy to forget this fundamental truth as we find ourselves confronted with the kind of challenges that we fear must surely break us. But here is a promise upon which countless followers of Jesus have relied down through the centuries. Ask Jesus to help you see beyond every obstacle and fear that confronts you in the path of discipleship, and to rely totally on the assurance that nothing whatsoever can separate you from the love of God.

Second Sunday: 1 Corinthians 15, 12-19

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Belief in personal survival of death is fundamental to Christianity, and to follow Jesus is to pass, in union with him, through the brutal reality of death and into the glories of life eternal. Jesus not only shows us our future: he is our future. Ask Jesus to increase in you the confidence that death is not the end, and that you and your loved ones are called to be with him forever.

Second Monday: 2 Corinthians 5, 17-21

[I]f anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

In Christ your Son our life and yours are brought together in a wonderful exchange. He made his home among us that we might for ever dwell in you. These words from the Scottish Episcopal Church's 1982 Liturgy remind us that at the cross Jesus offered himself to be condemned in our place, so that in union with him we might share in the eternal life that is his by right. Thank Jesus that he won for us what we can never win for ourselves, namely, acceptance by God and the sure promise of eternity. Were it not for this 'wonderful exchange' we could never find peace with God.

Second Tuesday: Galatians 5, 22-25

[T]he fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

God is more than simply our Father in heaven, and more than simply the Eternal Son who took into himself our humanity. God is also the Holy Spirit, the Presence and Power who fills all things. To live by the Spirit is to let the being of God dwell in our hearts, so that our old self, having been crucified with Christ, is transformed into a new self that becomes a blossoming tree whose branches will bear the same fruits that are found in the perfect humanity of Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to become a source of new life welling up from your inmost being, and the guiding hand that directs and controls your life in ways that are pleasing to God and loving towards others.

Second Wednesday: Ephesians 2, 5-9

[E]ven when we were dead through our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

Grace is the unearned and undeserved kindness of God. That kindness is a gift, and never something we can win for ourselves by our own efforts:

*Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.*

Ask Jesus to take away every vain reliance upon your own endeavours to live a life that is pleasing to God. You can never do enough fully to satisfy God, but God could never have done more to save you than he has in Jesus.

Second Thursday: Philippians 4, 4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Joy and peace are gifts from God whose fullness we can only experience when we share them with others. Ask God to fill your mind, your heart, your life with all the joyful and peace-making virtues mentioned here.

Second Friday: Colossians 3, 12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

How many of these virtues could we display by shutting ourselves away from everyone and everything and living in and for ourselves alone? Ask Jesus to increase in you a sense of belonging to the whole community of his people.

Second Saturday: 1 Thessalonians 4, 13-18

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

We may find it hard to take some of these words literally, but at a deeper level they express the ecstasy that awaits us at the final union of Christ and his saints at the end of time. Ask Jesus to inspire in you a deepened confidence in God's good purposes for time and for eternity, so that death is seen, not as the end of all things, but as the gateway to fullness of life.

Third Sunday: 2 Thessalonians 2, 13-17

But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

Beloved, chosen, called to share in the glory of Christ – this is how God sees us, and how we should see our fellow human beings, not least the millions among them who do not yet know the love of God and the comfort and hope that God’s love inspires. Ask Jesus to fill your life with the good works and good words that will proclaim to others the reality of God’s love for them, and to give you the strength to be the person you are created to be.

Third Monday: 1 Timothy 2, 1-6

I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings should be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all — this was attested at the right time.

It is easy for those to whom are given worldly power and high positions in society to forget what these are given to them for, namely, so that all the people of God’s world may live in quietness, peace, godliness and dignity. Pray to God for all Christians in positions of power and responsibility, that they will never lose sight of what God has called them to be and to do. Pray also for all in authority who lack any sense of God’s presence and call to service, that their eyes will be opened to the reality of God and to what God desires of them and of our world.

Third Tuesday: 2 Timothy 3, 12-17

Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

By 'scripture' is meant the Old Testament, but when we see how its purpose is described here, we realise that these words apply equally to the New Testament. Pray that this 'Odyssey through the New Testament' will help you and others to a fuller appreciation of the usefulness of scripture in teaching truth, in warning us when we go wrong, in showing us the right paths to follow and in helping us to keep right with God and with one another.

Third Wednesday: Titus 2, 1-9

But as for you, teach what is consistent with sound doctrine. Tell the older men to be temperate, serious, prudent, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance. Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behaviour, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured; then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us...

These words reflect a male-dominated and gender-segregated society, but contain general principles that apply to all people regardless of gender or of age. Pray for wisdom to recognise the general principles embedded in the scriptures, and for God's help to practice these virtues in your own life.

Third Thursday: Philemon 3-7

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith towards the Lord Jesus. I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

What encouraging words to receive in a letter! Sometimes we can be so focused on people's faults and failings that we neglect to give credit where credit is due. Pray that God will open your eyes to see the good in others, and that you will take every opportunity to encourage rather than to criticise. Is there, perhaps, an appreciative or supportive letter that you should be writing to someone today, or a long-overdue phone call to be made?

Third Friday: Hebrews 12, 1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.

The previous chapter names a galaxy of men and women who were faithful to God in their own day, and now we are reminded that these saints of God are witnesses of our own lives and our own service of God and of one another. Is this a comforting thought, or one that should trouble us? As with Jesus himself, the greatest challenges often arise in situations where things aren't going well for us. Pray to Jesus, that you will be conscious of his witnessing and supportive presence by your side as you struggle with your own imperfections, and that he will give you the gift of perseverance so that there is joy in heaven and joy also in your own heart and in the hearts of the earthly witnesses who surround us day by day.

Third Saturday: James 2, 14-17

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill', and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

The letter of James runs parallel to the teaching of Jesus that it is by our fruits that we are known. Or, as the saying goes, actions speak louder than words. Are we sufficiently aware, as the Church and as individuals, of contexts in which a discrepancy exists between what we claim to believe and our actual conduct? Genuine faith is, of course, our response to God's grace freely offered despite our failings, but unless we are actively engaged, with God's help, in overcoming these failings, our faith is as good as dead. Pray to God that your faith and your life will always send out the same message.

Fourth Sunday: 1 Peter 2, 20-25

If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

It is always a distressing situation when we do what we know to be right, or sincerely believe to be right, but things work out badly either for ourselves or for others. Well-intentioned words or actions can sometimes have unforeseen and unwelcome consequences, but God understands, even if no one else does. Pray to Jesus, that he will inspire you by his own good example in the face of adversity, and that you will recognise and respect other people's good intentions, especially when things go wrong.

Fourth Monday: 2 Peter 3, 8-13

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

Behind the sometimes lurid and frightening ‘end of the world’ biblical imagery lies the solid fact that our universe and our individual lives exist for a God-ordained purpose that will only be fully revealed and understood when history has run its course. Pray that in our uncertain and sometimes terrifying times we will trust in God’s good purposes, and wait patiently when it seems to us that God is unwilling or slow to act in ways we would expect.

Fourth Tuesday: 1 John 2, 28 – 3,3

And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he is revealed we may have confidence and not be put to shame before him at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who does right has been born of him. See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

It is normal for there to be an identifiable likeness between parents and their children. Pray that people will see the likeness of God in you, and that by doing what is right, your closeness to God will become increasingly evident.

Fourth Wednesday: 2 John, 1-16

The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth, and not only I but also all who know the truth, because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us for ever: Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, in truth and love. I was overjoyed to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father. But now, dear lady, I ask you, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning, let us love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment just as you have heard it from the beginning—you must walk in it.

The 'dear lady' to whom John writes was probably a local church which he knew well and held in high regard. But there is a hint here that perhaps the love of its members for one another was falling short of God's ideals. Pray that your love for God and for your fellow church members and the wider community will grow steadily, and that the truth of God will become ever more firmly rooted in your mind and heart.

Fourth Thursday: 3 John, 9-11

I have written something to the church; but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing in spreading false charges against us. And not content with those charges, he refuses to welcome the friends, and even prevents those who want to do so and expels them from the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil but imitate what is good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

Whoever Diotrephes may have been, he was clearly a source of trouble in his local church, pushing himself forward, subverting its leadership, spreading lies and driving people away. It is false to imagine that the earliest decades of the Christian Church were a 'golden age' in which everyone behaved with total integrity. Pray that you will never behave like Diotrephes, and that if you ever encounter people like this, you will play your due part in preventing them from harming the life of the church or the wider community.

Fourth Friday: Jude 20-23

But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on some who are wavering; save others by snatching them out of the fire; and have mercy on still others with fear, hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies.

This is a wonderful but challenging list of the virtues that characterise a Christian community and its individual members. Note Jude's concern for people who are in danger of losing their way with regard either to their faith or their way of life. Sometimes we are too polite, or too afraid of being branded as busybodies, when a friendly word of encouragement or warning might help someone in danger of going off the rails. Ask Jesus to increase in you the same loving concern for others that we see in him.

Fourth Saturday: Revelation 22, 1-5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.

Our Odyssey concludes most appropriately with this glorious vision of heaven. Too often people can have a 'me and my God' approach to their Church membership, rather than an 'us and our God' understanding of the Church as an earthly community called, through shared faith and love, to mirror the perfection of God's eternity. Pray that these twenty-eight days will have deepened your faith, empowered you to fuller service, and given you a foretaste of the glories that await us in God's nearer presence.