SUNDAY 18 February 2024, 1st Sunday in Lent

Readings: Gen 9:8-17; 1 Pet 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

*Let us pray for the whole creation, and for the church in the world.*

O God, out of love for humankind, you sent your Son Jesus.

Touch our lives, and those we pray for with your healing love

Strengthen us as we rise to face the joys and challenges of a new day

Help us to break open our own isolation, the walls we build out of hurt or fear –

Gentle God, shelter us in our need, embrace those in sorrow, sickness or any kind of trouble,

and give courage and hope to those in distress; bless those who help and pray for them.

Grant the Spirit’s peace to those who wait in darkness, not knowing what may come.

Remind us you are the fire that burns within us: use us to light our patch of the world.

*God of love,****Grant our prayer.***

We pray for the tremendous heartache of violence and tensions among nations.

We pray for Ukraine, Gaza and Israel; and anywhere hatred and domination threaten lives.

We pray for teachers as they begin another year, and those in medicine and social work.

May we comfort those who find their burdens too much to carry, and give them relief, and rest.

Through the grace of our words and actions may we lend a hand and walk with them.

*God of love,****Grant our prayer.***

We give thanks for the stunning beauty of these islands. May we share our resources wisely, and confront those who would harm the earth, our home. Give wisdom to those with authority among us, and to all leaders of the nations. Help us listen to the voices of our children calling. Let us act, mindful of their inheritance, the land and seas, and in the knowledge that they are loved. In our own communities, help us to love and be loved.

This Lent, let us be aware of essential things, for ‘All that is needed is here’\* -- in our choices and the faith we live. May good come from our prayers. We pray for Wellington, for our parishes and homes, for the creative spark that inspires and moves hearts. We pray for Bishop Justin and his family, and for those whose task is to consider an assistant bishop for this diocese.

*God of love,****Grant our prayer.***

Loving God, you have given us everything: bread, vine and Spirit; and the presence of your Son.

May we live thankfully, joyously, a people of your own redeeming. ***Amen.***

*Sources: NRSV Bible; Original prayers, NEB Starr, A New Zealand Prayer book, and a phrase from Wendell Berry\**