

## Prayer Vigil at the Home Office for Victims of Global Migration March 2024

*Leader invites a few moments of silence and contemplation before the icon.*

### Opening Prayers

Leader We pray for those who will spend time during our service handing out leaflets to the public. We ask that our message will reach the hearts of people of good will on this street today.

Creator Spirit, wellspring of our lives, as the refreshing rain falls on the just and unjust alike,

All **Refresh us with your mercy, you who know our own injustice.**

Leader As the stream flows steadily on, defying all the odds of stone and water,

All **Flow over every boundary and border that separates us from each other.**

Leader As the waters of our baptism washed us and welcomed us,

All **Renew us now in newness of life and unity of love.**

### Hymn – “When I Needed a Neighbour”

When I needed a neighbour,  
Were you there, were you there?  
When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

**(Refrain:)** And the creed and the colour  
And the name won't matter,  
Were you there?

I was hungry and thirsty,  
Were you there, were you there?  
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there? **R**

I was cold, I was naked,  
Were you there, were you there?  
I was cold, I was naked, were you there? **R**

When I needed a shelter,  
Were you there, were you there?  
When I needed a shelter, were you there? **R**

When I needed a healer,  
Were you there, were you there?  
When I needed a healer, were you there? **R**

Wherever you travel,  
I'll be there, I'll be there.  
Wherever you travel, I'll be there. **R**

*Sydney Carter*  
*Words © 1965, 1969 Stainer & Bell Ltd*

### Psalm 50

**A** The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.  
Fresh and green are the pastures  
where he gives me repose.  
Near restful waters he leads me,  
to revive my drooping spirit.

**A** You have prepared a banquet for me  
in the sight of my foes.  
My head you have anointed with oil;  
my cup is overflowing.

**B** He guides me along the right path;  
he is true to his name.  
If I should walk in the valley of darkness  
no evil would I fear.  
You are there with your crook and your staff;  
with these you give me comfort.

**B** Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me  
all the days of my life.  
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell  
for ever and ever.

### Prayers of Repentance

*Leader:* Loving Jesus, as a child in fear of your life, you were forced to seek refuge in Egypt. You know what it is like to be rejected, and to be an outsider. You call us to love our neighbours as ourselves, but we have hardened our hearts against strangers.

**All: Forgive us, and help us to change.**

*Leader:* You told us not to judge, yet we listen to rumours and fail to check facts. We hear what is best for us and not what is good for those in need.

**All: Forgive us, and help us to change.**

*Leader:* You said we must welcome everyone, those speaking different languages and with different beliefs and cultures, but we have turned our backs on opportunities to widen our experience. We have shut out foreigners from our communities.

**All: Forgive us, and help us to change.**

*Leader:* Today we are called more than ever to welcome those fleeing from war. Open our hearts, and those of our neighbourhood, of our city, of our country and of our continent, to those who need our shelter.

**All: Forgive us, and help us to change.**

### The List of the Dead

The names and details which follow are those of people who have died trying to obtain sanctuary in Europe or the UK. We read them so as to honour their lives and mourn the injustice of their deaths. Many are unknown, but as Pope Francis said, 'Every one has a name, a face and a story'. Today we mark those who died in March 2023.

After each entry, *Leader* says: Lord have mercy.

*All* respond: **Christ, have mercy.**

	Date	Details
1	?	Meysam Qasemi, an Iranian boy of 14, drowned in a shipwreck in the Mediterranean. He was buried in Hamburg, where his uncle lives.
2	3/3	29 people, including 3 children, 3 women and 4 men, drowned while trying to transfer from a smaller to a larger boat off Tobruk, Lybia on the way to Italy; 25 bodies were found, 4 missing.
3	5/3	A headless body in a state of decay was found wrapped in a blanket on the beach of Baia Francese, Lampedusa, Italy.
4	7/3	Frank Ospina, a 39-year-old Colombian man who had come to the UK to visit his mother and was arrested for taking a short-term job washing dishes, committed suicide in Colnbrook immigration removal centre at Heathrow. In the following days up to 6 other inmates attempted suicide.
5	7/3	3 people from sub-Saharan Africa drowned a few hours off the Tunisian coast on the way to Italy; 34 survived.
6	8/3	A young woman from sub-Saharan Africa died of unknown causes, her body recovered by Italian coast guards from a boat off Lampedusa. 20 survived.
7	8/3	11 people from sub-Saharan Africa drowned when a boat sank off Sfax, Tunisia on the way to Italy; 20 survived.
8	9/3	3 people from sub-Saharan Africa drowned when a boat going from Sfax to Italy sank off the Tunisian coast; 34 survived.
9	11/3	15 Africans drowned on the way to Greece; 5 bodies were found in a half-sunken rubber dinghy off Didim, Turkey. 16 survived.
10	12/3	An Afghan man of 23 died of unknown causes, his body found by activists lying face-down in a swamp off Hwożna River, Poland, near a main road at the Belarusian border.

11	12/3	34 people, including 3 children, drowned when an overloaded boat sank off Ambanja, Madagascar on the way to the French island of Mayotte; 23 survived.
12	12/3	Abdo al Sabbah, 17, and Abdel Razzak al Qastal, 18, both from Syria, were tortured to death by Turkish border guards when trying to cross the Syrian-Turkish border near Reyhanli. They were beaten with various tools and forced to drink petrol. 7 other men were severely injured.
13	12/3	30 people drowned when a boat on the way from Benghazi, Libya to Italy capsized. Italian authorities were aware of the distress call for at least 9 hours but took no action. 17 were rescued by a merchant vessel.
14	13/3	An Afghan man was shot in a fight between Afghan migrants near the makeshift border camp in a disused Viskozine factory in Loznica, Serbia.
15	14/3	4 people drowned when 2 boats sank off Kusadasi, Turkey after an alleged pushback by Greek authorities; 38 survived.
16	15/3	The bodies of 5 people, including 1 woman, 2 men, a girl aged 3 and a boy of 7 or 8 were found floating in the sea 17 days after a boat crashed off Cutro, Italy, killing 80.
17	19/3	1 Afghan man died when a car overturned in a ravine evading a police check in the Dragoman region, Bulgaria, near the Serbian border; 10 were injured.
18	20/3	17 people, including a mother with her 3 children, drowned when a boat on the way to Sardinia, Italy sank off Skikda, Algeria. 9 bodies found, 2 survived.
19	21/3	30 people drowned when a boat capsized off Al Argoub, Western Sahara on the way to the Canary Islands; 12 bodies found, 9 survived.
20	21/3	The body of an Afghan man aged 27 was found near Zamosze, Poland near the Belarusian border by national park employees. His uncle, who had travelled with him, had urged a rescue operation to be undertaken for a month; Polish authorities blocked search attempts by activists.
21	21/3	The body of a victim of the crash off Cutro was found on the beach of Praialonga, Italy, after 23 days.
22	23/3	Sisters Saran-soumah, 12, and Macire, 10, drowned before the eyes of their mother when a boat overturned off the Tunisian coast on the way to Italy. 36 survived.
23	23/3	33 people from Ivory Coast and sub-Saharan Africa, including 5 children and 2 men, drowned when an overloaded boat sank off La Louza, Tunisia on way to Lampedusa; 9 bodies were found, 5 survived.
24	24/3	16 people, including 1 child and 2 women, drowned in the Alboran Sea on way from Cherchell, Algeria to Cartagena, Spain; 2 bodies found.
25	24/3	A person was found dead of unknown causes by activists in Białowieża National Park near Hwoźna River at the Poland-Belarus border.
26	24/3	42 people from Africa drowned when their boat capsized off Sfax after Tunisian coast guards removed its engine. Some of the men were beaten. 4 survived.
27	24/3	A man of about 40 died of unknown causes near Sofikos, Greece, near the Turkish border.
28	25/3	4 people, a woman and 3 men, drowned when a boat on the way from Tunisia to Italy capsized near Malta; 51 survived.
29	26/3	2 people from sub-Saharan Africa drowned when a boat sank off Sfax, Tunisia on the way to Italy, their bodies recovered by trawlers.
30	26/3	10 people from sub-Saharan Africa drowned when a boat capsized off Mahdia, Tunisia on the way to Italy; 11 survived.
31	26/3	19 people from sub-Saharan Africa drowned when a boat capsized off Tunisia on the way to Italy; 5 survived.

32	28/3	A young man from Sabikhan, Syria was shot by Turkish border guards near Ras Al-Ain, Syria while trying to cross the border to Turkey.
33	28/3	A woman's body was found among rocks on Lampedusa, presumed to be a victim of the shipwrecks near Malta.
34	29/3	A woman's body was found floating off Punta Alaimo, Lampedusa.

Taken from UNITED List of Refugee Deaths, produced by UNITED for Intercultural Action (UNITEDAgainstRefugeeDeaths.eu). Collated from the following sources: ABCNews, ADN, AfricaNews, AlarmPhone, Aljazeera, ANSA, Angi, Assahraoui, Dispatch, Euromed, EvrosNews, Financiero, Flucht, France24, Fanpage, Guardian, GrupaGranica, HelCoastG, HRW, IOM, InfoMigrants, Impala, KurirRS, Le Monde, LenaK, MEHR, MEE, Nanopress, NOS, OKO, PalermoLive, PodlaskaPolicja, RAI, Reuters, SCF, SeaWatch, SKGOVBY, SofiaNewsAgency, Stamp, Stampa, Telegraf, TVN24, VOA, VOAAfrique, VK, WION, Wyborcza, Ya.UK, and Zancan.

**All: Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.**

### **Hymn – "Jesus, Remember Me"**

by Communauté de Taizé

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom **(x3)**

### **Reading**

*(John 8:1-11)* Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.' And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, sir.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.'

### **Reflection**

#### **Prayers of Intercession**

*Everyone present reads in turn. All say the **response** in bold.*

We pray for the thousands of men, women and children, known and unknown, who set out to seek safety and a better life in Europe, but who were drowned in the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, the Aegean Sea, or the English Channel, and for those who mourn them. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for migrants who have met hostility or violence from authorities or vigilantes. We pray for those pushed back into the sea, and those forced into the desert. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for all those seeking sanctuary in the UK who depend on its adhering to the European Convention for Human Rights, and pray that our government will respect the agreement that we helped to draw up over 70 years ago. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for the former residents of the camp in Calais and for those who remain there. We pray for the protection of all people in refugee camps and the communities they build. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for refugees arriving in the UK and being placed in detention in poor conditions at arrival, and those made homeless on being granted asylum. We pray for their mental and physical well-being and for the recognition of their right to decent housing. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for a resolution to the conflicts and oppression which are forcing so many to flee in desperation, for the end of the arms trade, and the realisation of the right of people to remain in their homes. We pray for the people of Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Eritrea, Sudan, Ukraine, and Palestine. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for those who are fleeing the effects of climate change, with rising sea levels, drought, flood or crop failure, yet who have caused little or no damage to our climate; for those who make decisions about compensation, and those who continue to exploit the earth for profit. We ask forgiveness for our complicity in this. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for the safety and success of those serving aboard the rescue ships: the *Sea Watch 3*, the *Life Support*, the *Aurora*, the *Imara*, the *Rise Above*, the *Nadir*, the *Geo Barents*, the *Wind Express*, the *Ocean Viking*, the *Open Arms*, the *Aita Mari*, the *Trotamar III*, and others; and of the volunteers of the Alarm Phone, and the reception teams on the Greek and Italian islands. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray that you inspire compassion in all those who work with migrants on behalf of governments, and that they recognise all those they come across as their brothers and sisters. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray that you create in all of us the strength and resilience to resist unjust immigration laws and to support one another in this struggle. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

*Leader invites those present to add other prayers if they wish.*

## **Concluding Prayer**

*by Pope Francis*

**All:** Merciful God, we pray to you  
for all the men, women and children  
who have died after leaving their homelands in search of a better life.  
Though many of their graves bear no name,  
to you each one is known, loved and cherished.  
May we never forget them, but honour their sacrifice  
with deeds more than words.

Just as you never abandoned your Son  
as he was brought to a safe place by Mary and Joseph,  
so now be close to these, your sons and daughters,  
through our tenderness and protection.  
Wake us from the slumber of indifference,  
inspire us, as nations, communities and individuals,  
to see that those who come to our shores  
are our brothers and sisters.

May we share with them the blessings  
we have received from your hand,  
and recognize that together, as one human family,  
we are all migrants, journeying in hope to you, our true home,  
where every tear will be wiped away,  
where we will be at peace and safe in your embrace.

### **Hymn – “Amazing Grace”**

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils, and snares  
I have already come:  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright, shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise,  
Than when we first begun.

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind but now I see.

*Words by John Newton, music by William Walker.*

*All introduce themselves briefly. Any announcements are given.*