

# Conquering our fears

Jo Jones *reflects on* Psalm 136 and Matthew 6:25-end

God's "steadfast love endures for ever". The psalmist keeps repeating this phrase while telling the story of God's creation of and care for the world. Yet how hard it is to remember this and how easy to worry our lives away. I am worried about what I will do when my job ends. I am worried I am not looking after my family well enough. I am worried about my worrying! I become trapped and exhausted. Then I read Jesus' words, "do not worry... Consider the lilies of the field".

I travelled in Ethiopia when war was creating famine. I stood among queues of people who were desperately thin, waiting to receive rations which they had walked ten or more miles to collect. I wondered how these people continued to believe in a God who promised to give them what they needed. An Ethiopian aid worker told me, "When you have a good harvest you think it is all your doing. When you have a poor harvest you know you are dependent on God for everything. Then you are close to God."

Our retired priest, David King, preached that the key to past fears is forgiveness and God's acceptance of us; the key to present fears is courage, founded on the conviction that God is with us; and the key to our future fears is hope, knowing that God will be there with us. Thank God. 🌱

## Names of Jesus

### Part 2 – my Lord and my God

by Heather Smith

In John's Gospel Jesus makes his controversial "I am" statements: "I am... the bread of life... the light of the world... the gate". For a Jewish audience they would have had a familiar ring; echoes of the words God spoke to Moses at the burning bush, as recounted in the book of Exodus. Jesus makes the point quite clearly: "before Abraham was, I am". Giving himself the same name as God does not go down well; they take up stones to throw at him.

A more familiar name for Jesus is Lord, usually a replacement for YHWH, which the Jews wrote without vowels and did not pronounce. It may be more familiar as the alternative English rendering, Jehovah. The Greek word for Lord, Adonai, is used in the New Testament and in the Acts of the Apostles.

Before anyone had a chance to develop a theology of who Jesus was, the new Christians simply said he was Lord – the one they followed and obeyed. 🌱



As we journey through life, may we feel your steadfast love endure for ever with us, Lord. In times of joy, of ordinariness, of terrible pain, may we know your forgiveness, and continue to have courage and keep hope strong. Amen.

## St Valentine

by William Hepper

Valentine of Rome lived in the third century. His origin is shrouded in mystery, there being a possible conflation of two different characters. According to some he was a priest who performed forbidden marriages and gave assistance to Christians suffering from persecution under Claudius II.

Inevitably he became part of the persecuted community. He was dragged in front of the prefect and ordered to renounce

his faith. When he refused he was beaten then beheaded.

This grizzly story does not sit easily alongside romantic candlelit suppers, although a romantic addendum tells how, when Valentine was in prison, he miraculously healed the gaoler's daughter and how, before his execution, he wrote her a letter signed, "Your Valentine".

How much can be taken as authentic is moot. Perhaps, however, Valentine's tale should be read symbolically, as an image of the victory of love, which finds its source in God, over tyranny and cruelty. 🌱

“ Pray as you can, and do not try to pray as you can't.”

Dom John Chapman OSB (1865-1933) English Roman Catholic priest