

PRAYING WITH THE CELTIC SAINTS



SAINT SAMSON

We light this candle because Christ is the Light no darkness can extinguish



Light and peace has come into the world through our Lord Jesus Christ and through his saints.

The light of Christ has come into the world.

You led your people of Israel to freedom by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

The light of Christ has come into the world.

You led your people of this land out of darkness through the holy prayers and powerful signs of Samson and other saints.

The light of Christ has come into the world.

May we who walk in the light of your presence acclaim your Christ, rising victorious, as He banishes all darkness from our lives and from our land today.

The light of Christ has come into the world. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 4 : 23

Jesus was going all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

Matthew 10 : 7-8

As you go, preach this message, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is near'. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

Acts 28 : 1-10

Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live." But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead; but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.



There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days. His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. They honoured us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

According to tradition, Publius became the first bishop of Malta, following his conversion by St Paul. Remains of early Christian communities have been discovered throughout Malta, although it is thought that paganism still prevailed until the time of Constantine.

THE LIFE OF SAINT SAMSON

The life of this saint is said to be the most historically accurate, written soon after his death and containing eye witness material from his nephew. It is one of the earliest accounts of life in Britain.

Samson was born in Wales in 486 (and died in 565). God had told Anna, his mother, that she would have a son and was to name him Samson. No doubt this implied that he, like the Samson of the Old Testament, whose birth also came as the result of prophecy, would be strong for the Lord. He trained under Illtyd, the wisest man of his generation, at the then most famous monastery in Britain, Llantwit Major near Cowbridge, Wales. Samson was way ahead of the other monks in terms of faith : when a monk was dying from a snakebite, he asked permission to pray over him – he took seriously the command of Jesus to heal the sick and raise the dead. The brother was cured and thus began a healing ministry in the Church of Samson's time.



When he was eventually ordained deacon, the bishops saw a dove alighting on him – a sign of the Holy Spirit. Celtic Christian leaders were very sensitive to these anointings, which often indicated whom they should ordain.

In due course, Samson went to Ireland and was made a bishop. He then went to Padstow and made journeys of witness in Cornwall, travelling to the Scilly Isles - the now uninhabited island of Samson is named after him. He moved to the Channel Islands and then founded monasteries in Brittany, the most famous being that at Dol. His ministry throughout was marked by prayer, preaching the Gospel and healing the sick.

It is said that one day, while travelling through Cornwall, he came across pagan tribesmen worshipping an idol on a hill. Samson fearlessly challenged them, imploring them to worship the Living God. He endangered his life by walking up to a standing stone and carving the sign of the Cross into it. Just then, a young man came charging towards them in his chariot, late for the ceremony. The chariot swerved and he was thrown out, lying in a twisted and lifeless heap on the ground. The chieftain was distraught. Samson asked him if he would destroy the graven image if he brought the young man back to life. This was agreed and Samson prayed over him for 2 hours, restoring him to health. Samson proclaimed that the one, true, Living God could do what no idol could. The idol was destroyed and the whole tribe was baptised. He considered no challenge too great, with the power of prayer and the Spirit of God flowing through him.

REFLECTION

St Samson, like St Paul, followed Jesus' example and command to preach the Gospel and to heal. Jesus was concerned with the healing of the whole person – the body, as well as the soul – and prayer was fundamental to any such undertaking. The healing of the soul (conversion) so often followed the healing of the body. St Samson instituted a healing ministry in the early Celtic Church. Healing ministry today, is often limited to special services. However, Jesus' original command to his disciples is a command to his followers today. Let's spend a few moments listening, as God calls each of us, in our own way, to bless the world.

PRAYER

We bless you Lord for the life of St Samson and all the saints who brought your light and healing to these Celtic lands. We thank you that Samson's prayer, his courage in witness and his healing love brought so many to know you, the Living God. Reveal to us Lord, our part in your healing ministry, as we offer you now our prayers for the world :



Loving God, we bring before you our world, which is so in need of healing. The people, the situations, the places, all crying out for hope, for peace. We pray for the healing of the wounds inflicted by this pandemic : For those who have lost loved ones, for those who are dangerously ill. We thank you for the courage and selflessness of those who seek to heal them and care for them. We pray an enduring respect for the medical profession, that we may never take it for granted. Lord, in your mercy **Heal us and make us whole.**

Loving God, we pray wisdom for governments seeking a way forward through the pandemic. We pray for the safety of teachers and children about to return to school and we ask your healing on relationships that have been damaged by the pressures of lockdown. May love prevail.

Lord, in your mercy **Heal us and make us whole.**

Loving God, we remember the places in our world ravaged by war, famine and disease. We pray your healing for the Rohingya people. May they find a home and live in peace, without the threat of genocide. We remember all people displaced by conflict, the refugees and asylum seekers.

Lord, in your mercy **Heal us and make us whole.**

Loving God, we pray that rulers and those in positions of influence will use their power to heal the deep wounds that humankind is inflicting on Creation. The pollution of the seas, the air and the soil, the destruction of natural habitats and the extinction of species. Give them the wisdom and the will to protect our planet and the poorest, who suffer at the hands of the ruthless and the greedy.

Lord, in your mercy **Heal us and make us whole.**

Loving God, we bring those we carry on our hearts – those whom we know to be in need of your healing and we name them before you now

Lord, in your mercy **Heal us and make us whole.**

We pray eternal light and peace for those who have died and the healing of sorrow for those who mourn.

Lord, in your mercy **Heal us and make us whole.**

Lord, make us a channel of your blessing. Fill our hearts with your Holy Spirit, that in prayer and action, we may bring peace and healing into all our relationships and every situation.

We humbly offer our prayers in the name the Eternal Healer, our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

BLESSING

May God deepen us in prayer,
enrich us with compassion
and gift us, like St Samson, with the power to work miracles, no matter how
small.

And may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
rest upon us and those we love and pray for today and always

Amen.