

Plough Sunday Prayers



Plough Sunday, traditionally the first Sunday after Epiphany, is the time to celebrate the long hours of tilling and preparing before the seed can be sown. A celebration of digging, winter feeding of cattle, the mystery of the land and human labour. Associated are the tools of the plough, spade, the milk churn, feed bucket or muck fork. The festival reflects the virtues of faith and fortitude.

Genesis 8 v.22

Verses from Psalm 104

Prayer

Creator God, you give us the amazing gift of soil in which to grow crops to feed both humans and animals. Grant us wisdom as we seek to work with you and in harmony with the micro-organisms and worms in maintaining soil fertility and proper drainage. As we plant successive crops, we trust you for the miracle of growth enabled by the balance of light, warmth, nutrients and moisture to produce an abundant crop. Keep us alert to maintain and use our farm machinery carefully and give us pride and satisfaction in our work. This we pray in the name of Christ, who set his hand to the plough and did not look back. AMEN.

Thanksgiving

Every good and perfect gift comes from you, O Lord.
For fertile soil, for the smell of newly-turned earth
We give you thanks, O Lord.
For keen cold frosty winter days and nights
We give you thanks, O Lord.
For the tractor's hum and the gleam of a cutting edge
We give you thanks, O Lord.
For the beauty of a clean-cut furrow and the sweep of a well-ploughed field
We give you thanks, O Lord
Blessed be you, Lord for all your gifts to us. AMEN.

Verses from John Masefield's "The Everlasting Mercy":

O Christ who holds the open gate
O Christ who drives the furrow straight,
O Christ, the plough, O Christ, the laughter
Of holy white birds flying after.
Lo, all my heart's field's red and torn,
And thou wilt bring the young green corn,
The young green corn divinely springing,
The young green corn for ever singing;



Germinate
Arthur Rank Centre

And when the field is fresh and fair
Thy blessed feet shall glitter there,
And we will walk the weeded field,
And tell the golden harvest's yield,
The corn that makes the holy bread
By which the soul of man is fed,
The holy bread, the food unpriced,
Thy everlasting mercy, Christ.

With thanks to Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre

Confession

When we are ungrateful for the rain, sun and frost,
and forget they are God's gift to us:

O God forgive us.

When we are blind to the mystery of germination,
and forget God's handiwork:

O God forgive us.

When we are careless with our beasts,
and forget they are God's creatures:

O God forgive us.

When we are unkind to those who work with us,
and forget they are God's children:

O God forgive us.

When we are careless about our work,
and forget we are God's co-workers:

O God forgive us.

When we ill-treat the land
and forget we are God's stewards:

O God forgive us.

Blessing of the Plough

1st Speaker The plough is the foundation of our work and
a symbol of our labour:

2nd Speaker For the soil must be broken up and the seed sown,
we must first plough the fields.

3rd Speaker For the green corn to grow and ripe grain to be
reaped we must first plough the fields.

1st Speaker For the bread to be baked and the people fed,
we must first plough the fields.

2nd Speaker For prosperity to come to our farms and families,
we must first plough the fields.

3rd Speaker So we bring this ploughshare here
for you to give your blessing upon it
and upon all the work done on our farms.

1st Speaker God speed the plough:
the plough and the ploughman,
the farm and the farmer.

2nd Speaker God speed the plough:
the beam and the mouldboard,
the slade and the sidecap,
the share and the coulter.

3rd Speaker God speed the plough:
in fair weather and foul,
in rain and wind,
in frost and sunshine:

God speed the plough.

Prayer

Let us pray:

O God, who gives each of us work to do for your sake,
we ask for your blessing on this plough and upon all the
machines that enable us to do our work upon the land.

We ask you to prosper throughout the year
the work done on our local farms.

May the farmer's hopes be fulfilled in a plentiful harvest;
may your people be fed with wholesome food;
may town and country, united in gratitude to you,
be drawn nearer to the understanding
and true service of each other:
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Prayers taken from a service by St. Mary and All Saints, Great Budworth

The earth is the Lord's
and everything that is within it;
the wide extent of the world
and all who live there.

The Lord looked upon the earth
and filled it with blessings.

As long as the earth endures,
seed time and harvest
summer and winter
will never cease.

When farmers plough for planting,
do they plough continually?
When they have levelled the surface,
do they not plant the seed and look for its growth?
For God instructs them
and teaches them the right way.

Prayers of Penitence *(sit or kneel)*

When we are ungrateful for the rain, sun and frost,
and forget that they are your gifts to us:

O God, forgive us.

When we are blind to the mystery of germination,
and forget that it is your handiwork:

O God, forgive us.

When we are careless with our beasts,
and forget that they are your creatures:

O God, forgive us.

When we are unkind to those who work with us,
and forget that they are your children:

O God, forgive us.

When we are careless about our work,
and forget that we are your co-workers:

O God, forgive us.

When we ill-treat the land
and forget that we are your stewards.

O God, forgive us.

Presentation and Blessing of soils from around the Diocese

Farmers and farm staff stand. Others sit.

The soils are presented

O Lord, all the earth is yours.

We bring before you this rich and living soil
that you may bless us and our lands with abundant fertility.

You visit the earth and water it;

you make it very plenteous.

You prepare grain for your people,

for so you provide for the earth.

You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges;

you soften the ground with showers and bless its increase.

You crown the year with your goodness,
and your paths overflow with plenty.

In the name of the creator of heaven and earth,
we dedicate this living soil
that it may be fruitful to his glory.
By the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
may the land we till and tend
bring forth good food in abundance,
for the birds and beasts and all people.
Amen.

May the pastures flow with goodness,
and the hills be girded with joy.
May the valleys stand so thick with corn
that they shall laugh and sing.

The Blessing of the Plough and Churn

The Plough is presented

This plough symbolises all the machines on our farms
and all the tools of the horticulturist.
At the beginning of this new year's work,
will you pray God's blessing on this plough
and on our cultivation of the soil?

O God our Father,
giver of seedtime and harvest,
bless all ploughs, tractors and tools, large and small,
used in the work of our farms.
May they be instruments of fruitfulness;
may all who use them do so to your glory
and in the grateful and hopeful offering of their daily work,
for their own and others' good,
that your people may be fed
and all rejoice in your bounty,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

God speed the plough.
God speed the plough.

The Churn and Cluster is presented

This churn stands here to represent the milking herds
and all the work we do in the tending of animals.
At the beginning of this new year's work,
will you pray God to bless this churn and cluster
and our work with animals?

O God, loving creator of all life,
you call us to be grateful stewards of your creatures.

Bless the cattle and horses,
the pigs and sheep and poultry
and all the animals we tend in your name,
and strengthen us with wisdom and compassion
to care for them as you would have us do,
to the glory of your name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

God guard the animals.
God guard the animals.

Prayers taken from a service by St. Peter's Church, Inkberrow

May God the Creator forgive our misusing of his creative work;

May God the Son take up into his cross the sufferings of our land, our animals, our families and ourselves.

May God the Holy Spirit give us the strength and power to overcome our troubles, weaknesses and temptations.

May God the Holy Trinity forgive us all our sins. **Amen.**

Gratitude and Praise

Members of the Farming Community lead us in gratitude and praise.

Speaker 1: From God comes every good and perfect gift – the rich soil, the smell of the fresh-burned earth:

Come from God.

Speaker 2: The keenness of a winter's frost and our break steaming:

Come from God.

Speaker 1: The hum of the tractor, the gleam of a cutting edge

Come from God.

Speaker 2: The beauty of a clean-cut furrow, the sweep of a well-ploughed field

Come from God.

Speaker 1: Blessed be God in all his gifts.

And praised by all his works.

Leader: Let us pray

O God, who gives each of us work to do for your sake, we ask for your blessing on this plough and upon all the machines that enable us to do work upon the land.

We ask you to prosper throughout the year the work done on our local farms.

May the farmers' hopes be fulfilled in a plentiful harvest;

may your people be fed with wholesome food;

may town and country, united in gratitude to you, be drawn nearer to the understanding and true service of each other;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Blessing of the People and Dismissal

May God bless you in winter and summer,

at your ploughing, your sowing and your reaping.

May God give you sunshine and rain in due season;

May God, who gladdens the face of the earth,

give you joyfulness of heart.

May God who has called you to work on the land,

set his affections upon himself.

And may the blessing of the Trinity,

three persons and one God,

remain with you and all those for whom you have prayed, this day and always.

Amen.

Tend the earth, care for God's good creation,

and bring forth the fruits of righteousness.

Go in the peace of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

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Opening Prayer for Plough Sunday on a farm

Leader: We come in the name of the One
who made us all, people, animals
and the whole earth.

Farmer: We welcome you and ask your blessing
on the work we do here and all the work
done on the farms around us.

from Seasonal Worship from the Countryside page 25
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