



Image of the day - Binevenagh and the Roe river

Consecration of Bishop of Clogher today

Today Monday, St Mark's Day, Canon Ian Ellis will be consecrated in St Macartin's cathedral, Enniskillen, following his election last November as Bishop of Clogher in succession to the Most Revd John McDowell who is now Archbishop of Armagh.

A graduate of Queen's University, Belfast, Dr Ellis taught physics in Antrim Grammar School before his ordination in

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1989 for St Mark's parish, Armagh. He served as Rector of Loughgall & Grange for eleven years in the Diocese of Armagh and during this time he was Editor of the Armagh Diocesan Magazine, and actively involved in diocesan administration.

Canon Ellis is well-known for his subsequent role as Secretary to the Church's Board of Education for Northern Ireland where he served for 13 years, bringing together his experience as a schoolteacher and his time in parochial ministry. He also served as the Church of Ireland's representative on the Transferor Representatives' Council and as Secretary of that body.

In 2015 he was appointed as Rector of Rossorry in Co. Fermanagh, and the Clogher diocesan representative

Hope at Easter

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canon on the Chapter of St Patrick's cathedral, Dublin. He has been closely involved in the administration of the Diocese of Clogher as a member of Diocesan Council, of which he is one of its Clerical Honorary Secretaries; a member of the Diocesan Board of Education, a Diocesan Nominator and a member of General Synod. He is a member of the Board of Governors of Enniskillen Royal Grammar School, where he is Vice-Chairman of the Board of Governors and Chairman of the Education Committee, in addition to being a governor of Jones Memorial Primary School.

The New Face of Contemporary Christianity

Contemporary Christianity says “We are ready for a new chapter and a new look!”

A statement issued by the group says -

“Since we became a volunteer led organisation back in 2009, we had retained the logo developed for the Centre for Contemporary Christianity back in 2005. We just shortened the name by dropping “Centre” and “In Ireland” and retained the logo and strapline which had then been in use for four years.

With 10 years' experience of operating on an entirely voluntary basis the Board committed itself to an in-depth discernment process: a structured and facilitated discussion with our supporter base and critical friends. We wanted to know what might be the next steps for us as a small



organisation, with a distinctive history and heritage. The whole process was based on a deeply challenging quotation from Jesus, given on the last day of the Festival of Tabernacles. Curiously, scripture records it as being said in a loud voice, not characteristic of Jesus!

The Message puts it in these words...

He cried out...

“If anyone thirsts let him come to me and drink. Rivers of living water will brim and spill out of the depths of anyone who believes in me in this way” (John 7:37-38, The Message)

We were thirsting to know what God might have in store for us around the ideas of ... What is life giving and refreshing for individuals, churches and communities in Northern

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Ireland? Could we also identify ...What is and has been draining?

We found the concept of living water brimming and spilling out to be an inspiring one. Throughout the process, it became clear that any future role and a refreshed vision should be life giving to individuals, the churches and our communities.

The process brought out a rich heritage of what ECONI had offered some 30 years ago. Friends recounted many stories of how working together with ECONI emboldened a band of young Christian leaders to engage with scripture and take a fresh look at many deeply rooted issues across our communities. They respected the scope they were given to experiment, engage, write, and articulate biblical peacebuilding, and model reconciliatory actions. Conversations, in a safe space as well as in public and private shaped the participants and their impact on the wider community and Christian / Church leaders.

Stories were also shared on some of the imaginative and creative ideas taken forward over more recent years, particularly around events in the Decade of Centenaries. Plays, conversations and other activities brought refreshing new insights into, and perspectives on, aspects of our society still slowly recovering from the legacy of the Troubles.

We recognised that Christian faith provides life-giving strength and inspiration to thousands of people across Northern Ireland. There is some evidence of an entrepreneurial spirit and a prophetic voice in the face of

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many challenges, which in human terms just overwhelm. Society, despite some increased prosperity for some, remains deeply divided and churches are increasingly on the margins.

The conversations led us to believe that “the spirit of ECONI” needs to be revived for the 2020s. In new and fresh ways, we feel challenged to offer biblical thinking and perspectives to inspire, challenge and release Christians in Northern Ireland to a fresh love of God. It is our prayer that we will enable many people to share hope filled stories that will nurture Kingdom changes across our communities.

Therefore, out of this process we are blessed to have a renewed and energetic extended Board membership who want our work to be refreshing: like living water spilling out to those we can support and help.

We have worked hard, during lockdown, on how to communicate better. We have had a professionally designed new logo to reflect our spiritual desire, to refresh and bless, like living water; the blue and green colours are striking but subdued and gentle. Someone said it might even have a Celtic feel in its shape and style! All the better for that ...since being contemporary, we must not forget our deep spiritual heritage and our eternal rootedness in Christ.

Therefore, the water of life in this new logo is now replacing the stones that were moulded in 2005 to shape the former CCCI logo.

In using the new logo, we trust and pray our activities will be refreshing, and as we come thirsty, our hearts, minds souls

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and spirits will be refreshed, and that under God's guidance we may offer living water to quench thirsty people, and a troubled society.

With the new logo, we are also looking forward to an imminent relaunch of our website, where we will share some of the themes we will be taking forward during the year ahead.

We look forward to you journeying with us....

Contemporary Christianity mailing address is:
Inter-Church Centre, 48 Elmwood Avenue, Belfast, BT9 6AZ

New school sex ed guide repeats Church position 'marriage between man and woman can't be omitted'

Sex as a "gift from God" which belongs in committed relationships and marriage as a sacrament of commitment are two of the themes included in new sex education resources for Catholic primary schools, Jess Casey writes in the Irish Examiner.

They also say that while children should not be made to feel othered, the Catholic Church's teaching in relation to "marriage between a man and a woman cannot be omitted".

The details are included in 'Flourish', a new relationship and sexual education (RSE) programme for all Catholic primary schools on the island of Ireland, developed by the Irish Bishops Conference.



The Bishop's Council for Education says the material in the 'Flourish' programme is "bright, fun, engaging, interesting and pedagogically sound".

The programme includes lessons on topics like safe internet usage, friendship, puberty and body changes, with each lesson ending with a prayer reflection.

Strands and themes for the programme for the senior classes include:

- Sex is a gift from God. It belongs in committed relationships. Sex is not a commodity;
- Puberty is a gift from God. We are perfectly designed by God to procreate with him;
- Sexual love belongs within a committed relationship. Marriage as a sacrament of commitment.

In an introductory document entitled 'The vision for RSE in Catholic primary schools', the programme sets out that RSE

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must be taught in Catholic schools “with reference to moral decision-making”.

The document also adds that teachers must be sensitive to the family circumstances of the children in their care.

Children do not choose their circumstances and should not be made to feel any form of ‘otherness’ by what is taught in class.

It goes on to say: “Children in the senior classes in primary school will be aware [of] the existence of LGBTQI and some may question their own identity in this regard.”

The RSE programme must not promote shame but rather “seek to affirm that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God and is loved by God as they are”.

“The same moral obligation to respect and treat our bodies with dignity applies to people of all sexual orientation,” it says.

“However, the Church’s teaching in relation to marriage between a man and a woman cannot be omitted.”

In one lesson, teachers are asked to explain to children that love takes many forms, and to explain to students that when a person is attracted to someone of the same sex in a romantic way “they are said to be homosexual or gay”.

The same lesson then invites children to draw all the different kinds of family groups.

A spokesman for the Irish Bishops’ Conference said all teaching in a Catholic primary school in areas relating to the Church’s teaching is done in “an entirely invitational way” using pedagogies outlined by the curriculum.

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Church teaching on a range of perspectives on human life and human relationships can be offered to pupils but obviously other perspectives will also be shared, again in an age and stage appropriate way.

The biological aspects of RSE are contained in this programme, entirely in line with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) curriculum for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), he added.

The programme will be amended if necessary when the NCCA review of RSE is completed; this review is expected to take a number of years.

The Bishop's Council for Education believes the Flourish programme provides the best opportunity “for teachers and pupils to explore together, in the context of their school’s ethos, important themes within RSE and SPHE”.

“The material, written by a former principal, is bright, fun, engaging, interesting and pedagogically sound,” it says.

"Feedback so far has been very positive. Principals in particular have really welcomed this resource and know that they and their teachers have the expertise, training and support to use it to good effect in their schools, for the good of their pupils." The Irish Examiner 25.04.2021

Warm welcome to Annalong

The Revd Geoff Hamilton has received a warm welcome from his new congregation in Kilhorne Church, Annalong.

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Bishop David McClay of Down & Dromore instituted Mr Hamilton as Incumbent and the Revd Canon Malcolm Kingston, Rector of St Mark's, Armagh, gave the address at the service on 22 April.

Geoff was ordained deacon in Down and Dromore in 2016 and spent his internship in Seagoe Parish. He returns to the diocese from a curacy in St Mark's. He is married to Jill. Addressing the parishioners, Canon Kingston said: "You are receiving one of the most genuinely caring and attentive pastors that I know. Geoff, or Titch as he is also known, will serve faithfully amongst you, and I know he will sensitively encourage you as a people of faith."

He continued: "Of course, Geoff isn't here to serve you alone. He is accompanied by the lovely Jill who can simply be described as a star. Jill is a person with a servant heart and many, many gifts and I know that as you get to know both Geoff and Jill, you will identify characteristics that are outcomes of hearts of love of the Lord Jesus.

"Theirs is a desire to honour and serve the Lord. They will give you their best, because they want to give the Lord their best."

On becoming rector, Geoff said, "I haven't stopped smiling since arriving in Annalong as the setting is stunning. I've met numerous parishioners when I've been out walking the dog and I've been encouraged by their warm welcome.

"This past year has been challenging on many levels for all of us. During this pandemic we have been reminded afresh that we are relational beings, therefore we do life better

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together. I'm looking forward to doing life within Kilhorne Parish and also in the wider community. Jill and I value your prayers as we embark on this new and exciting chapter."

Remembrance - Fr Felix McGuckin: 'Hardest working priest in Ireland' led by example

Fr Felix McGuckin was once described as the "hardest working priest in the whole of Ireland", the Irish News records.

Over more than 60 years of ministry he led by example in developing new church and school buildings for growing Catholic populations across the diocese of Down and Connor.

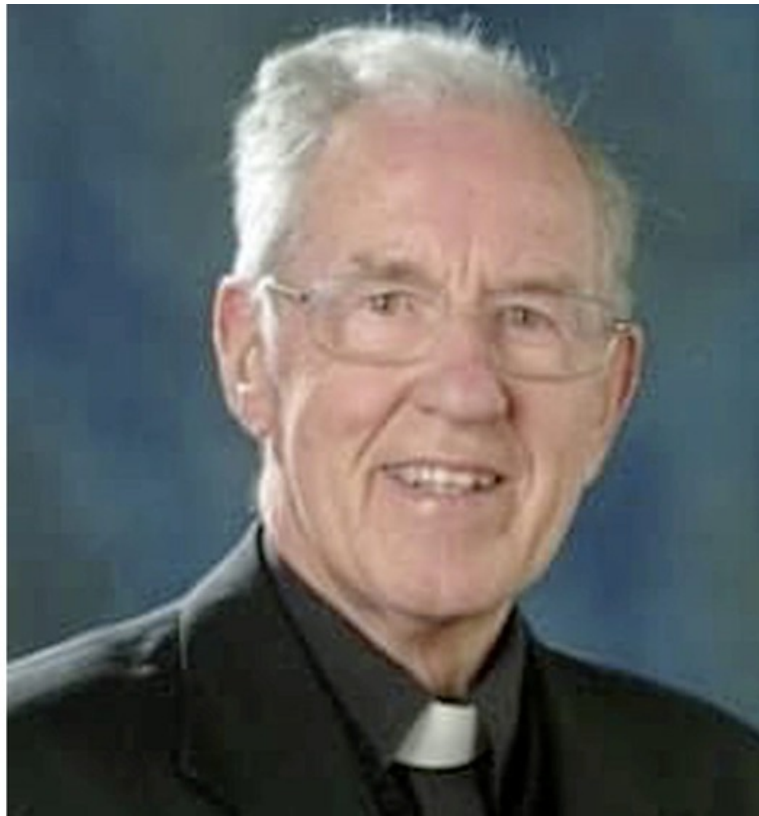
He also combined pastoral work with chaplaincy duties to prisoners in Crumlin Road gaol and patients in Holywell, Masserene, Purdysburn and Belvoir Park hospitals.

Always humble, he would typically respond to criticism of people with 'Is that so?' or 'There you are'.

A clerical friend said: "He made a deep impression on people, not because he tried, but because he was authentic."

Fr Felix was born in Tirgarvil on a farm in the parish of Maghera in 1927, the sixth in a family of four boys and three girls.

His home was one of strong faith, prayer and attendance at Mass and devotions and his ordination in Maynooth in 1957 was a great cause for family celebration.



Fr Felix's first appointment was to Portglenone, where he lived at the gate lodge of the monastery.

Along with the rejuvenation of SVP and the Legion of Mary, he will be remembered for his restoration of the ancient graveyard at Aughanoy.

Ecumenical contacts were also fostered and when a local Protestant church was bombed, Fr Felix was one of the first to offer practical and financial help.

In 1965 he swapped these quiet rural surroundings for the bustle of Antrim town, where sprawling new housing estates for factory workers had almost trebled the Catholic population.

Fr Felix was fully involved in planning and fundraising for a new complex to include St Joseph's Church and Presbytery, St Joseph's Primary School and St Malachy's High School.

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It was a mammoth task, demanding perseverance, dedication and patience.

His next appointment was as the first full-time chaplain to Crumlin Road gaol in Belfast in 1983.

He ministered compassionately to men of violence without ever condoning their actions, often saying separate Masses for paramilitary and other prisoners.

Another major building project awaited on his appointment as parish priest of Drumbo in 1986.

The Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was now too small and there were more pupils in temporary classrooms than the main school building.

With characteristic diligence, flair for organisation and the support of a strong parish family, Fr Felix saw it through.

Hands-on as always, he could often be found in overalls and with a wheelbarrow, spade or tape measure as an unofficial clerk of works.

In retirement Fr Felix returned to Antrim as its hospital chaplain, a task he undertook with devotion, bringing consolation and healing to patients and their families.

It was there that he died on Easter Sunday last year, just days after his 93rd birthday.

Unlike the person in a phrase he often quoted - "He lived a life of going to do and died with nothing done" - Fr Felix lived a life of doing, of using his God-given talents with humility, saying, "It is to God we owe everything and it is to God that we need to give thanks."

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We give thanks for the life of Fr Felix.



Fresh calls to repair 200 year-old Limerick church

The cost of repairing a 200-year-old church to facilitate public access is estimated to be almost €40,000, councillors have been told, David Hurley writes in the Limerick Leader

Members of the Adare/Rathkeale Municipal District are calling on the local authority to explore ways of funding the works at Saint James's Church, Nantinan – between Askeaton and Rathkeale.

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Public access to the former Church of Ireland Church has been restricted since it was damaged during a storm in 2013.

While repairs were carried out, it was subsequently established that the integrity of the parapet had been compromised and that it would cost at least €35,000 to carry out repair works.

"In the course of (2014 repair) works it was discovered that inappropriate cementitious repairs had been carried out historically on the top of the tower inside the parapet wall at the base of the steeple. These repairs had failed and were allowing water into the tower and had undermined the integrity of the parapet wall," stated a report from Executive Archaeologist Sarah McCutcheon.



Lincoln

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Built in 1821, the church and the adjoining graveyard was transferred into the ownership of Limerick County Council in 1980.

The graveyard is maintained by a local committee whose members have improved access and worked with the Local Authority and West Limerick Resources to repair the boundary walls. - Limerick Leader 25.04.2021

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars

Reflection for the Fourth Sunday of Easter 2021

Archbishop Michael Jackson continues his sermon series for the Season of Easter 2021 with a reflection for the Fourth Sunday of Easter (April 25).

This week the Archbishop's reflection is based on: St John 10.11–18. 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly ...' [St John 15:10]

The Archbishop observes that the theme of Easter is hope. He points out that we are accustomed to taking home a message of hope from the parable of The Good Shepherd. However, in the search for the good and in the response to the good, it is essential to discern the bad, he contends. The series continues each Sunday.

Link at -

<https://dublin.anglican.org/news/2021/04/25/reflection-for-the-fourth-sunday>

Media focus - The EU must take the blame for Irish chaos - Ruth Dudley Edwards

The narrative that Boris is responsible for problems in the North hinders the search for actual solutions

Our Prime Minister consistently reminds me of William Brown, Richmal Crompton's 11-year-old hero, a natural leader whose optimism prompts him to promise more than he can deliver. This regularly lands him and his followers in deep trouble, whereupon his brilliance/luck saves the day. Disaster followed by triumph is the story of Boris's Brexit and Covid.

This time, however, he has the problem of Northern Ireland. Unionists accuse him of treacherously undermining their constitutional position through the adoption of the Northern Ireland Protocol, which creates an internal border in the Irish Sea. Republicans are crowing about the imminence of a united Ireland.

Nightly rioting would still be occurring but for the death of the Duke of Edinburgh. Disaffected, angry Loyalists have no trust in government and little in such institutions as the police and the justice system, but they still honour the monarchy. Prince Philip made 57 visits to Northern Ireland, the last just before he stepped back from public life in 2017, when he presented Gold Duke of Edinburgh Awards. Although they didn't apologise for the IRA murder of his uncle, Louis Mountbatten, in Stormont even Sinn Fein joined

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a chorus of thanks for his public service and his and the Royal family's work towards peace and reconciliation.

The simple family funeral at Windsor on Saturday will bring comfort to all those who obeyed Covid regulations and stayed away from the funerals of loved ones, only to see on television the massive funeral of an IRA terrorist attended by many Sinn Fein leaders last year. The announcement by the Public Prosecution Service in Northern Ireland that no one would be charged triggered the riots, but even worse and more fundamental is the protocol. Saturday night is predicted to see a return to widespread violence.

Boris Johnson will be blamed. And that is not fair. Yes, he went back on his word and agreed to a border in the Irish Sea to save Brexit but as Prime Minister of the UK he has to put its interests above any constituent part.

But remember why that was the stark choice. We voted in June 2016 to leave the EU, David Cameron resigned, Theresa May, a Remainer, became prime minister and chose a gentlemanly career civil servant as her main Brexit adviser. They were fatally bullied by the EU into agreeing a sequencing of negotiations that put the UK at a disadvantage and weaponised Northern Ireland. Meanwhile, Irish Taoiseach Enda Kenny had to resign, and Leo Varadkar, his successor, axed the working group he had instructed to devise ways of making a land border as painless as possible. At every turn, Varadkar obeyed EU negotiator Michel Barnier and backed up his intransigent position by echoing Sinn Fein warnings that any kind of land border would lead to Republican violence and the collapse of the Good Friday Agreement – which is arrant nonsense.

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May was weakened by a disastrous general election, Barnier made mincemeat of hamstrung British opposite numbers and, as a country, we had months and months of parliamentary chaos over what was known as the backstop that would keep Northern Ireland in the EU single market. Its consistent rejection by Parliament led to May's political demise, Johnson becoming leader, his appointment of a buccaneering negotiator, David Frost, the winning of a big majority and pulling off a deal that saved Brexit. The price was a protocol which is a better deal than the backstop was, and indeed offers great financial possibilities to Northern Ireland. But is wreaking havoc because the EU has applied it vindictively to cause maximum disruption to trade. Joe Biden's ill-informed bleatings about the agreement haven't helped.

There is some hope, though. Micheál Martin, Varadkar's successor, is wise and reasonable and does not bang a green drum. The EU is somewhat chastened by the vaccine fiasco, while the Commission's (brief) invocation of Article 16 of the protocol to stop the export of vaccines made a farce of its opposition to a land border. Now everyone has discovered that it is not only Republicans that throw petrol bombs.

Lord Frost is in Brussels today charged with averting disaster. Can he return to Boris bearing a rabbit to pull triumphantly out of his top hat? Only if the EU accepts that it is to blame for the mess it has created.

Daily Telegraph 15.04.2021

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Media review

Explainer article on conversion therapy.

BBC

[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-56496423>]

The Church of England is institutionally woke

Daily Telegraph

Calvin Robinson comment

[<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/04/22/church-england-institutionally-woke/>]



Pointers for prayer

Mighty God,
in whom we know the power of redemption,
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,
uphold us with knowledge of the final morning
when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,
we will share in his resurrection,

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redeemed and restored to the fullness of life
and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,
long ago, faithful women
proclaimed the good news
of Jesus' resurrection,
and the world was changed forever.
Teach us to keep faith with them,
that our witness may be as bold,
our love as deep,
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,
you made the world in beauty,
and restore all things in glory
through the victory of Jesus Christ.
We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love,
and peace, to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his
resurrection, teaching them to love all people as neighbours.
As his disciples in this age,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe
in which we are privileged to live
and our neighbours with whom we share it...
...Intercessions

Open our hearts to your power moving
around us and between us and within us,
until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and
enemy,

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in communities transformed by justice and compassion,
and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Holy God,
you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son,
and to care for those who are our companions,
not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love.
Seeking to be true friends of all,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the
world....

...Intercessions

Guide us in the path of discipleship,
so that, as you have blessed us,
we may be a blessing for others,
bringing the promise of the kingdom near
by our words and deeds. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

Joyful is the person who finds wisdom, the one who gains understanding. For wisdom is more profitable than silver, and her wages are better than gold.

Proverbs 3:13-14 NLT

Proverbs spends a lot of time reflecting on wealth and the question is – where can you find it? I find it fascinating that the writer often speaks of the preciousness of silver and gold. Some things don't change. Last year, when the Covid crisis started biting, the price of silver and gold shot up, as people looked for a safe haven for their wealth. Isn't it fascinating that after thousands of years, even though the

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world has changed out of all recognition, people are still trying to find safety in the same place?

But true wealth lies elsewhere. The writer of Proverbs is convinced that what really matters is wisdom and that needs to be treasured far more than any possessions, beautiful and impressive as they might seem to be. Possessions try to persuade us that they can give us everything that we need to live fulfilled lives, but the writer is clear that wisdom alone unlocks the door to life. Without it we stumble around without any sense of direction or purpose, and that kind of wisdom can only be found through an intimate and growing relationship with God.

Wisdom in the book of Proverbs is always intensely practical. Wisdom opens the door to a life of peace, love and joy and it does so by enabling us to make good decisions whatever our circumstances. It enables us to live at peace with those around us, and to use our own gifts and opportunities effectively. Wisdom enables us to live justly and responsibly in society and prevents us from falling for the temptations which continually try to lure us away from God's path. Wisdom never calls us to a life of dull bookishness but rather to a life that is full of vitality and hope. But none of that happens without a determination to share every aspect of life with our loving God who is the source of all wisdom.

QUESTION

In what way do you need God's wisdom today?

PRAYER

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God our Father, you are the source of all wisdom. Give me a growing longing to be wise and a desire to let you shape all my thinking and actions day by day. Amen

