



PRACTISING HUMILITY

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for all that you are continuing to do as leaders to make an incredible impact both in schools and in our now dispersing learning communities, in homes and families across the country. The education sector is stepping up in remarkable ways and doing an incredible job on the frontline of this ever-changing new season. We have seen countless examples of school staff exhibiting truly humble service on behalf of their pupils, families and communities - giving of themselves again and again.

Therefore, as we enter Holy Week, it seems an appropriate time to reflect on the concept of **Practising Humility**; something we see epitomised in Jesus, and so movingly demonstrated across our schools at this difficult time. Education can sometimes be a sector that feels like whatever we've done, and however much we've put in, it's not quite enough. There's always more to do, always more to improve, and always a to-do list that seems to get longer however many things we tick off. For leaders, that can lead to a sense of frustration, or impatience, or inadequacy. We can be quick to put ourselves down in a system that sometimes makes it difficult to get back up again.

However, humility is the opposite of this – whilst recognising our imperfections, **humility seeks not to put ourselves down, but to put others first**. It is an orientation, a posture or a lens through which to see the day ahead, starting less often with 'what do I have to get done today as a leader' and more often with 'how can I serve my colleagues first today'. Humility is intrinsic to our authenticity as leaders – the ability and desire to place others first and show this in practical actions, as we have seen so many of you doing. In John 13:1-17, the writer explains the famous story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet at some length – zoning in on firstly on the response of Peter (who appears frequently as Jesus' deputy in some senses in the team – who might yours be, and how would you feel about washing their feet?), and then secondly on the importance of this as an example of humility for all others (in your own context, what has been your school's equivalent of washing others' feet?). Foot washing is not simply an act to be copied, but a principle to be adopted – maybe take a moment to read the familiar story again and consider what it means for your school community at the moment.

As you continue to put yourselves on the line as school leaders in this season (the challenge of which has been severe, but in fact, may only just be beginning), practising humility may well be so important for our communities – for at times, despite dynamic and well-intentioned decision-making, things may have gone wrong. Hope is however not the absence of things going wrong, but the ability to cope wisely with things and people going wrong, including ourselves. We continue to encourage one another and lift others up in this season – looking while we serve, as Paul writes to his struggling small church in Corinth, to the promise of God in the crisis: **'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in your weakness.'** (2 Corinthians 12:9)

As we move into the Easter holiday – let us stick together even more in looking to our neighbour before ourselves. This lens of humility may in fact lead to the re-shaping of relationships (within and between our schools) for the long-term because we were willing, like Jesus, to serve others first.

Andy Wolfe, Deputy Chief Education Officer (Leadership Development)

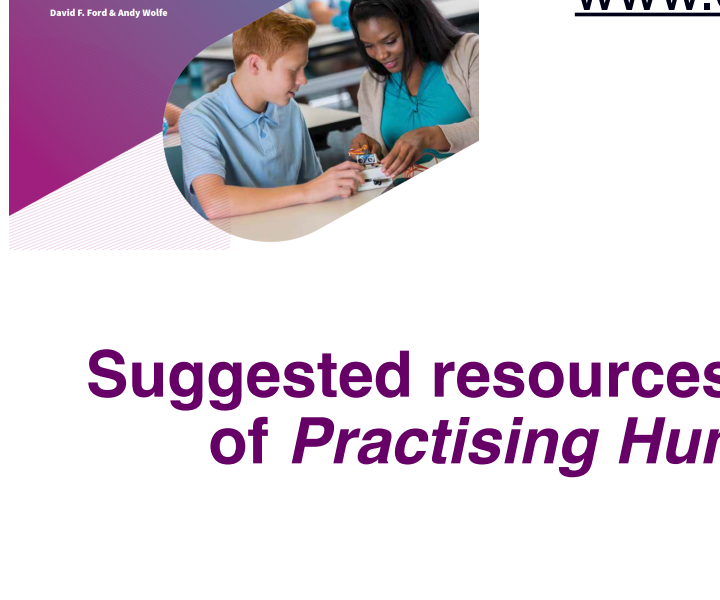


Practising Humility Reflection (Audio Version) - click here to listen

Practising Humility Reflection (Extract)

Humility causes us to re-orient our desires before and more in line with God: "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding." (Proverbs 3:5), while acknowledging that it is acceptable (and even important) to get things wrong... It is not about being self-deprecating, but rather retaining appropriate perspective and spreading the credit across teams.

Practising humility is not to dispel confidence and momentum, but rather asks **where is that confidence placed and how secure are those foundations?**

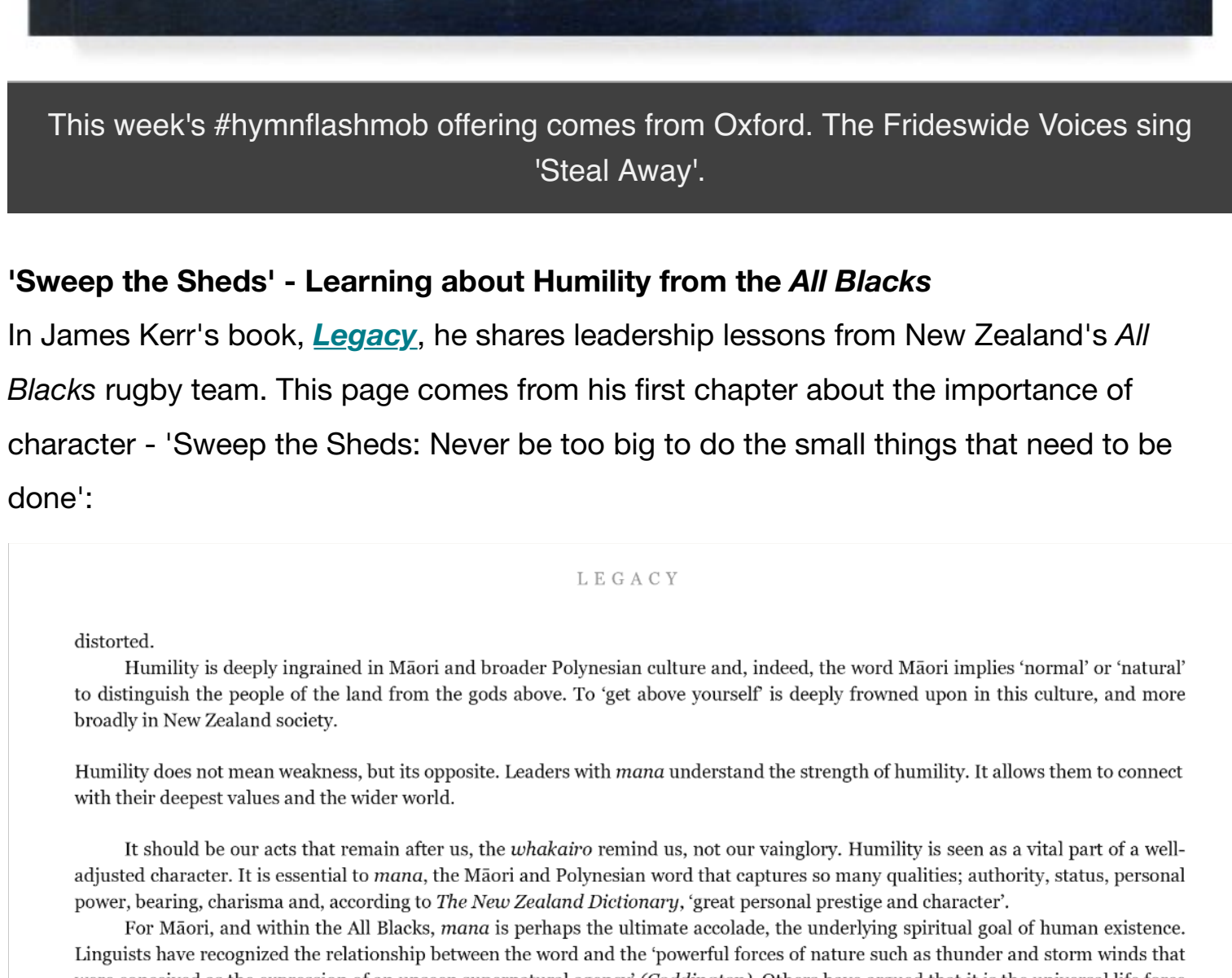


It notes that in our weakness we are strong, and our power as leaders comes from God's grace, not our own endeavour – as Paul outlines: **"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."** (2 Corinthians 12:9).



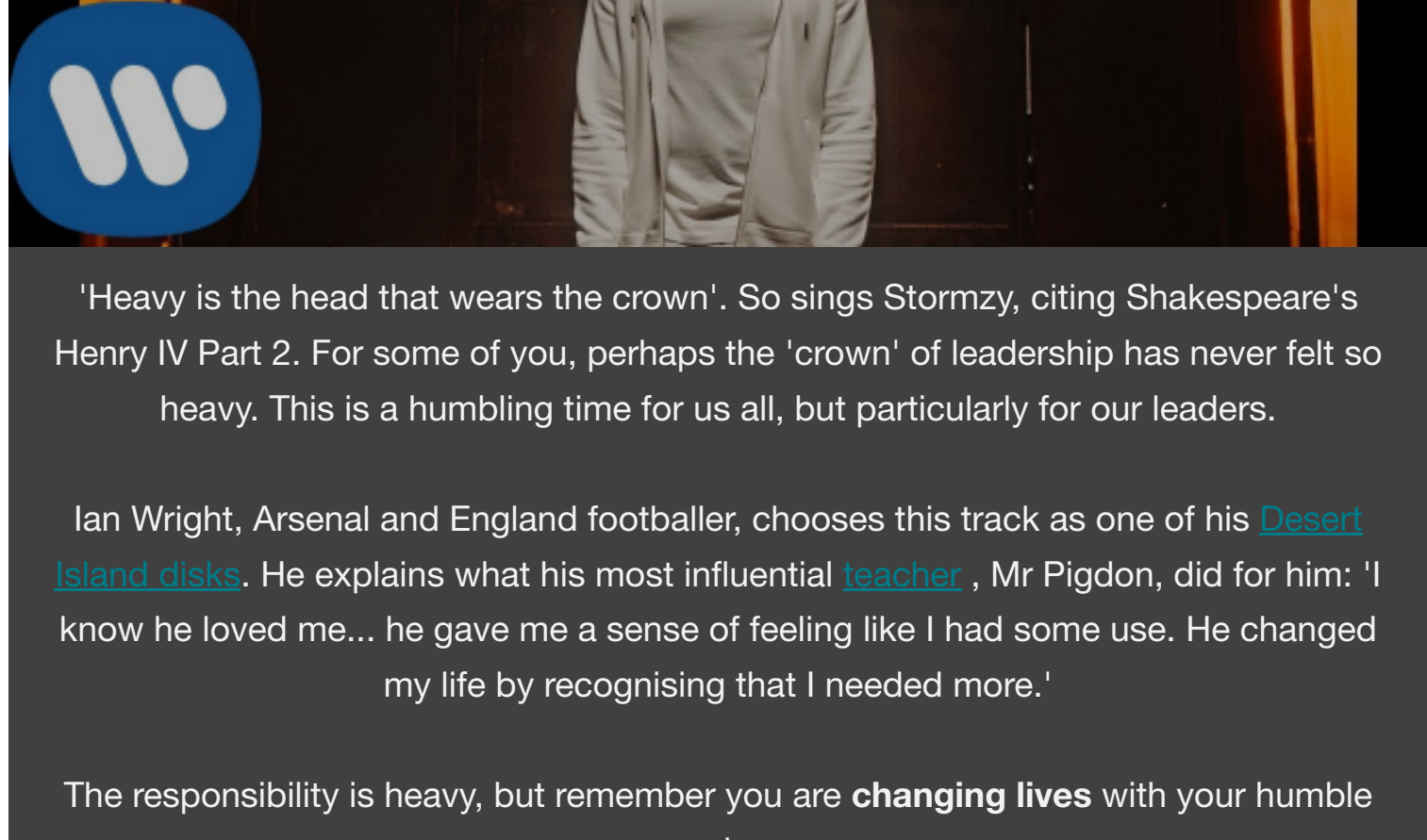
To read the reflection in full visit: www.cefel.org.uk/humility/

Suggested resources to explore the concept of Practising Humility where you are



'Sweep the Sheds' - Learning about Humility from the All Blacks

In James Kerr's book, *Legacy*, he shares leadership lessons from New Zealand's All Blacks rugby team. This page comes from his first chapter about the importance of character - 'Sweep the Sheds: Never be too big to do the small things that need to be done':



'Heavy is the head that wears the crown'. So sings Stormzy, citing Shakespeare's Henry IV Part 2. For some of you, perhaps the 'crown' of leadership has never felt so heavy. This is a humbling time for us all, but particularly for our leaders.

Ian Wright, Arsenal and England footballer, chooses this track as one of his *Daunt Island* clips. He explains what his most influential coaches, Mr Pigdon, did for him: 'I know he loved me... he gave me a sense of feeling like I had some use. He changed my life by recognising that I needed more.'

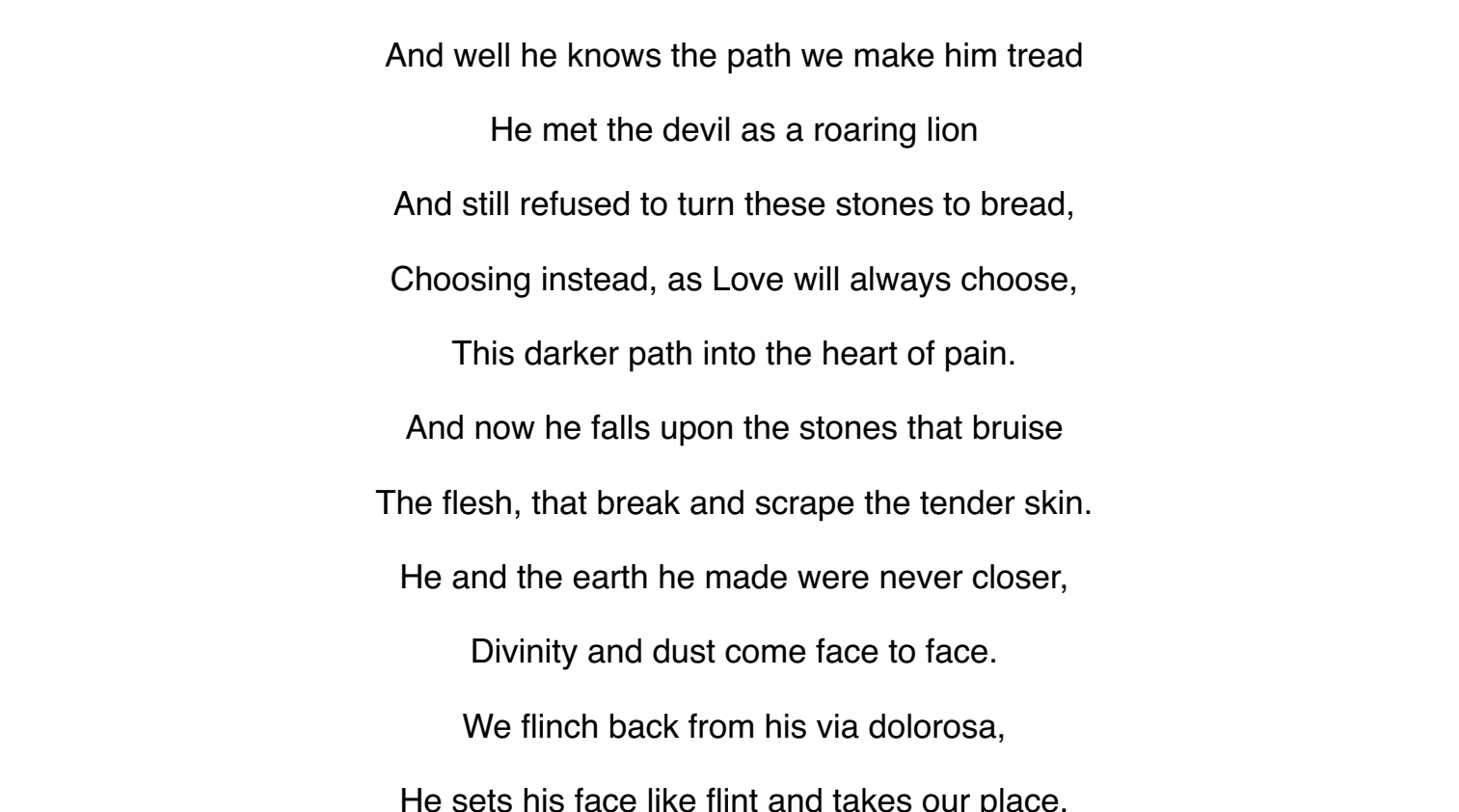
The responsibility is heavy, but remember you are **changing lives** with your humble service.

We have loved seeing examples of children and young people writing to the elderly and vulnerable in their communities; using this time to **think not of themselves, but of others**. Here are two examples, from the Dioceses of Southwark and Norwich. Do continue to share your wonderful acts of social justice, kindness and community outreach with us CEFEL@churchofengland.org or @CoJE_EduLead



Humility and Level 5 Leadership

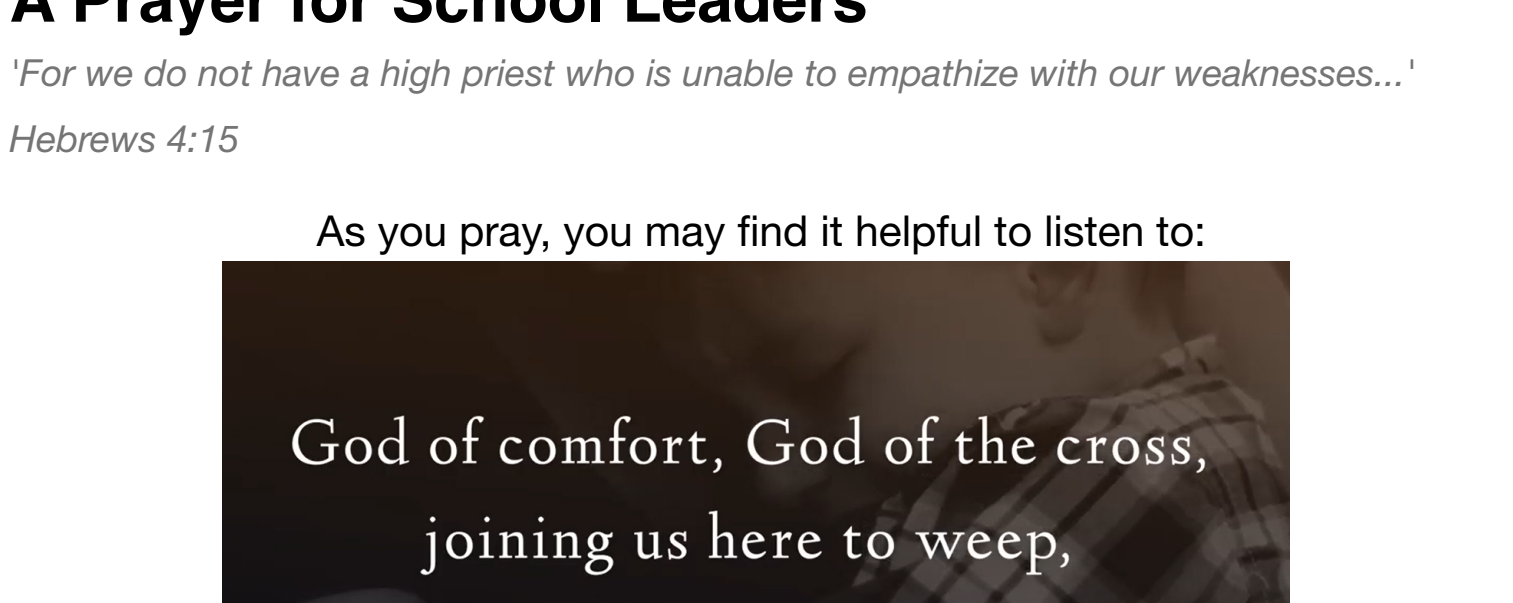
In this [video clip](#), Jim Collins - author of 'Good to Great' - explains why humility is a crucial component of great leadership.



As we begin Holy Week, we reflect on the humility of Christ in suffering for our sake. 'Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows'. The words of Isaiah 53 brought to life through the sublime music of Handel's Messiah.

III Jesus falls the first time - Malcolm Guite

He made the stones that pave the roads of Zion
And well he knows the path we make him tread
He met the devil as a roaring lion
And still refused to turn these stones to bread,
Choosing instead, as Love will always choose,
This darker path into the heart of pain.
And now he falls upon the stones that bruise
The flesh, that break and scrape the tender skin.
He and the earth he made were never closer,
Divinity and dust come face to face.
We flinch back from his via dolorosa,
He sets his face like flint and takes our place,
Staggers beneath the black weight of us all,
And falls with us that he might break our fall.

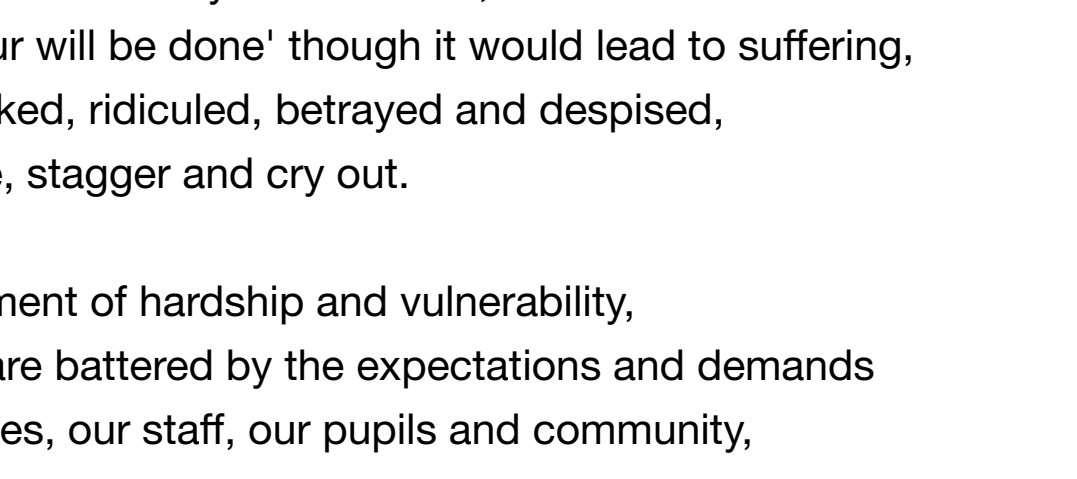


ECCE HOMO (1871-1891) - Behold the Man. Antonio Ciseri's painting depicts the moment of Pontius Pilate presenting Jesus as a criminal to the crowd that only a few days earlier had lauded him. Click the image to hear Christy Owens' extraordinary song 'Behold the Man' performed by the All Souls Orchestra at one of their Prom Praise concerts.

A Prayer for School Leaders

'For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses...'
Hebrews 4:15

As you pray, you may find it helpful to listen to:



Lord Jesus Christ
You chose to become one of us,
To breathe the air we breathe, to live the life we live,
To feel our joy, pain, excitement and fear,
To know loneliness, disappointment and grief.

In this moment of confusion and uncertainty,
When we do not know what the future holds,
For ourselves, our staff, our pupils and community,
Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ
You chose to humble yourself for us,
To say 'your will be done' though it would lead to suffering,
To be mocked, ridiculed and betrayed and despised,
To stumble, stagger and cry out.

In this moment of hardship and vulnerability,
When we are battered by the expectations and demands
On ourselves, our staff, our pupils and community,
Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ
You chose to be crucified for us,
To offer those who plotted against you,
To offer eternal life to those by your side,
To breathe your last breath for our sake.

In this moment of exhaustion and helplessness,
When so much is beyond the control
Of ourselves, our staff, our pupils and community,
Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ
You were raised back to life for us,
To show us there is hope beyond suffering,
To demonstrate that evil can be conquered,
To speak words of abundance and everlasting life.

In this moment when we need uplifting and inspiring,
When we ache for refreshment, restoration and comfort
For ourselves, our staff, our pupils and community
Lord, hear our prayer.

Graciously hear us, O Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen

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