

Prayer of the Month • July 2010

As we take the thorns of life and try to work them into some kind of pattern, O God, let us not waste our energies wondering about the trouble in the world, but use them to meet it; to take it away, if that be possible; but if it be not possible, give us the grace to take up our trouble like a cross, and bear it proudly in the name of Jesus our Lord.

Prayers / Theodor Parker Ferris. (New York : Seabury Press, 1981.) p.31, 1908–72

This is a prayer that gets to the heart of the Christian presence in the world. It is a prayer that grapples with pain and difficulty – the thorns of life. Recalling the reference to Christ's Crown of Thorns, we can be assured of God's love for us even in pain and degradation. Whilst being real about the trials of life, the prayer is not defeatist, but encouraging and affirmative. Of course, we would rather not suffer, if possible, but like Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, if in our suffering we can serve God, then we should do so confidently and proudly.

Theodore Parker Ferris was born on 23 December 1908 in Port Chester, New York. He received degrees from Harvard university (1928) and General Theological Seminary, New York (1933), and was ordained priest in 1934. He started his ministry at Grace Church, New York, in 1933, also become a tutor at General Seminary. From 1937 to 1942 he was Rector of Emmanuel Church, Baltimore, and from 1942 until his death at Trinity Church, Boston, Massachusetts. He was active in the ecumenical movement and was an alternate delegate to the first assembly of the World Council of Churches, in Amsterdam, in 1948. He was a delegate to the Episcopal Church's triennial General Convention six times between 1946 and 1967. He was also a trustee of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Many of the books he published were collections of sermons, and he was perhaps the best-known preacher in the Episcopal Church of the USA in the mid-twentieth century. In a book on preaching, *Go Tell the People* (1951), he wrote: "A sermon is by nature a disclosure, an unveiling, a revelation ... to preach is to draw the curtain aside from the figure of Christ and to lose oneself in the folds of it." He was a bachelor, and died in Boston on 26 November 1972.

Colin Lunt