

### ***Prayer of the Month • July/August 2016***

O Lord, greatest and most true light, from which the light of the day and of the sun springs! O Light, which lightens every human who comes into the world! O Light, which knows no night or evening but is always at midday most clear and fair! Without you all is utter darkness; by you everything is resplendent. O Wisdom, Father of mercies, enlighten my mind, so that I may see only those things that please you and be blind to everything else. Amen.



John Bradford (1510–1555)

This prayer sustains the image of light from one phrase to the next. Acknowledging that God is the source of light, and of human understanding, it asks for enlightenment of mind, with the purpose of seeing what pleases God, and overlooking the disorder and darkness of the world.

John Bradford lived at a time of great disturbance in the country. It must have been hard to see what was right and what was wrong. He prays, really, to ignore what is wrong, and only to see what is right. John Bradford was born in Blackley, Manchester, in 1510. His family could afford to send him to grammar school. He started his working life as a servant, but was well trusted and rose to become paymaster of the English army in the wars of Henry VIII. Later, he studied law and, listening to the preaching of a fellow student was converted to the Protestant faith. He then studied theology at Cambridge, and was appointed Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge. There, he acquired the nickname of 'Holy Bradford', not out of malice but with respect for his dedication to God and unselfish attitude. He was ordained in 1550 and appointed personal chaplain to Bishop Nicholas Ridley. His gifts in preaching led to him being appointed in 1551 as chaplain to King Edward VI, and prebendary of St Paul's Cathedral.

Following the death of Edward VI, Mary Tudor ascended the throne, bringing the threat of reprisals against Protestants. Bradford was arrested in her first month, and consigned to the Tower of London, where he continued to write religious works and to preach to any who would listen. He was tried in January 1555 and condemned to death, and taken to Newgate Jail, where he was to die on 1 July. The execution had been set for 4.00 a.m. but was delayed due to a large crowd turning up to witness the death. Bradford was chained to the stake with a young man, John Leaf. After begging forgiveness of any he had wronged, Bradford turned to Leaf and said, 'Be of good comfort, brother, for we shall have a merry supper with the Lord this night.' Bradford is commemorated at the Marian Martyrs' Monument in Smithfield, London.

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