

- 1 Victor Hugo was one of the greatest French authors, and he died on this day in 1885. One of his most famous books has been made into a musical that has been performed across the world.
- 2 The book and the musical are called "*Les Misérables*", telling of a thief - Jean Valjean - who is released from being chained in a floating prison for 19 years. His imprisonment has taken away his sense of living as a human being. On his release, no-one will help him because he is an ex-prisoner. Eventually a priest invites him to have a meal. Valjean leaves the house during the night, stealing what is valuable from the priest's house. Soldiers come upon him and arrest him as he acts suspiciously. They discover the valuables and take him back to the priest. Wanting to give him a break, a chance, the priest lies and says that he has given him the valuables.
- 3 Forgiven and treated generously, Valjean decides to change his life. He can only break with the past, he feels, if people no longer know that he is a former prisoner. He decides to take on a new name, and moves to a small town, where eventually he becomes mayor, and helps people.
- 4 Because Jean Valjean has broken the law in not reporting regularly to the police, a policeman (called Javert) searches for him, year after year. The policeman happens to arrive in the town where the ex-prisoner has become the mayor, but he does not recognise him. One day there is an accident and someone becomes trapped under a runaway cart. Immediately the mayor lifts one end of the heavy cart with his back. The policeman who sees this knows of only one other man with such strength - the prisoner he is looking for: Jean Valjean.

- 5 '*Les Misérables*' continues with love stories and escapes, telling of the courage and the struggle to improve the lives of all who are poor and deprived.
- 6 '*Les Misérables*' is one of the world's most popular musicals. The Finale includes these words:

*"To love another person  
is to touch the face of God."*

- 7 The first part of our prayer is based on a prayer written by Victor Hugo, the author of '*Les Misérables*':
- 8 *Let us pray:*

**We who weep come to you, Lord,  
because you always  
share our sorrow.**

**We who suffer come to you,  
knowing that you cure.**

**We who are afraid come to you,  
because you smile on us.**

**We share in your life  
because you share ours  
and so we know, God of love,  
that "to love another person  
is, indeed, to touch your face".**

**May we live in your love forever.  
Amen.**

The words of the Finale:

*"To love another person  
is to touch the face of God."*



 *An alternative prayer:*

**Lord, may people be as ready  
to give me a break, a chance,  
and let me make a new start,  
as I am ready  
to be generous to others.  
Forgive me my faults  
in the same way  
as I forgive and accept other people.  
Amen.**

 *In October 1995 in London's Royal Albert Hall, 250 actors from across the world came together for a 10th anniversary concert. The Finale featured 17 actors who had played the hero, Valjean, and each sang a line or two in his own language.*

 *An organisation that works with prisoners, former prisoners and their families, is: The Bourne Trust, 1-3 Brixton Rd., London SW9 6DE*

 *Similar to the words quoted from the Finale are these by the Roman philosopher, Seneca, who wrote shortly before his death in 65 AD: "No-one is so near God as the person who shows kindness." He was not a Christian.*

 *Victor Hugo (26/2/1802-22/5/1885) wrote to his publisher in 1862. As the author of 'Les Misérables', he wanted to know if the book was successful and selling. He simply wrote " ? ". to which his publisher replied: " ! " He wrote the book during his 15-year exile from France on the Channel Island of Guernsey. Hugo also wrote "The Hunchback of Notre Dame".*

 *Father, I place into your hands; If I am lacking love; In you, my God; Oh the love of my Lord*

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in  
*'Praying Each Day of the Year'*,  
a 3-volume book  
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine  
to research this topic further.

This material is part of  
the prayer and education website  
of the De La Salle Brothers  
in Great Britain:  
[www.prayingeachday.org](http://www.prayingeachday.org)