

- 1 People of the Jewish faith celebrate the New Year - *'Rosh Hashanah'* - when it is late September or early October. It is the first of 10 days of prayer for forgiveness - 10 "penitential" days: a time when people focus on returning to God, growing closer to him, and realising how they need to grow in kindness to others. The last of the ten days is called *'Yom Kippur'*, which is considered the most holy of days in the Jewish Calendar. *'Yom Kippur'* is sometimes called *'The Day of Atonement'* - a word that means becoming "at-one" with God again.
- 2 Until the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D., it was on this feastday that the high priest entered what was called "the holy of holies" in the Temple, where God's presence was thought to be focused in a special way. There the high priest would confess his sins and pray for all the people.
- 3 On the same day, the high priest would place his hands upon a goat as he prayed for God to forgive everyone. The goat - symbolically carrying the sins of the people - was then taken out into the wilderness of the desert. It is from this practice that we have the term "*scapegoat*" - one who is made to carry the wrongdoing of someone else; someone who can be blamed for the faults of others.
- 4 In our own times, *'Yom Kippur'* remains the most special and prayerful day of the year. People of the Jewish faith spend most of *'Yom Kippur'* in prayer and fasting, expressing sorrow for what they have done wrong.
- 5 In the synagogue, the rabbi and many of the worshippers wear white clothes. These reflect the joy of knowing that God takes away the sin of those who are sorry, and who are genuine in being determined to change their attitude. At the end of the prayer service in the synagogue, the *'shofar'* - the ram's horn - is blown, reminding people of the promises they have made to change their lives for the better.
- 6 *We'll take as our prayer a few words from the Old Testament prophet, Micah:*
- 7 **Who can compare with the Lord?
He pardons what we do wrong,
and takes great pleasure
in having mercy.
He treads down our faults,
and he casts our sins
to the very bottom of the sea.**
(Micah 7¹⁸⁻²⁰)

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