

# **PRAYER GROUP**

April 29, 2020

## ***A TIME FOR A CHECK-IN***

### ***GREETING***

*Leader:* Jesus said,  
“Where two or three are gathered in my name,  
there am I, in the midst of them.

### ***LIGHTING THE CANDLE***

*Leader:* We light this candle as a reminder that Jesus,  
who is for us the light of the world,  
will be with us always,  
even until the end of the age.

### ***AN INVITATION INTO STILLNESS***

*Richard Bott*

Breathe in.

Know the Holy Spirit is around,  
and in,  
and with you.

Breathe out.

Know that all creation is dancing,  
arm in arm with the Creator.

Breathe in.

Know that the peace of Christ,  
the peace that passes all understanding,  
rests and remains with all things,  
all creatures, all people,  
all places, all times.

Breathe, beloved siblings.,

and know that each breath  
is a prayer -  
of lament and of joy,  
of hallelujah, whole or broken,  
but always holy.

Breathe.

## ***PRAYER***

*Reader:* Christ, as a light illumine and guide us.  
Christ, as a shield overshadow us.

*All:*       **Christ under us; Christ over us;  
Christ beside us on our left and our right.**

*Reader:* This day be within and without us,  
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.

*Reader:* Be in the heart of each to whom we speak;  
in the mouth of each who speaks unto us.

*Reader:* This day be within and without us,  
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.

**All: Christ as a light; Christ as a shield;  
Christ beside us on our left and our right.**

## **A WORD ABOUT LIMINAL SPACES**

*Liminal spaces are transitional or transformative spaces. They are the waiting areas between one point in time and space and the next.*

*Often, when we are in liminal spaces, we have the feeling of just being on the verge of something. Liminal space is, of course, a literal space. And there are plenty of examples of physical liminal spaces, but there are also spaces of liminality in our mental states. This, too, is a type of liminal space.*

## **SCRIPTURE READING** Romans 8:18ff

**18-21** ...I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens.

**22-25** All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's *within* us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.

<sup>26-28</sup> Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. The Spirit does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. The Spirit knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.

<sup>29-30</sup> God decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love along the same lines as the life of The Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him.

After God made that decision of what God's children should be like, God followed it up by calling people by name. After God called them by name, God set them on a solid footing...and then, after getting them established, God stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what had begun.

<sup>31-39</sup> So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition...is there anything else God wouldn't gladly and freely do for us...Who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us!—is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us.

Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture...

None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely *nothing* can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

**REFLECTION**     “The Liminal Paradox”     *Sheryl Fullerton*

*Fr. Richard Rohr of the Centre for Contemplation and action quotes Sheryl Fullerton, an editor and author with whom he has worked for many years, and who received a cancer diagnosis two years ago which required a difficult surgery. Like many individuals who are on earnest spiritual journeys, she allowed the painful and challenging experience to transform and guide her to greater wisdom.*

When we find ourselves in liminal space, does it matter whether we are pushed or whether we jump? Either way, we are not where or what we were before, nor do we know how or where we will land in our new reality. We are, as the anthropologist Victor Turner (1920–1983) wrote, betwixt and between. In that space—which is mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual—we are destabilized, disoriented. The old touchstones, habits, and comforts are now past, the future unknown. We only wish such a time to be over. We may be impatient to pass through it quickly, with as little distress as possible, even though that is not likely. . . .

But what if we can choose to experience this liminal space and time, this uncomfortable now, as . . . a place and state of creativity, of construction and deconstruction, choice and transformation[?] I wonder whether it is, then, also the realm of the Holy Spirit, our comforter, who does not take away the vastness and possibility of this opened-up threshold time, but invites us to lay down our fears and discomfort to see what else is there, hard as that may be. . . .

One transformation in this liminal time of cancer treatment and recovery was my recognition that the staggering vulnerability I was experiencing was not weakness, not shameful, but the source of what would allow me to survive and, eventually, to thrive. I allowed others to see me—not just my broken, lopsided face, but also my pain, sorrow, disappointment, and discouragement, as well as my gratitude, resilience, joy, and recovery. . . .

Like Jonah in the belly of the sea monster, we are led where we do not want to go—not once, but many times in our lives. Dwelling in unsettling liminal space, whether we are pushed or we jump, we are led to draw on resources and possibilities we may not have tapped before. In the unknown space between here and there, younger and older, past and future, life happens. And, if we attend, we can feel the Holy Spirit moving with us in a way that we may not be aware of in more settled times. In liminal time and space, we can learn to let reality—even in its darkness—be our teacher, rather than living in the illusion that we are creating it on our own. We can enter into the liminal paradox: a disturbing time and space that not only breaks us down, but also offers us the choice to live in it with fierce aliveness, freedom, sacredness, companionship, and awareness of Presence.

## ***PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION***

O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other's burdens.

Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our world.

We pray for those who struggle...

We pray for those who struggle at this time of huge uncertainty;

for political leaders faced with unforeseen challenges, uncharted ways, difficult decisions...

*(time of silent reflection)*

We pray for those who struggle.

We pray for those in situations never before experienced...

We pray for moms and dads who struggle with having children at home all day...

It is difficult to find new activities; it is hard to stay creative.

Holy One, we will listen carefully to the challenges, we will encourage fresh ways of communication with good friends.

*(time of silent reflection)*

We pray for those who struggle.

We pray for those whose day is radically different...

We pray for those who must leave their usual workspace, for those breadwinners who must work at home...

Holy One, we will support the new priorities, we will not intrude into the working hours.

*(time of silent reflection)*

We pray for those who struggle.

We pray for those who have lost their jobs...

We pray for those whose financial security has gone,  
who have anxiety around paying rent  
or providing for family needs...

Holy One, we will be there in the testing times,  
we will assure them of their self-worth.

*(time of silent reflection)*

We pray for those who struggle.

We pray for those who have been affected  
by the Covid 19 virus...

Those who are sick at home  
and those who have been hospitalized,  
in their suffering, and in their fear...

Holy One, we will hear and respond to their distress,  
we will be a safe but compassionate presence  
to their loved ones.

*(time of silent reflection)*

Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking,  
we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God,

**AMEN.**

***THE LORD'S PRAYER***

## **WORDS OF BLESSING**

*Leader:* May the peace of Christ go with us,  
wherever God may send us.

May God guide us through the wilderness,  
protect us through the storm.

May God bring us home rejoicing  
at the wonders we've been shown.

May God bring us home rejoicing  
once again into these doors. Amen