

PRAYER GROUP

June 16, 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.

OPENING SENTENCES

Leader: One thing I have asked of God
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of God
all the days of my life;
to behold the beauty of God
and to seek God in God’s temple.

Who is it that you seek?

We seek God, the Holy One.

Do you seek God with all your heart?

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Do you seek God with all your soul?

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Do you seek God with all your mind?

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Do you seek God with all your strength?

Amen. Christ, have mercy.

DECLARATION OF FAITH

Leader: To whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life,
and we have believed and have come to know
that You are the Holy One of God.

Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ,
King of endless glory.

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.**

AN INVITATION INTO STILLNESS

Let us now take a moment to settle into the silence.

Hear and feel the quiet of this place
and this community of people.

Hear and feel your quiet breathing.

Inhale the good gifts that God provides,
and exhale all of the things
that you need to release.

Breathe in strength. *(Pause for breath...)*

Exhale exhaustion. *(Pause for breath...)*

Breathe in freedom. *(Pause for breath...)*

Exhale all that holds you back. *(Pause for breath...)*

Breathe in a new sense of direction. *(Pause for breath...)*

Exhale the paths you no longer want to use.
(Pause for breath...)

Breathe in hope. *(Pause for breath...)*

Exhale self-doubt. *(Pause for breath...)*

Breathe in unconditional love. *(Pause for breath...)*

Exhale distrust and hate. *(Pause for breath...)*

In this time of prayer,
may our minds be open to new truth,
and our hearts be receptive to love.

Let us open ourselves to the Spirit of Christ
in our midst.

AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTINE VALTERS PAINTER

My new book, [*Earth, Our Original Monastery*](#), is rooted in my love of monastic tradition and practice: the gifts of silence and solitude, hospitality, daily rhythms, slowness, soulful companionship, and presence to the holiness of everything are gifts our world is hungry for. Over time, I began to discover the ways that Earth herself teaches us these practices. In the Celtic tradition it is said there are two books of revelation – the big book of Nature and the small book of the scriptures. Nature is experienced as the original scripture.

Thomas Merton, the 20th century Trappist monk who was such a genius at translating contemplative wisdom for a contemporary world often found his experiences in creation as some of the most profound spiritually. He writes, “How necessary it is for the monks to work in the fields, in the sun, in the mud, in the clay, in the wind: These are our spiritual directors and our novice masters.” For Merton, the elements of water, wind, earth, and fire are our original soul friends.

The monastic tradition is also filled with stories of the kinship between saints and animals as a sign of their holiness. The desert and Celtic traditions in particular have many of these stories, such as St. Cuthbert who would emerge from the sea each morning after prayer and otters would come to dry him off and warm his feet or St. Brigid who had a white cow as a companion who would give endless milk.

And of course, the great tradition of the creation psalms gives us a window into a worldview that sees all of nature singing praise together in the original liturgy.

How do we find resurrection in a season when many will die from this pandemic? How so we practice a deep sense of hope in the midst of economic uncertainty? What might happen if we let Earth teach us a new way of being?

Imagine if...we each took on practices like these:

- Allow time and space each day to grieve fully, to release the river of tears we try to hold back so carefully. Listen to the elements and see what wisdom they offer to you for this sorrow and for how to endure.
- As our movements are limited, make a commitment to move slowly through the world, resisting the demand for speed and productivity that is tearing our bodies apart and wearing them down to exhaustion.
- Reject compulsive “busyness” as a badge of pride and see it for what it is—a way of staying asleep to your own deep longings and those of the world around you. Allow time to be present to birdsong and to notice the way creation is awakening through green leaf and pink bud.
- Pause regularly. Breathe deeply. Reject multitasking. Savor one thing in this moment right now. Discover a portal into joy and delight in your body through fragrance, texture, shimmering light, song, or sweetness.
- Roll around on the grass, the way dogs do with abandon.

- Release worries about getting muddy or cold or looking foolish. Or dance with a tree in the wind, letting its branches guide you. Don't hold yourself back.
- Every day, at least once, say thank you for the gift of being alive. Every day, at least once, remember the One who crafted you and all of creation and exclaimed, "That is so very good."
- Allow a day to follow the rhythms of your body. Notice when you are tired, and sleep. When you are hungry, eat. When your energy feels stagnant, go for a long walk. See what you discover when you try to attune to your natural rhythms.

[This] is a season of new life, which does not mean we deny the reality of death. Indeed nature requires the death of old matter to generate nourishment for growth. Make space for the sorrow and make space to listen for the rumblings of [growth] erupting around you.

VIDEO "In This Newborn Light" *The Work of the People*

READINGS *Psalm 104 NRSVA*

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul.
O LORD my God, you are very great.

You are clothed with honour and majesty,
² wrapped in light as with a garment.

You stretch out the heavens like a tent,
³ you set the beams of your^[a] chambers on the waters,

you make the clouds your^[b] chariot,
you ride on the wings of the wind,

⁴ you make the winds your^[c] messengers,
fire and flame your^[d] ministers.

⁵ You set the earth on its foundations,
so that it shall never be shaken.

⁶ You cover it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.

⁷ At your rebuke they flee;
at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.

⁸ They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys
to the place that you appointed for them.

⁹ You set a boundary that they may not pass,
so that they might not again cover the earth.

¹⁰ You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills,

¹¹ giving drink to every wild animal;
the wild asses quench their thirst.

¹² By the streams^[e] the birds of the air have their habitation;
they sing among the branches.

¹³ From your lofty abode you water the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

- 14 You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to use,^[f]
to bring forth food from the earth,
15 and wine to gladden the human heart,
oil to make the face shine,
and bread to strengthen the human heart.
- 16 The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly,
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
- 17 In them the birds build their nests;
the stork has its home in the fir trees.
- 18 The high mountains are for the wild goats;
the rocks are a refuge for the coney.
- 19 You have made the moon to mark the seasons;
the sun knows its time for setting.
- 20 You make darkness, and it is night,
when all the animals of the forest come creeping out.
- 21 The young lions roar for their prey,
seeking their food from God.
- 22 When the sun rises, they withdraw
and lie down in their dens.
- 23 People go out to their work
and to their labour until the evening.

- 24 O LORD, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
- 25 Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
creeping things innumerable are there,
living things both small and great.
- 26 There go the ships,
and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.
- 27 These all look to you
to give them their food in due season;
- 28 when you give to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.
- 29 When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.
- 30 When you send forth your spirit,^[a] they are created;
and you renew the face of the ground.
- 31 May the glory of the LORD endure for ever;
may the LORD rejoice in his works—
- 32 who looks on the earth and it trembles,
who touches the mountains and they smoke.
- 33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

A REFLECTION Video “Everything is Holy Now”

<https://youtu.be/6VGastsEkyo>

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...

THE LORD'S PRAYER

WORDS OF BLESSING

Leader: The strength of the rising sun,
the strength of the swelling sea,
the strength of the high mountains,
the strength of the fertile plains,
the strength of the everlasting river
flowing in us and through us this day,
the strength of the river of God
flowing in us and through us this day.