

PRAYER GROUP

July 15, 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.

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.

EARTH AS THE ORIGINAL SAINTS--Christine Valters Paintner

- 1 “The animals don’t spend time in discernment; the trees don’t go off on retreat to listen to their calling. They simply are exactly as they were created to be, and in that simple witness, they reveal a path of yielding, of not resisting, and of simply allowing themselves to unfold as intended.”

Why do we, as human beings, work so hard to resist our calling?

- 2 “We need time in silence, away from the distractions of daily life. We need guides who can help us to identify and celebrate our gifts. We need wise ones who can help us identify our shadow material—those places of resistance and refusal to be who we are most called to be.”

Who are the wise ones, the guides you turn to who help you discover who you truly are?

- 3 “One way to encourage a posture of contentment in our lives is gratitude. Gratitude is a way of being in the world that does not assume we are owed anything, and the fact that we have something at all—our lives, breath, families, friends, shelter, laughter, or other simple pleasures—is cause for celebration.”

What might happen if you began to cultivate a way of being in the world that treats all the things you take for granted as gifts, knowing none of us deserves particular graces?

- 4 “Gratitude is a practice that can begin with the smallest acknowledgment and be expanded out to every facet of our existence.”

How might gratitude help you to cultivate a healthy asceticism and a rejection of consumerism?

A READING “The Peace of Wild Things” *Wendell Berry*

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

A PRACTICE TO TRY

Resting in Gratitude

This meditation can be done any time of day, but it might be especially meaningful at the end of each day as a way to reflect back on the events and encounters of your day with a heart of gratitude.

Find a comfortable seated position, and spend some time deepening your breath and bringing your awareness to your heart center.

As you breathe in, imagine your heart expanding to behold the gifts of your life.

As you breathe out, release any worries or concerns you carry for the moment.

Begin by remembering your ancestors, both of blood and of spirit, whose lives have inspired your own, whose labors meant that you were given the gift of life.

Call present this cloud of witnesses. Offer gratitude for their presence.

Remember the people of your life who bring you joy and comfort, beginning with those closest to you—friends and family, neighbors and coworkers—then moving outward and thinking of the people who work to deliver your mail, remove the trash, work at the grocery store, or smile at you at the bank: all those who bring ease to your daily life in various ways. Then widen that out further and breathe in gratitude for all people and cultures across the globe trying to make the world a better place.

Remember the gifts of the earth and the sea, the creatures who inhabit them, and the plants that offer their nourishment.

Call to mind any places in nature that are sanctuaries for you.

If you have any companion animals, hold them with gratitude.

Remember the gift of life and all the ways you are nourished and sustained each day through shelter and food, through health and community, and through the wisdom of others, all the while holding a heart of gratitude.

Call to mind and heart the communion of saints, both those humans who have walked Earth and left their wisdom behind for us and the animals and other creatures whose presence inspires us to live more fully as ourselves.

Invite the presence of the Holy Spirit with you and notice how it has been moving in your life lately.

Take time to allow yourself to bask in this sense of gratitude for a while, and see what other images come. Who or what else sparks this heart-expanding sense of thanksgiving for you?

As you come to a close of this prayer, you might spend some time writing down a list of what you are grateful for and anything that arose in your prayer that surprised you.

You are also invited to write your own prayer of gratitude.

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

(Richard Rohr)

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: May the song of the birds
be the bearer of your joy.

May the softness of the moss
be the pillow for your dreams.

May the puzzle of the monkey
bring adventure to your steps.

May the down of the feather
be the gentleness of your touch.

May the wild nettle grove
be the healing of your pain.