

# PRAYER GROUP

July 22, 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.

**A READING** *“A Rabbit Noticed My Condition”—St. John of the Cross*

*I was sad one day and went for a walk; I sat in a field. A rabbit noticed my condition and came near. It often does not take more than that to help at times— to just be close to creatures who are so full of knowing, so full of love, that they don't — chat, they just gaze with their marvelous understanding*

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION FROM**

***“Earth—Our Original Monastery”*** *Christine Valters Paintner*

**CHAPTER 4: Earth As The Original Spiritual Directors**

1. “In the tradition of both the desert and the Celtic monks, having a spiritual director or soul friend was considered essential to the spiritual life. A wise guide and mentor can help remind us of our heart’s true desires and how to live with more integrity.”

Who is your *anam cara*, your soul friend? To whom do you turn for compassionate and wise guidance?

2. “In Christian tradition, there were often holy men and women who were described as having a special relationship to animals. St. Benedict, for example, befriended a crow who was later said to have saved his life from being poisoned.

It was said of St. Kevin that an otter would bring him salmon every day from the lake so he could eat. These special connections and relationships to animals were once a sign of holiness. The animals, as well as other aspects of creation, often acted as soul friends to the monks and mystics.”

Soul friends do not have to be only human. Which animals or other elements of the creation, offer their soul friendship and wisdom to you?

3. “We are called to live the life of the new creation in which right relationship to all creation is restored. We are not anticipating its arrival but living it’s becoming.”

In what way are you living the creation here and now, honouring the wisdom of your body and the body of creation?

4. “Merton knew that the true mentor of the soul was nature itself. The fields, sun, mud, clay, wind, forests, sky, earth, and water are all companions for our own inner journeys.”

What guidance and wisdom have you gleaned from the elements of water, wind, earth, and fire?

5. “All created things await to serve the divine purpose in our lives. There is nothing in nature that falls outside these parameters. Through every rock, every bird, every flower, and every creature, God enters into intimacy and communion with us. This is how God’s wisdom is revealed, and we would do well to listen for their spiritual direction.”

What would it mean to listen into the deep wisdom of these four elements for our own spiritual direction and guidance in life?

6. “The ancient monks used to practice a kind of inner and outer watchfulness. The desert mothers and fathers wrote about this frequently, for a central part of their spiritual discipline was to show up for life and pay attention. This kind of presence can be challenging in our modern world when our attention is pulled in so many different directions.”

How might you begin to practice presence to another as gift of reverence and mutuality?

7. “When we practice watchfulness, we become aware of the wonder that surrounds us. Walking the path of wonder is a radical act in a world numbed by cynicism and despair.”

What holy surprises await you when you pay attention?

### ***A PRACTICE TO TRY--Written Exploration: “I Am” Poem***

You might begin by doing an online search for a poem by N. Scott Momaday titled “The Delight Song of Tsoai-Talee.”

Drawing on the poem as a springboard, write your own version of an “I am” poem. Let images arise spontaneously without editing, always returning to the words “I am” and listening for what parts of creation you are longing to identify with. Imagine speaking from the voice of creation, and see what wants to be spoken. As you deepen your own capacity to cherish Earth and feel your intimacy with her being, what do you notice and discover?

## ***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***

May God give you...  
For every storm, a rainbow,  
For every tear, a smile,  
For every care, a promise,  
And a blessing in each trial.  
For every problem life sends,  
A faithful friend to share,  
For every sigh, a sweet song,  
And an answer for each prayer.