

PRAYER GROUP

July 8, 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 SCRIPTURES--Christine Valters Paintner

1. “The Celtic Christian tradition maintains that we receive two books of revelation. One is the book of the scripture texts, and the other is the vast book of creation. We need both to receive the fullness of divine wisdom.”

Where does God reveal Gods-Self to you?

2. “When we pay attention to the rhythm of the seasons, we learn a great deal about the rise and fall of life, about emptiness and fullness. Spring invites us to blossom forth; summer calls us to our own ripening; autumn demands that we release and let go; and winter quietly whispers to us to rest, to sink into the dark fertile space of unknowing, to release the demands of productivity and calendars and to-do lists, and simply to be.”

What is the rhythm of the present season calling you to do now?

3. “When you bring your attention to something in nature, whether a tree or a stone or a creature, and bring yourself fully present to it, you can sense its inner stillness, meeting a place of stillness in your own heart. You can experience how much it rests in the great Being who holds all of us, with no divisions, and in that awareness you discover that place within you as well.”

How does this image of Earth as original scripture, as the first text we meet long before we encounter the holy books, alter not just your understanding of the earth, but of you too as a creature of the earth?

4. “[At a time of grief] winter’s sparseness reflected back to me my own inner reality. It was during this time that I fell in love with winter and the gifts she offers. “What is it the season for?” a wise spiritual director used to ask me, inviting me to tend to my inner seasons as well as the outer one unfolding around me. She knew that nature’s wisdom could offer me guidance and grace.”

What wisdom do the seasons hold for you?

5. “We are called to seek the wild spaces of our lives, to break free from the places that feel confining but also to find places of sanctuary where we are offered the gift of rest and safety. From there we can find nourishment to return again and again to the wild edges and hear nature as scripture verse.”

Where do you experience the wild spaces in your life?
Where are the places of rest and sanctuary?

SOME PRACTICES TO TRY

Visual Art Exploration—Contemplative Photography

- To make a walk a visual art exploration, bring your camera with you; it can be as simple as your phone camera.
- Pay attention to what gifts and graces arrive when you move through the world in an openhearted way.

- The frame of the camera lens helps you to see them in new ways and reflect again later on what you have encountered. If you notice yourself grasping and trying to “capture” as many images as you can, pause and breathe
- See if you might soften into the moment and shift your awareness to receiving images as gifts.
- When you return home, allow some time to be with the images received.
- Notice which images especially shimmer for you, and consider them to be a holy text.
- You might journal about anything that is sparked in you.

Writing Exploration—Ways of Circles of Response

*This writing exercise is adapted from the work of Mary Reynolds Thompson and Kate Thompson in *Environmental Expressive Therapies*.¹⁰*

- To begin, think about something in nature you have had an encounter with during the last week, perhaps something you found on your contemplative walk.
- Spend a few moments breathing deeply and reflecting back on this last season, and see what comes to mind.
- Then, allow about five minutes of free writing for each of these three reflections:
- How does this make you feel? What aspect of your life does this reflect?
- How might you learn to speak the language of this thing from nature? Pause after this free writing and see if anything surprised you.
- Take this thing you were drawn to and bring it inside of you. Write: The [thing] in me knows . . . and then keep writing to explore your response. Again pause after this free writing to see what surprised you.

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

(Richard Rohr, Carol Scott-Kassner)

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.

Thank you for the generosity of birds who sing their celebration of life without ceasing—may their chirps, tweets, twitters, coos, and hoots continue to bless the land.

Thank you for the wild rhododendrons who don their lovely purple frocks each spring - dancing with delight in the gentle breeze and dotting the landscape with color.

Thank you for the busily buzzing bees who do the important work of pollinating to ensure the continued fruitfulness of the earth.

Thank you for the grandeur of trees that provide a canopy from the rain and sun and stand as majestic, silent witnesses to the blooming, buzzing, chirping world.

Praise be to you for all of these wondrous things...
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.