

PRAYER GROUP

August 5, 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.

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

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 *“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.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION FROM

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

I once spoke to my friend, an old squirrel, about the Sacraments—he got so excited and ran into a hollow in his tree and came back holding some acorns, an owl feather, and a ribbon he had found. And I just smiled and said, “Yes, dear, you understand: everything imparts God’s grace.” —St. Francis of Assisi, “The Sacraments”

CHAPTER 5: Earth As The Original Sacrament

1. “Sacramentality breaks through our surface obsessions in the world and plunges us into the depth of the Sacred at every turn.”

How do you respond to the spontaneous reminders of God’s creative upwelling and expansive love, calling you to love beyond boundaries?

2. “This sense of the sacramentality of all creation reveals to us the God of immanence—the One who is intimately involved in our world and who expresses divine love through the created world. However, there is also the transcendent dimension of God, in which we recognize God’s wholly otherness. The sacraments of nature can also reveal this aspect of the Divine to us.”

Walking in nature, are you able to breathe more deeply and experience a freedom from your problems and narrow vision of the world?

3. “The mystical tradition is clear that the state of ecstasy—when the human person is caught up into union with the Divine—is considered highly favorable ... The word ecstasy has become synonymous with joyous exaltation, and yet we might often find ourselves holding back.”

If you find joy difficult to embrace because of the sense of moving beyond oneself and losing some control, try to just rest in the moment and simply allow the experience to move through you, letting your boundaries soften.

What do you notice or discover?

4. “Seeing nature as the original sacrament does not mean doing away with institutional churches or formal sacraments or even rote prayers. The enduring universality of the psalms is a testament to their usefulness in modern spirituality—providing us with words when we lack them. But what we mustn’t do is think that these human creations have surpassed or replaced the revelatory role of nature. Nature continues to be sacramental, a conduit that connects us to the Divine.”

Does your spiritual practice incorporate elements of ancient prayers alongside wonderment of the sacramental vision of nature?

A PRACTICE TO TRY—“Mirroring Nature”—*Visual Art Exploration*

Begin by spending some time in nature. Approach various aspects of nature and “mirror” them with your body. If you see a tree, you might spend a few minutes trying to embody “treeness” and mirror how the tree moves with your own body. This doesn’t have to be an exact representation. The idea is to enter into a relationship with the tree and imagine how it feels inside, and then move in whatever way seems reflective of that. Allow some time for this relationship to unfold; when it seems like enough, take some deep breaths and have a physical connection for a moment. You might place your hand on the tree’s bark, offering gratitude, saying, “You are sacrament.”

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 green be the grass you walk on,
May blue be the skies above you,
May pure be the joys that surround you,
May true be the hearts that love you.