

PRAYER GROUP

July 29, 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.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION FROM

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

CHAPTER 5: Earth As The Original Icons

“Icons play a significant role in the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition. Theologically, icons are considered to be sacred as they offer a doorway to communion between heaven and Earth.”

If you believe that creation is the original icon, how do you reverence and practice presence to nature as holy text, a window to the Divine Presence at work in the world?

1. “St. Hildegard of Bingen saw the presence of the Holy through what she called *viriditas*, which essentially means the greening power of God. This greening operates on the physical level and ... and on the spiritual level. Our souls can be greening, or they might feel as if they are arid and dry.”

Is your soul greening? Can you feel the Divine working through you?

A READING—*Ann Weems, Reaching for Rainbows*

I watched her go uncelebrated into the second grade,
A greenless child,
Gray among the orange and yellow,
Attached too much to corners and to other people’s sunshine.

She colors the rainbow brown
And leaves balloons unopened in their packages.

Oh, who will touch this greenless child?
Who will plant alleluias in her heart
And send her dancing into all the colors of God?

Or will she be left like an unwrapped package on
the kitchen table—
Too dull for anyone to take the trouble?
Does God think we're her keeper?

2. “Angela of Foligno was a thirteenth-century Franciscan mystic. She saw the presence of the Holy in the world as the world being pregnant with the Divine Presence [which] is the heart of the Incarnation and also the doorway into an icon.”

What are you learning about how God works in our life when you pay close attention to nature as a window into the divine nature?

3. “Nature as icon reveals to us both the glory of divine creation and also the reality of human development and the rampant use of plastics, toxins, chemicals, and fossil fuels.”

As a pilgrim on the contemplative path, can you open up toward deepened intimacy with nature and see the truth of things, discerning what you are being called to release in terms of habits, practices, and ways of being that burden us and harm to Earth?

4. “Lament releases the layers of grief we are holding and makes room within us for the Spirit to break through in new ways.”

Since we live in a culture that denies pain and suffering and encourages every possible method of distraction, what can you do to begin to acknowledge the reality of disorientation and grief in the world we all live in?

5. “To behold Earth as an icon of Sacred Presence, we must also wrestle with how Earth reveals the terrible things we have unleashed upon her. Lament is a necessary first step toward healing. We are in the midst of what St. John of the Cross might call a “dark night” experience collectively, one in which we are standing at an impasse.”

How will you begin to find ways of expressing the deep pain and anguish you feel in this state of impasse?

6. “The experiences of mystics across time reassure us that the usual rational ways of proceeding are of no use, but when we allow ourselves to have the experience of impasse—when we move fully into it and allow our hearts to experience grief—then transformation can enter in.”

What spiritual practices help you to move into and through the experience of impasse?

A PRACTICE TO TRY—“An Ecological Examen”

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 the Guardian rock above, before us,
strong foundation where we build,
landmark through the haze of doubting,
shelter where our fears are stilled.

May the God of unexplored tomorrows,
of today and yesterday,

The God of rock and flowing river,
be our refuge, be our way.