

Lenten Midweek Prayer Service – March 18th

(This liturgy can be done by yourself or with a friend or family member. Pieces of the liturgy can be read aloud or silently. Titles are indicated with underlining and do not need to be read aloud. Anything in parentheses is informational and is not intended to be read aloud. If doing the liturgy with someone else, consider reading the Psalm responsively and taking turns reading prayers aloud. If doing the liturgy by yourself, you will notice that often plural pronouns are used. Feel free to make the pronouns singular or read the liturgy as if you were worshipping with a dear friend. Your community will be with you in spirit! Consider lighting a candle at the beginning of the liturgy or during the prayers. If you like to sing, the closing song is included. If you do not want to sing, consider reading the closing song as a prayer.)

Opening Prayer

God of peace and mercy, equip us in this time to live fully in the present. Make your ways known to us and teach us your truth. Lead us in the way of your son and deepen our awareness of your spirit. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, Amen.

Reading - Psalm 90: 1-14

¹LORD, you have been our dwelling place
in all generations.

²Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

³You turn us back to dust,
and say, "Turn back, you mortals."

⁴For a thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday when it is past,
or like a watch in the night.

⁵You sweep them away; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning;

⁶in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.

⁷For we are consumed by your anger;
by your wrath we are overwhelmed.

⁸You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your countenance.

⁹For all our days pass away under your wrath;
our years come to an end like a sigh.

¹⁰The days of our life are seventy years,
or perhaps eighty, if we are strong;
even then their span is only toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away.

¹¹Who considers the power of your anger?
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.

¹²So teach us to count our days
that we may gain a wise heart.

¹³Turn, O LORD! How long?
Have compassion on your servants!

¹⁴Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

(time of silence for reflection)

Reading ~ Disequilibrium

Today is like every other day

 We wake, we eat, we work, we live
 We breath in once and then exhale
 Our bodies' wisdom of existence

But today is unlike any other day

 We wake, we eat, we work, we live
 Breathing in fear and uncertainty
 Exhaling our question - what comes next

I want today back

 I want to wake, eat, work, live
 Taking tomorrow for granted
 Existing in the delightful oblivion of hope

(time of silence for reflection)

Reflection

In an address on March 13th, Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote:

“With the worldwide outbreak of the coronavirus, we are confronted once more with the fragility of our lives, and again we are reminded of our common humanity — that the peoples of this world are our brothers and sisters, that we are all one family under God. God does not abandon us, [God] goes with us even now in this time of trial and testing. In this moment, it is important for us to anchor our hearts in the hope that we have in Jesus Christ.”

Reading the archbishop’s words made me think - *what does it mean to hope in Christ?* Immediately I realized what it doesn’t mean. Hoping in Christ, finding our center in our faith, does not mean denying the real feelings of fear we have in the face of a global crisis. Whether we are afraid for our health, our finances, our church, or the well-being of our family and friends, most of us are nervous about something right now. Hoping in Christ also doesn’t mean trying to artificially soothe other people’s fears. Telling people that “it will all work out in the end, just trust in God,” might feel true in the moment, but it doesn’t leave room for the grief people feel in the face of job loss, loneliness, financial stress, or disequilibrium. Our lives have been thrust into a kind of hall of mirrors. We don’t recognize where we are and we can’t fully orient ourselves to figure it out.

All that being said, I do think the archbishop is onto something. It is important to anchor our hearts in the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. During Lent we talk about journeying with Jesus to Jerusalem and to the cross. We commit ourselves to walking a difficult path of discipleship that takes us through the horrors of death into the deep breaths of new life. The reason we know to do this, to be with Jesus along the way, is that God has modeled this kind of accompaniment to us. God has gone through the trials and tribulations of human life before and God goes with us now into this new time of trial and testing in our world. We can anchor our hearts in the hope we have in Christ because we know how this journey begins, goes forward, and ends. Not without fear or grief, but with God, led by God, supported by God, loved by God.

This virus is making me crazy. I am feeling weary of the elevated cortisol my brain is telling my body to make because of the stress of a global pandemic that has now come to our door. The news cycle is so repetitive, and yet – I check the updates compulsively. I can’t quite believe that we will not see each other for the next month or more. I don’t fully comprehend what is in store for our world in the coming days and weeks. I want to yell with the Psalmist, “O Lord, how long?!” even though I have only been facing the fall-out of this crisis for a few days. But as crazy-making as this is and as much as “normal” has been lost, there are some

realities in life that remain the same. I know I have a God who is with me, a community that supports me, and a beautiful normal to get back to someday. The details of normal might never be the same, but the heart of it always will be. Our anchor is, was, and ever shall be Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who walks the rough roads with us and leads us to the smooth, solid ground of God's love.

(time of silence for reflection)

Prayers

God of might, renew this weary world, send your grace to heal the places that are filled with violence and affliction.

(offer prayers for places in need of renewal and life)

Most loving God, you offer life and healing to those who suffer in any way. Be with:

(offer names of people in need of prayer)

God of mercy, we thank you for the resurrection, for bringing the glory of our risen Lord who makes all things new. We give you thanks for:

(offer prayers of thanks)

Leader: Almighty God, you have promised to hear those who call upon your name. We commend all our prayers to you, spoken and silent, trusting in your abundant mercy, grace and goodness. And now we pray as your son taught:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Blessing

May the God of peace and mercy be with us as we hold on to hope for this world, and as we follow Jesus to the cross. May we have strength for this Lenten journey, and feel God's presence with us on the way. Amen.

Song ~ To You Before the Close of Day



1 To you, be - fore the close of day, Cre - a - tor of the
2 Save us from trou - bled, rest - less sleep, from all ill dreams your
3 A health - y life we ask of you, the fire of love in
4 Cre - a - tor, this we ask be done through Je - sus Christ, your



world, we pray. Your grace and peace to us al - low
chil - dren keep; so calm our minds that fears may cease
us re - new, and when the dawn new light will bring,
on - ly Son, whom with the Spir - it we a - dore,



and be our guard and keep - er now.
and rest - ed bod - ies wake in peace.
your praise and glo - ry we shall sing.
with you, one God for - ev - er - more. A - men.