

PRAYING FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE
June 17, 2018

Micah 6:6-8

With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He has told you O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

The right to seek asylum is set out in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. It is one of the most important obligations in international law. This is a long-standing tradition of giving refuge to those escaping persecution and has saved the lives of thousands of people.

“You shall not oppress strangers. You know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” - Exodus 23:9

Our souls cry out at the heart-breaking stories of the 200 plus people incarcerated at the Federal Detention Center in SeaTac, many of whom do not know where their children are currently located, let alone when they may be reunited as families. For these migrants and thousands like them across our country, their tragic experience adds to the trauma that led them to seek refuge in the first place.

These women, men and children came to this country that, for generations of immigrants, has provided hope and an opportunity to contribute socially, politically, and economically to the diverse tapestry that is the United States of America. Instead, what they have found is ongoing suffering as they are being ripped apart and terrified children are left with no one to comfort them.

We pray for their well-being, immediate release and an end to policies which seek to criminalize people who ask for the most basic of human rights: The right to live in peace with their families safe from the threats of persecution and the violence of poverty. Their pleas for asylum need to be fully heard, honored and acted upon. These are the prayers we bring before God.

We sit in the presence of God, to hear the word and to offer in prayer those in need of God’s healing and hope; those families which have been traumatized by hatred and ignorance. We come to pray in silence, offering our very selves as living intercessions on behalf of others, and to be sent into the world as instruments of God’s mercy, healing and peace.

Romans 8:26-27

The Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought; but that very spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

How often we are without words. The need and longing in our lives is deep, but we do not know how to express ourselves to one another, much less to God. Sometimes we are afraid about “not getting it right” when we pray. So, tonight we offer our whole selves as a prayer – our breathing and our sighing, even our weeping. Then we cling to the promise that the Spirit of the Living Christ hears those prayers and prays for us...within us.

Romans 8:34b-35

It is Christ Jesus who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship or distress or persecution, or famine or nakedness, or peril or sword?

Will shame or guilt? Doubt or despair? A deep sense of unworthiness or abandonment? Will a past that haunts and continues to harm us? Or our fears about the future that hinder us from moving with joy into tomorrow? What about wealth that encumbers or anger that enslaves; humiliating failure or intoxicating success?

Romans 8:37-39

No, in all of these things we are more than conquerors through the one who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What freedom this gives us in prayer. Confident that we will never be separated from God, we can pray boldly and persistently, or silently, wordlessly with the Spirit of Christ praying within us, pleading for us, working through us. Even in our weakness, God uses us to tend to the prayers of others in need.

[Enter into 15 to 20 minutes of quiet prayer and reflection.]

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Closing Prayer: Merciful God, source of all goodness and life, into your wide and welcoming embrace we place all for whom we pray. Grant that we, having turned toward you in prayer, now might turn toward one another in peace and tend the world with justice and mercy for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.