

Pilgrims Together 1st April 2020



God of honest emotions
God of cathartic tears,
it would be sadder if in these days
we didn't need a good cry,
a release from the body,
a moment to name how it feels.
We thank you that these tears
are not tears of weakness
but of witness.
They speak to a God
who wept as we do, and showed
human love is divine.
Amen

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For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love
and self-discipline. 2 Timothy 1-7

Gracious God,
if we came to your house,
we would find the door open,
because there are no closing hours
for the hospitality of heaven.

IF WE CAME TO YOUR HOUSE,
WE WOULD HEAR MANY ACCENTS
OURS JUST ONE AMONG THEM,
FOR THERE IS NO FAVOURED NATION

IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF HEAVEN.

If we came to your house,
we would see people who never thought
they would be allowed in,
had entrance been by merit
rather than by your gracious invitation

So, as we gather in Jesus' name
let the characteristics you cherish
become evident in all we do and share together

Gather into one
the glorious assortment of unlikes
which is your true church.

REVEAL WITHIN THIS COMMUNITY
WHAT WE MUST DO, WHAT WE MUST HEAR,
AND WHO WE MUST WELCOME
IF WE ARE TO KNOW JESUS AMONG US.

God, give us the grace
to surrender our presumptions
as to what we should be or do;
and then amend our lives
until we become the people you intended.
AMEN

Psalms 133 & 134

How good and how lovely it is to live together in unity.
PRECIOUS IT IS LIKE OIL POURED OUT TO ANOINT THE HEAD.

Unity is like the dew falling on holy mountains
WITH IT COMES GOD'S BLESSING: LIFE FOR EVERMORE.

Come, bless the Lord, you servants fulfilling God's commands;
LOVE AND PRAISE YOUR MAKER, THE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

Bible Reading Mark 12, 28-34:

28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating.
Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all
the commandments, which is the most important?"²⁹ "The most important
one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the

Lord is one.^[a] ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.^[b] ³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'^[c] There is no commandment greater than these."

³² "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. ³³ To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

³⁴ When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Reflection preached by Kathy Galloway at the online service from Wellington Church, Glasgow 22nd March 2020

A Celtic Rune of Hospitality

We saw a stranger yesterday.
We put food in the eating place,
drink in the drinking place
music in the listening place;
and with the sacred name of the triune God,
she blessed us and our house,
our cattle and our dear ones.
As the lark says in her song
'Often, often, often goes the Christ in the stranger's guise'

In the old days in the Highlands of Scotland, there was a tradition that at every meal, in addition to those laid for the people living in the house, an extra place should be set, even if no guest was expected. Then, if a stranger should unexpectedly arrive, they could be welcomed and fed without any difficulty. This was the essence of highland hospitality, the belief that when you welcomed a stranger, however poor or unimportant they were, you were welcoming Jesus.

In Mark 12, Jesus sets human relationships within the context of the two great commandments: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength and you shall love your neighbour as yourself. Jesus always refused to place limits on the definition of who a neighbour is and told parables and performed healing acts which were characterised by inclusion. Jesus makes action the final criterion

of neighbourliness, specifically, the practice of justice and mercy, of compassion. We will be judged by how we love. It is only action that transforms, that brings about actual change, not just in the situation but also in us. Wherever love and compassion are found, God is there. Like the prophets, Jesus foresaw no rose-strewn path for the people of God. But even in the midst of disaster, persecution and chaos, his followers were neither to panic nor flee, nor to become fanatical and obsessed. Instead, he told them they should stand firm, and lean on the Holy Spirit.

We know now what we need to do to love our neighbours; both the ones in this church, and the ones who live next door, the ones we work with, the ones we socialize with. We need, as a matter of extreme urgency, to give each other space. We need to stay at home, not go visiting, work at home if possible, stay away from the streets except for absolutely necessary journeys. Our exercise should be confined as much as possible to walking at a two-metre/six-and-a-half-foot distance from others. Even with our families, or those we live with or must meet, we should observe this distance as much as possible. We need to observe good hygiene, wash our hands thoroughly very frequently, refrain from touching our faces and use tissues. It is especially important if we are over 70, have an underlying health condition or are pregnant.

There are so many losses in this regime. We will miss our families, especially, some of us, our grandchildren, whom we are used to looking after at times. We will miss the physical presence of friends, our social activities, our outings, the colleagues we are used to seeing every day at work. But even so, there is still much support we can give one another. Phone calls, social media messages, letters and cards for those who are not internet users, just checking in in these ways with those who live alone, will all become much more important. There are many people for whom this is a truly terrifying time; because they are worried about losing their jobs or even their homes, because they are fearful of catching the virus or for their families, because they are already very isolated. There are some whose lives, grim already, will likely become even grimmer, people who are homeless or living in extreme poverty. If we can afford to, even small monetary donations to food banks, homeless and refugee charities will make a huge difference at this time.

And perhaps we may find, in time, that there are also gifts in this time. The gift of time, for a start, to not need to rush so much, to read, to listen to the radio or watch programmes we always meant to watch. And this is also a time for reflection and prayer. Though it happens in diverse locations, in solitude, praying for each other is actually one of the important ways in which people can connect, even while apart. Though it may be personal, it is never private. It is a bit like logging in to a network or weaving oneself into a web; it is the prayer of a community. Praying for other people can be an opening ourselves up to the reality, the gift, the struggles and suffering of others, being present to

and with them insofar as we are able, even if it's only for one hour on one day of a week. And perhaps this might bring us closer to Jesus at this time of Lent, when we remember the forty days he spent in solitude in the desert. As we set out on this journey, on a path we have never been down before, and don't know where it will lead us, let's commit ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus urged.

A Time of Prayer: Take time to add your own prayers as you pause between the prayers below.

Let us pray.

Before we leave this space, a prayer for our own healing, the healing of bodies which are sick, or hearts that are weary, or minds that are confused, or imaginations that are overactive, or memories which are menacing...

(Pause) God in your mercy

ALL: HEAR OUR PRAYER

(Silence)

Before we leave this space, a prayer for our own deepening – in faith, hope and love, in our life as a community of believers, in our own walk with God ... *(Pause)* God in your mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

(Silence)

Before we leave this place, let us ask what God wants us to hear, or to have or to do, and be open to receive it graciously...

(Pause) God in your mercy

HEAR OUR PRAYER

(Silence)

For all that God gives to us, we say. THANK YOU

To all that God asks of us, we say YES

In Jesus' name, AMEN

Prayer for Courage

Courage comes from the heart
and we are always welcomed by God,
the Croí of all being.*

We bear witness to our faith,

knowing that we are called to live lives
of courage, love and reconciliation
in the ordinary and extraordinary moments
of each day.
We bear witness, too, to our failures
and our complicity in the fractures of our world.
May we be courageous today.
May we learn today.
May we love today.

Amen

*Croí is Irish for heart. It is also the name of the worshipping space at
Corrymeela.

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Let us all now join hands in our dispersed Pilgrim circle and pray:

Christ of the pilgrim mind
and of every exploring heart
illumine our understanding
that we may discern your spirit
in the midst of all that is new.

Loving God we ask you to continue to bless and guide the mission of Pilgrims
Together.

Transform the lives of those who are yet to know you; renew the hearts of all
who already name you as their Saviour.

In Jesus' name we pray.

And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the
fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.



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