**April – Petitioning Prayer**

“Prayer is asking….It is a longing of the soul.” Mahatma Ghandi

Petitioning prayer is asking prayer. It is prayer offered from a humble point of need that requests assistance.

“Give us this day our daily bread” and “Forgive us our trespasses and we forgive those…”

We ask that our daily survival needs be met and that our errors be forgiven, but we must first acknowledge our neediness and our wayward behaviors and thoughts.

Richard Foster, in Prayer, Finding the Heart’s True Home, suggests that petitioning prayer is a “childlike expression of faith,” meaning innocence and humility is at its foundation.

Issues that may interfere with our ability to humble ourselves before God in petition stem from feelings of worth. Worthiness and humility are not at all the same thing. Feelings of unworthiness act as a barricade to spiritual flow and consciousness, whereas a posture of humility allows the Spirit to flow freely within us. On one hand we may think that God already knows what we ask and what we need, so why should we vocalize it to God? On the other hand, we may believe ourselves to be unworthy of God’s attention in prayer. Neither of these help us to make a spiritual connection with God. Would an all-loving Father or Mother deny our need, our requests for attention and love? Surely not! God loves to hear our every breath and all the joy or pain it may carry. The smallest matters of life are held suspended in the great grace of the God of Life.

This month we will pray together a petitioning prayer, the Lord’s Prayer. In the Lord’s Prayer we ask for our basic needs to be met, security and nourishment. We implore God to remove our impediments to love and the flow of Grace that issues with life abundant. We ask for our world to look more like the Kingdom of God, twice! And by doing so, we set an intention that we will do our best to be emissaries of that Kingdom.

The following is a responsive prayer sequence of collective petitioning, based on the Lord’s Prayer as it is translated into Aramaic. The responsive lines coincide with the text of the Lord’s Prayer. I am sure you will see the similarities. The sequence describes the molding of ourselves from dust, into pots that can be filled with grace and flowing Spirit for the sake of others. You might frame this in light of the Biennial and the mission of the ABC as you begin and throughout the prayer, by mentioning the church and participation in the church’s mission.

* Bolded italicized text in parentheses gives instructions.
* Bolded italicized text w/o parentheses are to be read by the prayer leader.
* Read slowly and spend time at the reflection points in silence – a good 2 to 3 minutes.
* During the candle lighting, if you have a large group, play some quiet music.

***(Prepare a table with a large Christ candle in the center and enough votives for all present to light one).***

**Reader 1:** Genesis 2:7 the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being.

**\*ALL** : Oh breathing Life, your Name shines everywhere!  Soften the ground of our being and hollow a space within us for your presence to abide.

***In Silence consider your own emergence from ashes.  In what ways are you hollowed? How do you make space for God to fill? When you create your empty vessel, how does it feel?***

Silent Meditation Time

***God breathes the breath of life into your vessel. God’s image is imparted into your own image. God’s Word is a divine message breathed into the humble human clay form: “Be love.” God says. Be love.***

**Reader 2:** The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: “O Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?” declares the Lord. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand.” Jer 18:5, 6

**Reader 3:** We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us….We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. 2 Cor 4:7, 10

**\*ALL:** Fill us with your creativity so that we may be empowered to bear the fruit of your mission. Embody your desire in every light and form.

***In silence see yourself full of the grace of God.  What form does this take? In what ways do you fill yourself? Consider the posture of your soul in the filling.***

Silent Meditation Time

***The vessel is thus filled and overflows in refreshment and blessing to others. As Jesus told his disciples, “Freely you have received, freely give.” The grace of God imparts to us the living power of the Holy Spirit, streams of living water to be flow forth as from a perennial fountain for God’s purpose.***

**Reader 1:** Jesus said, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

**Reader 2:** As God’s people, holy and dearly beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to one peace.  And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, singing songs of gratitude to God. Col 3:12-16

**\*ALL:** Give us the wisdom to produce and share what each being needs to grow and flourish. Untie the tangled threads of our offenses as we release the strands we hold of others’ faults.

***In Silence picture yourself aflow with the abundance of God. How do you offer your treasure, your living water to the world? How does the world receive it? Think of the character and the dimension of your gifts. When is it easy to be overflowing? When is it challenging?***

Silent Meditation Time

**Reader 3:** For God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 2 Cor 4:6

**\*ALL:** Do not let us be distracted from that which would divert us from our true purpose. But illuminate the opportunities of the present moment.

***(At this point each person may light a votive candle place it together with others in the group.)  In silence illuminate your votive from the Christ candle on the table, symbolizing the wellspring of grace within you freely extended to the needs of the world.***

Silence or Music as Candles are Lit

***For the emptiness that is full of potential ...***

All: God who lives and breathes in us, we thank you.

***For the life breath, the holy spirit ever present, ever moving around us, within us, filling us with your presence and moving us toward your purpose….***

All: God who lives and breathes in us, we thank you.

***For times of over flowing joy and abundance…***

All: God of grace, we trust you

***In times of doubt, despair, distraction, draught…***

All: God of grace we trust you

***As your song of love grows within us and calls us to your purpose…***

All: God of love, sing through us

***As we go forth today as instruments of your peace, lights of the world…***

All: God of love, shine through us

**\*ALL:** From you arises every vision, power, and song, from gathering to gathering.

Glory be to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imaging Eph 3:21

**AMEN**

\* These passages compiled from 2 Aramaic translations of the Lord’s Prayer: Neil Douglas-Klotz and Heather Cumming

Reference: Prayers of the Cosmos by Neil Douglas-Klotz

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