

Daily Prayer

Feria in Epiphanytide

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

We enter into a time of quiet. We offer to God our selves and in the silence know that God embraces us as God's very own. We offer our hopes and our concerns through our prayers and in the silence listen for God. Today we hold in our prayers the ordinary moments in life—the trials and the joys and we remember Anskar, Apostle of Scandinavia, 865.

We begin by saying

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness:
let the whole earth stand in awe of him.

Psalm 96.9

The First Reading

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

Genesis 2.4b-9, 15-17

The Psalm

People go forth to their work ♦
and to their labour until the evening.

There go the ships, and there is that Leviathan ♦
which you have made to play in the deep.

All of these look to you ♦
to give them their food in due season.

When you give it them, they gather it; ♦
you open your hand and they are filled with good.

When you hide your face they are troubled; ♦
when you take away their breath,
they die and return again to the dust.

Psalm 104.25, 28-31

The Gospel Reading

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not live according to

the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?’ He said to them, ‘Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, “This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.”

You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.’

Then he said to them, ‘You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition! For Moses said, “Honour your father and your mother”; and, “Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.” But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, “Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban” (that is, an offering to God)— then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother, thus making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this.’

Then Jesus called the crowd again and said to them, ‘Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.’

When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. He said to them, ‘Then do you also fail to understand? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?’ (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, ‘It is what comes out of a person that defiles. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.’

We continue with the reflection that follows. In silence, we ask what the reading has to say to us today. Is there something in the reflection that draws us more deeply into the reading? What does God have to say to us? What do we have to ask God?

The Reflection

Katy Waugh

“The Pharisees noticed that some of Jesus' disciples were eating without washing their hands.”

When I read the gospel lesson for today in preparation for writing this brief homily, I laughed right out loud. It seems the Pharisees, the keepers of the Jewish Temple laws, were questioning Jesus' disciples' understanding of the necessity of hand washing!!!

Obviously, theirs was a different time! They were not living during a pandemic where they were being inundated with warnings about “staying safe” by constantly washing their hands or social distancing!

The Pharisees had a point. I would bet that some of Jesus' crew were not up on hygiene and Jesus would have noticed their hands. But, as always, his was a wider and deeper perspective. In today's gospel he is asking us to dig deeper than strict adherence to the laws to find out what really defiles us. And his answer is this. “It is from within, from the human heart that evil comes.” And, in your own experience, isn't that the truth?

I am not downplaying the need for stringent adherence to practices that are in the interest of public health, but I do like today's reminder that most of the time we need to look within to see what is really leading us astray. It is only when we stop finger-pointing and blaming that we can really see where God is in our own lives. As the events of our own times are unfolding it is so obvious that only hatred and misunderstanding come from adhering to our own all too human and narrow understanding of what life is about.

I often find myself returning to this brief and wonderful prayer by Kathy Keay.

“Lord of Creation,
moulder of our fragile clay,
Shape us in your image.
Spin us round if you must,
until we're empty
of all that is false and useless.
Fill us daily with living water
that we may carry your life
to a world dying of thirst.”

In these COVID-19 times I find I am capable of a lot of finger-pointing and bad thoughts about those I deem to be not living up to my standards of what constitutes the proper health standards. Non maskers are the clearest villains...but...also...the people who refuse to move aside on sidewalks or...reach across me in a grocery store...or...or...And this is in Canada where we pride ourselves on being polite law abiders. This prayer acts as a quick antidote to my sense of self righteousness and I find it very reassuring that I am in the hands of someone whose perspective is far greater and more loving than mine.

When the time is right, we conclude our time of silence with the canticle

The Canticle ~ A Song of God's Light

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom then shall I fear? ♦

The Lord is the strength of my life;
of whom then shall I be afraid?

Though a host encamp against me,
my heart shall not be afraid, ♦

and though there rise up war against me,
yet will I put my trust in him.

One thing have I asked of the Lord
and that alone I seek: ♦
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,

To behold the fair beauty of the Lord ♦
and to seek his will in his temple.

For in the day of trouble
he shall hide me in his shelter; ♦
in the secret place of his dwelling shall he hide me
and set me high upon a rock.

Therefore will I offer in his dwelling an oblation
with great gladness; ♦
I will sing and make music to the Lord.

Psalm 27.1, 3-6, 8

*We continue in prayer for those people and situations that we hold up before God (The Intercessions)
and continue with the concluding collect, the Lord's prayer and the closing sentences.*

The Intercessions

Let us pray to the Lord,
who is our refuge and stronghold.

For the health and well-being of our nation,
that all who are fearful and anxious
may be at peace and free from worry:
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

For the isolated and housebound,
that we may be alert to their needs,

and care for them in their vulnerability:
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

For our homes and families,
our schools and young people,
and all in any kind of need or distress:
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

For a blessing on our local community,
that our neighbourhoods may be places of trust and friendship,
where all are known and cared for:
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,
to the mercy and protection of God.

Merciful Father,
accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our prayers conclude

Merciful Lord,
grant to your faithful people pardon and peace,
that we may be cleansed from all our sins
and serve you with a quiet mind;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God now and forever.

[let us pray as our Saviour taught us,]

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen

We conclude

May the light of the glorious gospel of Christ
shine in our hearts and fill our lives
with his joy and peace.

Credits:

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The Intercessions: Church of England: Coronavirus Resources www.churchofengland.org

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The Concluding Sentence: Common Worship: Times and Seasons—Epiphany (adapted). © The Archbishops' Council 2005 and published by Church House Publishing.

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