

Daily Prayer

Anskar

Wednesday, February 3, 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

The Lord has become my stronghold,
and my God the rock of my trust.

Psalm 94.22

The First Reading

For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, as though sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to mortals. We are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honour, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless, and we grow weary from the work of our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we speak kindly. We have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things, to this very day.

1 Corinthians 4.9-13

The Psalm

You brought a vine out of Egypt; ♦
you drove out the nations and planted it.

You made room around it, ♦
and when it had taken root, it filled the land.

The hills were covered with its shadow ♦
and the cedars of God by its boughs.
It stretched out its branches to the Sea ♦
and its tendrils to the River.
Why then have you broken down its wall, ♦
so that all who pass by pluck off its grapes?
The wild boar out of the wood tears it off, ♦
and all the insects of the field devour it.
Turn again, O God of hosts, ♦
look down from heaven and behold;
Cherish this vine which your right hand has planted, ♦
and the branch that you made so strong for yourself.
Let those who burnt it with fire, who cut it down, ♦
perish at the rebuke of your countenance.
Let your hand be upon the man at your right hand, ♦
the son of man you made so strong for yourself.
And so will we not go back from you; ♦
give us life, and we shall call upon your name.

Psalm 80.8-18

The Gospel Reading

He also said, 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.'

He also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'

Mark 4.26-32

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

Jim Boyles

Today we honour Anskar, not one of our well-known historic figures, unless you're from one of the Scandinavian countries. He was a monk, a bishop, then archbishop, and a missionary sent north from his base in Hamburg (now in Germany). In his forty years of ministry, he had a tough time. From my reading of his story, he was a faithful and energetic man, but one who spent so much time caught up in political intrigue, international politics, and even church machinations. He died in 865 on February 3rd, having planted a small congregation in Denmark. His mission to Sweden had failed, and his home base in Hamburg left subject to Viking attacks.

Such struggle is the fate of all of us.

The gospel reading sets forth two of Jesus' rather small parables involving seeds. I have several house plants, some doing well, some not so well. Each has a particular need for water, not too much, nor too little. Some just give up and die. Others thrive and grow large and with healthy colour and shape. Watching them and tending them, I understand the line in the parable about the man scattering seed, waiting while the seed grows, "...he knows not how." When we see a child, or perhaps our grandchild, we know that they will

sprout and grow. We feed them, we tend to them, we do our best, but we have a really hard time predicting where they will be in life's journey by the time they're fifty.

We, like the seed, we struggle with life, with the forces in life that are beyond our control, often facing disappointment, perhaps with anger or depression when things don't go our way. Like Anskar. Often, it's the 'system' that defeats us, and leaves us out in the cold, leaves us behind. Anskar was able to get up, shake off defeat and try again. A simple lesson for us, not easy at times, but the stories of the saints of old serve as models for us.

Anskar faced political intrigue time and again, as kings and emperors and popes changed their strategies and left him stranded, at times sending him north, then recalling him, placing him in dangerous lands subject to Viking attacks, but not backing him up with any help. Anskar's faith was strong, he was inspired by visions, he lived a simple life, and these roots nourished him.

These days we live in the midst of political intrigue, whether it be in the handling of the pandemic and the distribution of vaccines, or issues of homelessness in Toronto, or the ups and downs of politics in America. Sometimes we despair. Sometimes we shut ourselves up and remain oblivious to the world around us. But sometimes we face what is in front of us, seeking to do our small part in creating a better world, a step on the way to the Kingdom.

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

The Canticle ~ A Song of God's Compassion

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, ♦
slow to anger and of great kindness.

He will not always accuse us, ♦
neither will he keep his anger for ever.

He has not dealt with us according to our sins, ♦
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.
For as the heavens are high above the earth, ♦
so great is his mercy upon those who fear him.
As far as the east is from the west, ♦
so far has he set our sins from us.
As a father has compassion on his children, ♦
so is the Lord merciful towards those who fear him.
For he knows of what we are made; ♦
he remembers that we are but dust.
Our days are but as grass; ♦
we flourish as a flower of the field;
For as soon as the wind goes over it, it is gone, ♦
and its place shall know it no more.
But the merciful goodness of the Lord is from of old
and endures for ever on those who fear him, ♦
and his righteousness on children's children;
On those who keep his covenant ♦
and remember his commandments to do them.

Psalm 103.8-18

*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

Almighty God,
you sent forth your servant Anskar
and became his stronghold against despair
when prejudice was deaf to his preaching
and violence overthrew his labours.
Sustain your Church in days of discouragement,
that we may ever trust you to preserve
and bring to perfect fruition

what your own right hand has planted;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

[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.

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The Psalm: Common Worship: Daily Prayer—Psalms © The Archbishops' Council 2005 and published by Church House Publishing.

The Canticle: Common Worship: Daily Prayer—Canticles © The Archbishops' Council 2005 and published by Church House Publishing.

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

The Collect: *For All the Saints Prayers* © 2007, General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada

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

The reflection: The Rev'd Jim Boyles

Church of the Redeemer

162 Bloor Street West Toronto, ON M5S 1M4

416.922.4948

office@theredeemer.ca

www.TheRedeemer.ca

Twitter: @theRedeemerTO

Facebook: theRedeemerTO

Instagram: theRedeemerTO