

Daily Prayer

St Patrick

Wednesday, March 17, 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 remember St Patrick, Missionary Bishop in Ireland, 461.

We begin by saying

Christ came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Ephesians 2.17-18

The First Reading

Here I am, ready to come to you this third time. And I will not be a burden, because I do not want what is yours but you; for children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children. I will most gladly spend and be spent for you. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? Let it be assumed that I did not burden you.

Nevertheless (you say) since I was crafty, I took you in by deceit.

Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves before you? We are speaking in Christ before God.

Everything we do, beloved, is for the sake of building you up.

2 Corinthians 12.14-16, 19

The Psalm

O Lord, my heart is not proud; ♦
my eyes are not raised in haughty looks.
I do not occupy myself with great matters, ♦
with things that are too high for me.
But I have quieted and stilled my soul,
like a weaned child on its mother's breast; ♦
so my soul is quieted within me.
O Israel, trust in the Lord, ♦
from this time forth for evermore.

Psalm 131

The Gospel Reading

'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 5.43-48

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 I Bind Unto Myself...

Paul McLean



Today we remember the patron saint of Ireland, St Patrick. He lived in the 5th century, a Romano Briton, born into a family probably living along Hadrian's Wall, near Carlisle. These were the 'Dark Ages', by which we mean the 150 years or so for which we have scant written historical records. Therefore, even a simple account of Patrick's life and missionary activity in Ireland contains disputed details. Yet Patrick remains a most popular saint even today, capturing our imaginations as much through legends, associations and attributions as through the actual person and his deeds. And perhaps the best known attribution is 'St Patrick's Breastplate', one

of the great hymns of the Church. The version most familiar to us is the translation of an Old Irish loric (or prayer of protection) attributed to St Patrick, but most likely composed in the early 8th century. Stephen Reynolds in 'For All the Saints' helpfully leaps the three centuries between the supposed author and the actual composition by commenting that the loric reflects the Celtic spirituality that would have characterized St Patrick's faith. Cecil Frances Alexander, the 19th century hymn writer and poet, rendered the translation we are familiar with today:

- 1 I bind unto myself today
the strong name of the Trinity
by invocation of the same,
the Three in One and One in Three.
- 2 I bind this day to me forever,
by power of faith, Christ's incarnation,
his baptism in the Jordan river,
his death on cross for my salvation,
his bursting from the spiced tomb,
his riding up the heavenly way,
his coming at the day of doom,
I bind unto myself today.
- 3 I bind unto myself today
the virtues of the starlit heaven,
the glorious sun's life-giving ray,
the whiteness of the moon at even,
the flashing of the lightning free,
the whirling wind's tempestuous shocks,
the stable earth, the deep salt sea
around the old eternal rocks.

- 4 I bind unto myself today
the power of God to hold and lead,
God's eye to watch, God's might to stay,
God's ear to hearken to my need,
the wisdom of my God to teach,
God's hand to guide, God's shield to ward,
the word of God to give me speech,
God's heavenly host to be my guard.
- 5 Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.
- 6 I bind unto myself the name,
the strong name of the Trinity
by invocation of the same,
the Three in One and One in Three,
of whom all nature has creation,
eternal Father, Spirit, Word.
Praise to the Lord of my salvation;
salvation is of Christ the Lord!

This 'prayer of protection' probably derives from the well known account of the 'armour of God' in the Epistle to the Ephesians, in which the Christian is encouraged to dress metaphorically in the gear of a Roman soldier to do spiritual battle. This armour protects against the 'fiery darts of the evil one', and indeed, in a verse we no longer sing, the Old Irish lorica offers protection against heretics,

witches and druids amongst other malign powers.

But how much more potent than Roman armour is this magnificent and triumphant catalogue of heavenly and earthly powers! You feel first of all in verse two, Christ's life and purpose encompassed by symbolic events of the beginning and the end, and we take those events into our own life by faith. And then we turn to the created order and find with awe that it is animated with God's very presence. Then in verse four, that almost terrifying presence becomes a personal, constant guide. The music changes as we sing verse five, and are encompassed in all directions and all circumstances by Christ, and more than that, Christ is intimately present in 'the hearts of all who love us', and 'in the mouth of friend and stranger.' The final verse creates a Trinitarian summation of our faith, but unlike most Christian formulae, includes the created order as necessary to our salvation.

Perhaps this Celtic emphasis is what makes the hymn so relevant today. Pope Francis has said that we need to fall in love with nature again, to appreciate nature for itself without any thought of using it for another purpose.

And so, I've included a few photos and reflections from these COVID times, times in which there is the space to appreciate the restorative, natural order and also, because it is so much reduced, the humans who are both close and separated from us.

Tundra swans migration. About 16,000 of these beautiful birds migrate annually in March from Chesapeake Bay to their breeding grounds in the Canadian Arctic, a journey of over 6000 km. Here they are stopping to rest and feed in Thedford Bog, fields just south of Grand Bend, during this past week. You cannot help but be inspired by their grace, strength and courage, and wonder at the primal urge behind this great natural feat, repeated year after year.

You wonder if this primal urge is an example from the world of nature of 'The power of God to hold and lead.' Certainly they appear themselves as a heavenly host as they fly in formation.

Lake Huron at the edge of the village. Each day the lake has something different to reveal, and even though the temperatures are warming, the ice fields on the lake are extensive, stretching for kilometres to the horizon. The sheer size and force of the ice is beyond our human capacity to imagine. The vast white ice field often turns golden late in the day as it reflects the setting sun. Perhaps this great lake in all its many moods could be a Canadian addition to the catalogue of natural powers and virtues in verse three.



I don't have any pictures that will adequately illustrate Christ's presence through interior experience and human encounter, which is described in verse five, but even as it is possible to fall in love with nature again by appreciating in the moment its beauty, strength and fragility, so we can also form our own personal pictures that bring to life those lines and transform the ordinary into moments infused with grace.

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

The Canticle ~ Song of Jeremiah

Hear the word of the Lord, O nations; *
tell it on the far-off shores:

“He who scattered Israel will gather *
and guard them as a shepherd his flock.”

For the Lord has ransomed Jacob, *
redeemed them from a foe too strong.

They will come and sing for joy on Zion's height, *
radiant at the bounty of the Lord:

the grain, the new wine, the oil, *
the young of flock and herd.

Their life like a watered garden, *
they will never want again.

Then will maidens show their joy in the dance; *
men, young and old, will rejoice.

I shall turn their mourning into gladness, *
give comfort and joy for their sorrow.

I shall satisfy the priests with abundance, *
and fill my people with my bounty.

Jeremiah 31.10-14

*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

With confidence and trust let us pray to our God.

For the one holy catholic and apostolic Church ...

let us pray to our God.

Lord of compassion,

in your mercy hear us.

For the mission of the Church,

that in faithful witness it may preach the gospel
to the ends of the earth,

let us pray to our God.

Lord of compassion,

in your mercy hear us.

For peace in the world ...

that a spirit of respect and reconciliation may grow
among nations and peoples,

let us pray to our God.

Lord of compassion,

in your mercy hear us.

For the poor, the persecuted, the sick, and all who suffer ...

for refugees, prisoners, and all in danger;

that they may be relieved and protected,

let us pray to our God.

Lord of compassion,

in your mercy hear us.

For those whom we have injured or offended,

let us pray to our God.

Lord of compassion,

in your mercy hear us.

For grace to amend our lives and to further the reign of God,
let us pray to our God.
Lord of compassion,
in your mercy hear us.

In communion with all those who have walked in the way of
holiness ...
let us pray to our God.
Lord of compassion,
in your mercy hear us.

God our Father,
in your love and goodness
you have taught us to come close to you in penitence
with prayer, fasting and generosity;
accept our Lenten discipline,
and when we fall by our weakness,
raise us up by your unfailing mercy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Our prayers conclude

O God, we thank you for Patrick,
whom you took into your service,
to bring within the freedom of your household
those who once enslaved him.
Encourage us through his example,
that we may know your power made perfect in our weakness,
and delight in serving others
for the sake of him who became servant of all,
Your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive 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 God the Father,
who does not despise the broken spirit,
give to you a contrite heart.

Amen.

May Christ,
who bore our sins in his body on the tree,
heal you by his wounds.

Amen.

May the Holy Spirit,
who leads us into all truth,
speak to you words of pardon and peace.

Amen.

Credits:

Scripture quotations: The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches in the USA. Used by permission. All Rights Reserved.

The Psalm: Common Worship: The Psalter © The Archbishops' Council 2005 and published by Church House Publishing.

The Canticle: *Book of Alternative Services* © 2004 by the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada. All rights reserved. Reproduced under license from ABC Publishing, Anglican Book Centre, a ministry of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, from *Anglican Liturgical Library*

The Intercessions: Common Worship: Times and Seasons—Lent. © The Archbishops' Council 2005 and published by Church House Publishing.

The Collect: Common Worship © The Archbishops' Council 2005 and published by Church House Publishing.

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

The reflection: The Rev'd Paul McLean

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