

Daily Prayer

Philip Lindel Tsen & Paul Shinji Sasaki

Wednesday, February 24, 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 Philip Lindel Tsen, Bishop of Honan, 1954 and Paul Shinji Sasaki, Bishop of Mid-Japan and Tokyo, 1946.

We begin by saying

A covenant of peace was established with him, that he should be a leader of the sanctuary and of his people.

Sirach 45.24

The First Reading

For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

Ezekiel 34.11-16

The Psalm

O Lord, you are my portion and my cup; *
it is you who uphold my lot.

My boundaries enclose a pleasant land; *
indeed, I have a goodly heritage.

I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel; *
my heart teaches me, night after night.

I have set the Lord always before me; *
because he is at my right hand I shall not fall.

My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices; *
my body also shall rest in hope.

For you will not abandon me to the grave, *
nor let your holy one see the Pit.

You will show me the path of life; *
in your presence there is fullness of joy,
and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Psalm 16.5-11

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

Paul MacLean

Many of our commemorations seem like isolated individuals, without a familiar, relatable context. They may have an important place within the Christian tradition, we may have read something they have written, we may have sung one of their hymns or prayed one of their prayers, we may have discovered a bit of their historical context, we may have visited a site on our holidays associated with them, we will have remembered them at the eucharist as a member of the communion of saints, but many of these folk remain disconnected, dissociated from our web of personal meaning by the mists of history. Not so today with Philip Tsen and Paul Sasaki. I recommend you begin by reading Stephen Reynolds' brief account of their lives and importance as Christian leaders.

Biography of Philip Lindel Tsen

“To me Christianity means a Person, Jesus Christ, who is my Saviour, my Companion, and my Lord.” These were the words of Philip Lindel Tsen, who was ordained bishop of Honan on this date in the year 1929 and helped to sustain the Anglican Church in China through the years of crisis that followed.

He spent his childhood and youth with American missionaries, but after his ordination to the priesthood he became closely associated with the work of Canadian Anglicans in Honan, and their influence

helped him to be elected as the first Chinese bishop of that diocese. Nationalists and Communists were already engaged in a bitter civil war, and the situation was made worse when the Japanese invaded China in 1937. In that year Bishop Tsen visited Canada and stood before General Synod with Paul Sasaki, bishop of Mid-Japan, to bear witness to the unity of Chinese and Japanese Christians, despite the war between their two nations.

Tsen returned to Honan, where daily Japanese air-raids and the collapse of civil authority tested his authority to the utmost. He proved an effective pastor, sustaining his hard-pressed clergy through all their common trials, and at the end of the second World War he emerged as the leader of the Chinese Anglican Church. He managed to attend the Lambeth Conference of 1948, but on his return he was placed under house arrest by the Communists, who had just taken over China. He died at Shanghai on June 6th, 1954.

Biography of Paul Shinji Sasaki

Today we give thanks for the life and witness of Paul Shinji Sasaki, a bishop of the *Nippon Seikokai*, the Holy Catholic Church of Japan, which is a member of the Anglican communion. Sasaki was primate of this Church during the second World War and suffered for his efforts to preserve its independence under government persecution.

He was born in 1885, the son of a devoutly Christian mother. Ordained to the Anglican priesthood at thirty-two, he taught liturgical studies and ascetical theology at St Andrew's Theological College in Tokyo. In 1935, at the age of fifty, he was ordained bishop of Mid-Japan, which until then had been a missionary district under the control of the Church of England in Canada. Seven years later, in the midst of the Second World War, the Japanese government tried to force all non-Roman Catholic churches into

one organization, for the sake of the national war effort. As many as half of the Anglican parishes in Japan submitted to the government programme, but Sasaki's strong and conscientious leadership ensured that not a single congregation in his diocese joined the new body.

This made Sasaki a marked man. Shortly after he was translated to the see of Tokyo in 1944 he was arrested by the military police and interrogated under torture. He endured unspeakable pains, and when he was released five months later his health was shattered. Nevertheless, before his death in December, 1946, he launched a programme of reconciliation which allowed the separated congregations to return to communion with the *Seikokai*. To this day, the Holy Catholic Church of Japan bears enduring witness to Paul Sasaki's courage, vision, and reconciling wisdom; and we join with that Church in honouring one of its true founders.

As I read these pages I was immediately struck by the steadfast courage of these two leaders, maintaining the Christian communities entrusted to their care in separate but linked hostile environments. What must it have taken to persevere in the face of so much persecution and danger? And then to maintain not just the communities, but the essence of the Christian faith - reconciliation - in the face of the overwhelming nationalism of both China and Japan. And to symbolize that faith by appearing together at an Anglican synod in Halifax in 1937, while their two countries were at war with each other.

It was this Canadian connection that stimulated my own thoughts about personal links. Yes, they had died in 1954 and 1946 respectively. Yes, their moments of greatest challenge occurred long ago and in countries I have never visited. But then I

remembered my professor from Harvard Divinity School who had narrowly escaped with his life from the same murderous Nationalist, Japanese and Communist forces that threatened Philip Tsen, and who was now a mentor to the next crop of theology students, embroiled in anti-Vietnam war protests. History, and Philip Tsen were not so far away. And then some five years later, back in Toronto, I became aware through two professors - Cy Powles at Trinity and Ernie Best at Victoria - of the Canadians who took up the challenge of reconciliation after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to serve in Japan and discover a new role for the Christian church of being a servant in a shattered society. Again, a personal connection, a personal witness, to one of the men we remember today. And the remembrance is not isolated or frozen in the past. It is living. The ministry of reconciliation initiated and lived out by Paul Sasaki motivated people like Cy and Ernie and many other Canadians who journeyed to Japan, and then later informed their teaching and was passed on to the students who came to learn from them the ways of Jesus for our times.

And so, today, let us give thanks for Philip Tsen and Paul Sasaki. Let us give thanks for Stephen Reynolds who has told their stories to us briefly, but so well. Let us give thanks for the continuing influence these two leaders have had through the lives of those who came to know them. Let us give thanks that their ministry of reconciliation has extended in a very personal way to some of us.

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

The Canticle ~ Seek the Lord

Seek the Lord while he wills to be found; *
call upon him when he draws near.

Let the wicked forsake their ways *
and the evil ones their thoughts;

And let them turn to the Lord, and he will have compassion, *
and to our God, for he will richly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, *
nor your ways my ways, says the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, *
so are my ways higher than your ways,
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as rain and snow fall from the heavens *
and return not again, but water the earth,

Bringing forth life and giving growth, *
seed for sowing and bread for eating,

So is my word that goes forth from my mouth; *
it will not return to me empty;

But it will accomplish that which I have purposed, *
and prosper in that for which I sent it.

Isaiah 55.6-11

*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,
you made your servant Lindel Tsen
a true shepherd of your people in China
and upheld him with the staff of your wisdom
through times of crisis and great peril.
Grant us to know the presence of your Son
as our Saviour and Companion,
that we may have courage in the works of peace
and strength in the path to your kingdom;
through 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:

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