

Daily Prayer

Florence Nightingale

Wednesday, May 12, 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 Florence Nightingale, Nurse, Social Reformer, 1910

We begin by saying

Thus says the Lord God: I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak; I will feed them with justice.

Ezekiel 34.11, 16

The First Reading

'With what shall I come before the Lord,
and bow myself before God on high?

Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings,
with calves a year old?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
with tens of thousands of rivers of oil?

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?'

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you

but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6.6-8

The Psalm

Yet I am always with you; *

you hold me by my right hand.

You will guide me by your counsel, *

and afterwards receive me with glory.

Whom have I in heaven but you? *

and having you I desire nothing upon earth.

Though my flesh and my heart should waste away, *

God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.

Truly, those who forsake you will perish; *

you destroy all who are unfaithful.

But it is good for me to be near God; *

I have made the Lord God my refuge.

I will speak of all your works *

in the gates of the city of Zion.

Psalm 73.23-29

The Gospel Reading

'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited

me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Matthew 25.31-40

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 Remembering the “Lady With the Lamp”

Susan Haig

Today we honour Florence Nightingale for her courageous and compassionate witness as a faithful servant of Jesus Christ and the founder of modern nursing. Courageous because it was a calling as lacking in respect and as low on the social scale as migrant farm working today or as shepherding in 1st-century Palestine; and courageous because its practice, whether at home in England or abroad in the Crimean war theatre, was almost as risky as facing the enemy muskets and cannons on the field of battle, given the horrendous sanitary conditions in hospitals which were rife with bacteria and viruses. (One of her most famous quotes was a propos this risk: “it may seem a strange principle to enunciate as the very first requirement in a hospital that it should do the sick no harm.”)

Her service was compassionate because Florence was absolutely tireless in her efforts to relieve the suffering of the wounded and dying soldiers lying helpless in the makeshift field hospitals at Scutari and Balaclava. Night after night, while most of the staff slept, she

kept vigil, walking from cot to cot with her lamp in hand, kneeling by the side of the men who lay in pain, offering a word of solace, listening to a last request, writing a letter home on their behalf, doing whatever was possible in an impossible place. Her compassion was seemingly boundless: at a time when the army didn't always inform families that soldiers had been killed, Florence felt a duty to do so and took it upon herself to write personal letters of condolences to the families of the men who had died.

For those afflicted soldiers whose hearts and flesh were, like the psalmist says, just wasting away, Florence would have been a refuge and beacon in the storm, a sign of God's abiding presence and healing strength. And whether she knew the prayer or not, she was also the embodiment of the great prayer of her sister in the faith, Teresa of Avila, for as she walked up and down the rows of fallen men, she was the hands and feet of Christ on earth.

Born on May 12, 1820, to a wealthy aristocratic family in Italy, she had heard God's call as a teenager to help the sick and poor by becoming a nurse, despite the fact that the profession was not deemed to be a respectable one. Both her family and prevailing social conventions expected her to stay dutifully and demurely at home, but undeterred she turned down multiple marriage proposals and instead educated herself in both the arts and sciences and gained some hands-on nursing experience at a Lutheran-run institution for the poor in Germany.

Tragically and sacrificially, like so many of the men who fought in the war, Florence returned from the Crimea a changed person, her health irreparably damaged. But despite battling depression and being intermittently bedridden, she wrote thousands of letters campaigning for improved public health and workhouse reform, using her influence to network with both Queen Victoria and

prominent politicians. One of her first tasks after returning from the war had been to set up a training school for nurses, the first to exist in the world and which still exists.

Florence died at the age of 90 on August 13, 1910, having done all and more that the Lord required. She lived a life of humble service. She loved and practised kindness. And she fought for justice, changing the world and bringing much-needed light.

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

The Canticle ~ A Song of Mercy and Truth

O God, will you not give us life again, ♦
that your people may rejoice in you?

Show us your mercy, O Lord, ♦
and grant us your salvation.

Truly, his salvation is near to those who fear him, ♦
that his glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth are met together, ♦
righteousness and peace have kissed each other;

Truth shall spring up from the earth ♦
and righteousness look down from heaven.

Righteousness shall go before him ♦
and direct his steps in the way.

Psalm 85.6, 7, 9-11, 13

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

In joy and hope let us pray to the source of all life, saying,
“Hear us, Lord of glory!”

That our risen Saviour may fill us with the joy of his holy and life-giving resurrection, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That isolated and persecuted churches may find fresh strength in the Easter gospel, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That he may grant us humility to be subject to one another in Christian love, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That he may provide for those who lack food, work, or shelter, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That by his power wars and famine may cease through all the earth, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That he may reveal the light of his presence to the sick, the weak, and the dying, that they may be comforted and strengthened, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That he may send the fire of the Holy Spirit upon his people, that we may bear faithful witness to his resurrection, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

Our prayers conclude

Life-giving God,
you alone have power over life and death,
over health and sickness.
Give power, wisdom, and gentleness
to those who follow the lead of Florence Nightingale,
that they, bearing with them your presence,
may not only heal but bless,
and shine as lanterns of hope
in the darkest hours of pain and fear;
through Jesus Christ, the healer of body and soul,
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 risen Christ grant us the joys of eternal life.
Amen.

Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.

Credits:

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