

Daily Prayer

The Martyrs of Lyons

Wednesday, June 2, 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 the Martyrs of Lyons, 177.

We begin by saying

The King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws.

2 Maccabees 7.9b

The First Reading

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you

will heap burning coals on their heads.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12.9-21

The Psalm

Hear my cry, O God, *
and listen to my prayer.

I call upon you from the ends of the earth
with heaviness in my heart; *
set me upon the rock that is higher than I.

For you have been my refuge, *
a strong tower against the enemy.

I will dwell in your house for ever; *
I will take refuge under the cover of your wings.

For you, O God, have heard my vows; *
you have granted me the heritage of those
who fear your name.

Psalm 61.1-5

The Gospel Reading

Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

'For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done.

Matthew 16.24-27

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

The Martyrs of Lyons and the Martyrs of Kamloops

Today in our church calendar is set aside to honour the Martyrs of Lyons. In 177, in the very early days of the Christian movement, the worshippers in Lyons, central France, were massacred by the Imperial authorities, and the crowds. Others were captured and later killed in the arena. One, Blandina, a young woman, went to her death holding in her heart all the children who had been killed.

Today, we don't need to go back to that early story to know and feel the tragedy of the death of children. The news is full this week of the 215 children buried at the residential school in Kamloops. They are martyrs too, in the cause of justice, and bear witness to the tragic, genocidal policies of the leaders of the churches and the governments of the time, as the schools spanned more than a century, with the last one closing in just 1996.

When I arrived in Toronto from Calgary in 1993 to take up the position of General Secretary, the church was to make a presentation in Ottawa to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP). The subject was residential schools. I read from the brief prepared by staff:

The condition of Aboriginal peoples a generation after the closing of most residential schools constitutes a national crisis. The institutions that ran the schools (church and government) must acknowledge their responsibility to support and encourage healing.

That was 28 years ago. Today, we continue to feel the pain of this part of our history. Not just our history, but also our present.

In researching in the Anglican archives for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, two stories I found in principals' reports struck me most forcefully:

It was Monday, September 23rd 1895, and they were building a root cellar at St. Peter's Boarding School on the Peigan Reserve in southwestern Alberta, a cellar to store the root vegetables - potatoes, carrots, beets, turnips. The boys were shoveling dirt over the frame. One boy, John, known as #29, was in the cellar. One of the beams collapsed, fell in, and struck John on the head. John died that day.

Another day, Saturday January 7th 1899. The old St. Peter's school had been replaced two years earlier, and renamed the Victoria Jubilee Home for Indian Children. A group of boys went out to play in the snow. The new school had been built on the floodplain of the Old Man River with high banks nearby. Eight boys wandered over, 5 went to the top, three stayed at the bottom. The snow was fresh and deep, and a small avalanche began. Two boys at the bottom were buried and died. The third one escaped. The two boys were John Bright Iron, #43, age 8, and Frank Calf Chief, #38, age 10. At least, unlike the Kamloops children, the parents were notified, and the parents came to claim the bodies. The Principal reported the deaths to the Indian Agent, and his report states, ".. it was the boys' own fault."

Today we remember those three boys who died long, long ago - John and John and Frank.

Of course, these are just three of the close to 4000 children who died in the schools, or who went missing. In many cases, families still

long to know what happened to their lost ancestors. We need to support the indigenous people of this land as they mourn the deaths of the Kamloops children, as they seek healing, and peace. We also need to urge our government in Ottawa to do some other things, too:

Give greater priority to provision of clean drinking water on the reserves where boiled water advisories are still in place.

Support Bill C-15 which adopts the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Support Bill C-5, which would establish September 30 as a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission set out 95 Calls to Action. Our church is involved in many of them, but there is much, much more that we can do.

Jesus said, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." And Paul sets out in Romans 12:9-21 a way of living, and the closing phrase is our calling: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

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

The Canticle ~ Saviour of the World

Jesus, Saviour of the world,
come to us in your mercy: ♦
we look to you to save and help us.

By your cross and your life laid down,
you set your people free: ♦
we look to you to save and help us.

When they were ready to perish, you saved your disciples: ♦
we look to you to come to our help.

In the greatness of your mercy, loose us from our chains, ♦
forgive the sins of all your people.

Make yourself known as our Saviour and mighty deliverer; ♦
save and help us that we may praise you.

Come now and dwell with us, Lord Christ Jesus: ♦
hear our prayer and be with us always.

And when you come in your glory: ♦
make us to be one with you
and to share the life of your kingdom.

*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

Creator God,
you have promised to hear when we pray
in the name of your Son.

Therefore in confidence and trust
we pray for the Church:

Holy One, enliven the Church for its mission
that we may be salt of the earth and light to the world.

Breath fresh life into your people

Give us power to reveal Christ in word and action.

We pray for the world:

Creator of all,

Lead us and every people into ways of justice and peace.

That we may respect one another in freedom and truth.

Awaken in us a sense of wonder for the earth and all that is in it.
Teach us to care creatively for its resources.

We pray for the community:

God of truth, inspire with your wisdom
those whose decisions affect the lives of others
that all may act with integrity and courage.
Give grace to all whose lives are linked with ours.
May we serve Christ in one another, and love as he loves us.

We pray for those in need:

God of hope, comfort and restore
all who suffer in body, mind or spirit.
May they know the power of your healing love.
Make us willing agents of your compassion.
Strengthen us as we share in making people whole.

We honour those who have died and remember those who
mourn:

We remember with thanksgiving those who have died in the faith
of Christ, and those whose faith is known to you alone.
Father, into your hands we commend them.
Give comfort to those who mourn.
Bring them peace in their time of loss.
We praise you for all your saints
who have entered your eternal glory.
May their example inspire and encourage us.

We prayer for ourselves and our ministries:

Your word is a lamp for our feet.
In darkness and in light,
in trouble and in joy,
help us, heavenly Father,

to trust your love,
to serve your purpose,
and to praise your name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our prayers conclude with the Collect for Holy Innocents

Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
whose children suffered at the hands of Herod,
receive, we pray, all innocent victims
into the arms of your mercy.

By your great might frustrate all evil designs
and establish your reign of justice, love, and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Loving God,
we pray in grief for 215 precious little souls.
We pray for their families - for their heavy loss - that even now,
you would bind up their hearts with your healing love.
We pray for humility;
to acknowledge and ask forgiveness
for the evil in which we have been complicit.
And then Lord, we pray for the gift of righteous anger;
that it may fuel our recommitment to work for justice and love;
and fuel our resolve to call out the supremacy narratives
that damage and diminish the divine in us all.
We pray all this in the strong and just name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

[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 grant to the world justice, truth and peace.
Amen.

Credits:

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