

Daily Prayer

Hannah Grier Coome

Wednesday, February 9, 2022

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 Hannah Grier Coome, Religious and Founder of the SSJD

We begin by saying

O Lord, open our lips,

and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

The First Reading

So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For all of us must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we ourselves are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences. We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that

those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

2 Corinthians 5.6-15

The Psalm

I call with my whole heart; ♦
answer me, O Lord, that I may keep your statutes.

To you I call, O save me! ♦
And I shall keep your testimonies.

Early in the morning I cry to you, ♦
for in your word is my trust.

My eyes are open before the night watches, ♦
that I may meditate on your word. [R]

Hear my voice, O Lord, according to your faithful love; ♦
according to your judgement, give me life.

They draw near that in malice persecute me, ♦
who are far from your law.

You, O Lord, are near at hand, ♦
and all your commandments are true.

Long have I known of your testimonies, ♦
that you have founded them for ever.

Psalm 119.145-152

The Gospel Reading

‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6.19-21

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

Susan Haig

I begin with a very personal testimony to the significance of this remarkable and holy woman in the life of our Church, by sharing with you that my youngest daughter, Hannah Rose, is named in her honour. As long-standing parishioners at St. Thomas's, Huron Street and supporters of the convent of the Sisters of St. John the Divine, her father and I had a deep affection for her, the sisterhood, and their connection to our parish church where they had worshipped before the community's move to their convent in North York. It is a joyful privilege, therefore, for me to write this reflection for this day of her commemoration. What she means to me and my Hannah's father is just a dim reflection of what she means and has meant to so many in the Canadian Church and Anglican communion.

When we look at the trajectory of Mother's Hannah's life and ministry, we discover a clear and profound link between loss and hardship and the outpouring of mercy and compassion that were their hallmarks. As she lost earthly treasures – and precious earthly relationships - she re-directed her energies and commitment towards - in St. Matthew's words (Mt 6:19) appointed for this commemoration - "storing up treasure in heaven." When tragically widowed in her early 40s, she decided to "offer her widowhood...to God's service. " At times her zeal and devotion had tongues wagging, suggesting derisively that she was out of her mind, (St. Paul in 2 Cor 5:13), to which, I can imagine, her calm and non-anxious response was: "if I am out of my mind, it is for God."

Hannah was born on October 28, 1837, at Carrying Place, Ontario. Her parents were the Rev. John Grier, a high-church Anglican clergyperson, and Eliza Lilia Geddes. She was well educated at

home by her father, and then married a civil engineer, Charles Horace Coome, who was working on the Grand Trunk Railway. For a time they lived in Kingston, Ontario, but then re-located to Britain where they remained for 14 years. This was a rich time of spiritual development for Hannah, who became acquainted with the Oxford Movement, as well as the Anglican religious community of St. Mary the Virgin in Watford. During this time she conceived what would be her only child; but sadly, lost the baby after suffering a severe fall. Her grief was then compounded by a long convalescence.

A year after the couple returned to North America in 1877, tragedy struck again and Charles died in Chicago. For a time Hannah lived with her brother and nephew in that city, teaching decorative arts and executing embroidery and fine needlework for churches. Feeling a call to the religious life and determining she would enter the Sisters of St. Mary at Watford, she passed through Toronto to visit her mother and was approached by a group keen on establishing a sisterhood here and desiring Hannah to lead it. The rest, as they say, is history - and our great inheritance.

To prepare for this momentous step and ministry, Hannah and her companion Amelia Elizabeth (Aimee) Hare entered the noviciate of the Sisters of St. Mary in Peekskill, New York, in June 1882. For two years they trained with the American sisters in their hospital and social missions in New York City; following which Hannah professed religious vows on September 8, 1884 at the Peekskill motherhouse. She and Aimee then returned to Toronto to lead the new community which Bishop Arthur Sweatman had recognized as the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine on St. John's Day, 1884.

In these early days, Mother Hannah, Novice Aimee and various postulants experienced abuse and taunts from some Protestants who considered their habits, similar to the widow's garb of the time,

excessively papist. Some Orangemen even threatened to burn down their house. These detractors were eventually silenced and even converted by their dedication to works of mercy and the relief of suffering. Because barely had they established themselves in Toronto, when Bishop Sweatman and later the Provincial Synod requested their assistance in Saskatchewan to tend to the fallout of the North-West Rebellion. So it was in May 1885, that Mother Hannah, novice Aimee, two postulants and three nurses embarked for Moose Jaw, where they set up a field hospital to tend the wounded and ill soldiers. Their mission was an immense success, so much so that on their return to Toronto that July, not only had Mother Hannah received a medal from the Government of Canada, but the opposition to their sisterhood had all but evaporated.

Upon their return to Toronto, the sisters lost no time in setting up St. John's House, the first surgical hospital for women in the city, a place where over half of their patients received medical care free of charge. Over the next few years they branched out further establishing a home for the aged (1886), an enlarged hospital and convent on Major Street (1888-89), incorporation of the order (with five sisters in 1889), a mission in Seaton Village north of Bloor Street (1890), and finally responsibility for Bishop Bethune College in Oshawa (1893).

During the time of Mother Hannah's leadership the order was never large and the scope of their work often seemed to exceed their numbers and resources. However, she was a shrewd financial administrator, tireless shepherd of her flock, and inspirational source of energy for mission across the Canadian church. Although she suffered from sciatica, overwork and continued complications of her miscarriage for many years, she only retired at the age of 79. She died on Ash Wednesday (February 9) 1921.

The Sisterhood she founded not only trained nurses and ministered to the elderly, it also ran schools and orphanages, serving the handicapped and vulnerable in both large cities and rural areas. By 1930 it had 300 associates. In 1933 they helped establish a rehabilitation hospital in Willowdale, now St. John's Rehab Hospital. As Stephen Reynolds writes in **For All The Saints** (at p.82):

“Mother Hannah guided these enterprises, and the everyday life of the Sisters, with holiness, practical wisdom, and a sense of humour that pierced high-flying pretensions and unseasonable gloom...In her life she learned to be a light which kindled righteous deeds in others...”

And for this we give thanks. May we too be lights which kindle righteous deeds in others.

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

The Canticle ~ A Song of God's Children

*The Spirit of the Father,
who raised Christ Jesus from the dead,
gives life to the people of God.*

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus ♦
has set us free from the law of sin and death.

All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God; ♦
for we have received the Spirit that enables us to cry,
'Abba, Father'.

The Spirit himself bears witness that we are children of
God ♦
and if God's children, then heirs of God;

If heirs of God, then fellow-heirs with Christ; ♦
since we suffer with him now, that we may be glorified
with him.

These sufferings that we now endure ♦
are not worth comparing to the glory that shall be
revealed.

For the creation waits with eager longing ♦
for the revealing of the children of God.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son
And to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning is now
And shall be for ever

*The Spirit of the Father,
who raised Christ Jesus from the dead,
gives life to the people of God.*

Luke 2.29-32

*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

For all the peoples of the world;
that they may know you as the God of peace,
we pray to you,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For nations, for leaders and governments;
that integrity may mark all their dealings,
we pray to you,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who labour for righteousness;
that your presence and help may give them courage,
we pray to you,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For communities torn by dissension and strife;
that your forgiveness may bring them healing,
we pray to you,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For the anxious, the lonely, the bereaved;
that consolation and peace may be theirs,
we pray to you,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For the Church, your household and family;
that she may be firm in the confession of her hope,
we pray to you,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who are separated from us by death;
that theirs may be the kingdom which is unshakeable,
we pray to you,
Lord, hear our prayer.

O God of peace,
who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great Shepherd of the sheep:
make us perfect in all goodness to do your will
and to be what you would have us be;
through him to whom be glory for ever,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Our prayers conclude

Eternal God, you clothed your servant Hannah
with the habit of prayer and the robe of wisdom,
to guide her sisters in this nation
in the ways of holiness

and the works of mercy and love.
Deliver us, we pray,
from an inordinate love of this world,
that we may be freed
for the worship of your Name
and for deeds that reveal your grace;
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 Christ, who sends us to the nations,
give us the power of his Spirit.

Amen.

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

The Intercessions: Scottish Episcopal Church—Form 1 (adapted)

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

The Concluding Sentence: Common Worship: Daily Prayer © The Archbishops' Council 2005 and published by Church House Publishing.

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