

Daily Prayer

Holy Innocents

Wednesday, December 28, 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.

We begin by saying

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make hast to help us.

I will give thanks to you, Lord, with my whole heart;

I will tell of all your marvellous works.

The First Reading

Thus says the LORD:

A voice is heard in Ramah,

lamentation and bitter weeping.

Rachel is weeping for her children;

she refuses to be comforted for her children,

because they are no more.

Thus says the LORD:

Keep your voice from weeping,

and your eyes from tears;

for there is a reward for your work,

says the LORD:

they shall come back from the land of the enemy;

there is hope for your future,

says the LORD:

your children shall come back to their own country.

Jeremiah 31.15-17

The Psalm

If the Lord himself had not been on our side, ♦
now may Israel say;

If the Lord had not been on our side, ♦
when enemies rose up against us;

Then would they have swallowed us alive ♦
when their anger burned against us;

Then would the waters have overwhelmed us
and the torrent gone over our soul; ♦
over our soul would have swept the raging waters.

But blessed be the Lord ♦
who has not given us over to be a prey for their teeth.

Our soul has escaped
as a bird from the snare of the fowler; ♦
the snare is broken and we are delivered.

Our help is in the name of the Lord, ♦
who has made heaven and earth.

Psalm 124

The Gospel Reading

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

'A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.'

Matthew 2.13-18

In silence, we ask what the readings have to say to us today. Is there something that draws us more deeply into the reading? What does God have to say to us? What do we have to ask God?

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

The Canticle ~ A Song of the Messiah

**To us a child is born,
to us a son is given.**

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; ♦
*those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
upon them the light has dawned.*

You have increased their joy and given them great gladness; ♦
they rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest.

For you have shattered the yoke that burdened them; ♦
the collar that lay heavy on their shoulders.

For to us a child is born and to us a son is given, ♦
and the government will be upon his shoulder.

And his name will be called: Wonderful Counsellor;
the Mighty God; ♦
the Everlasting Father; the Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of peace ♦
there will be no end,

Upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, ♦
to establish and uphold it with justice and righteousness.

From this time forth and for evermore; ♦
the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 9.2, 3b, 4a, 6, 7

*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. Amen.*

**To us a child is born,
to us a son is given.**

*We continue in prayer for those people and situations that we hold up before God and
continue with the concluding collect, the Lord's prayer and the closing sentences.*

The Intercessions

Watchful at all times,
let us pray for strength to stand with confidence
before our Maker and Redeemer.
That God may bring in his kingdom with justice and mercy,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That God may establish among the nations
his sceptre of righteousness,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That we may seek Christ in the Scriptures
and recognize him in the breaking of the bread,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That God may bind up the brokenhearted,
restore the sick
and raise up all who have fallen,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That the light of God's coming may dawn
on all who live in darkness and the shadow of death,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That, with all the saints in light,
we may shine forth as lights for the world,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

We commend ourselves and all for whom we pray
to the mercy and protection of our heavenly Father:

Silence is kept.

Almighty God,
as your blessed Son Jesus Christ
first came to seek and to save the lost;
so may he come again to find in us
the completion of his redeeming work;
for he is now alive
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.
Amen.

Our prayers conclude

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 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 the grace of Christ our Saviour be with us all.

Amen.

Holy Innocents

Holy Day

The story of the Holy Innocents is found in the Gospel according to Matthew, and it is the story of an atrocity. Herod the Great was titled “king of the Jews,” but he held his throne at the pleasure of the Roman emperor. The precariousness of his power made him all the more ruthless in defending it. Thus, when he learned that the Christ, the true king of the Jews, had been born at Bethlehem, Herod wanted to do away with him. But he did not know the exact identity of the child, so he sent his troops to slaughter all the infants of Bethlehem on the chance that one of the victims would be the Christ-child.

The murdered infants never had an opportunity to know Jesus or to confess him in their own right. But they all died for the sake of Christ, and Herod's atrocity sealed the name of Christ on each one of them. The Holy Innocents are therefore considered the prototype of all Christian martyrs.

The Holy Innocents may also be considered the patron saints of our own age. For we live in an age of atrocities, in a time infamous for the slaughter of innocent bystanders who never chose the causes for which they have been made to die. By celebrating this feast, we perform an office for the Holy Innocents and all other victims of massacre. We become their voice and cry out for God to remember the slaughtered — and to remember them for the sake of Christ, himself the great Innocent who was crucified by “the rulers of this age.”

Credits:

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Biographical information: For All the Saints © 2007, General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada

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