

# "PRAYER as communion with God"

was my title for some prayers I as a pastor a half century ago chose for my people's use. Here they are as I typed them--discovered by Loree when searching for prayers appropriate for church mailers.

O God, who art, and wast, and art to come, before whose face the generations rise and pass away; age after age the living seek Thee, and find that of Thy faithfulness there is no end. Our fathers in their pilgrimage walked by Thy guidance, and rested on Thy compassion; still to their children be Thou the cloud by day, the fire by night. In our manifold temptations, Thou alone knowest and are ever nigh: in sorrow, Thy pity revives the fainting soul; in our prosperity and ease, it is Thy Spirit only that can wean us from our pride and keep us low. O Thou sole Source of peace and righteousness! take now the veil from every heart; and join us in one communion with Thy prophets and saints who have trusted in Thee, and were not ashamed. Not of our worthiness, but of Thy tender mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.---James Martineau (1805-1900).

Almighty Father, enter Thou our hearts, and so fill us with Thy love, that, forsaking all evil desires, we may embrace Thee, our only good. Show unto us, for Thy mercies' sake, O Lord our God, what Thou art unto us. Say unto our souls, I am thy salvation. So speak that we may hear. Our hearts are before Thee; open Thou our ears; let us hasten after Thy voice, and take hold on Thee. Hide not Thy face from us, we beseech Thee, O Lord. Enlarge Thou the narrowness of our souls, that Thou mayest enter in. Repair the ruinous mansions, that Thou mayest dwell there. Hear us, O Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.---St. Augustine (354-430).

O Heavenly Father, the Author and Fountain of all truth, the bottomless Sea of all understanding, send, we beseech Thee, Thy Holy Spirit into our hearts, and lighten our understandings with the beams of Thy heavenly grace. We ask this, O merciful Father, for Thy dear Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.---Bishop Ridley (1500-1555).

Grant me, O most loving Lord, to rest in Thee above all creatures, above all health and beauty, above all glory and honor, above all power and dignity, above all knowledge and subtilty, above all riches and art, above all fame and praise, above all sweetness and comfort, above all hope and promise, above all gifts and favors that Thou canst give and impart to us, above all jubilee that the mind of man can receive and feel; finally, above angels and archangels, and above all the heavenly host, above all things visible and invisible, and above all that Thou art not, O my God. It is too small and unsatisfying, whatsoever Thou bestowest on me apart from Thee, or revealest to me, or promisest, whilst Thou art not seen, and not fully obtained. For surely my heart cannot truly rest, nor be entirely contented, unless it rest in Thee. Amen.---Thomas à Kempis (1379-1471).

O Thou divine Spirit that, in all events of life, art knocking at the door of my heart, help me to respond to Thee. I would not be driven blindly as the stars over their courses. I would not be made to work out Thy will unwillingly, to fulfil Thy law unintelligently, to obey Thy mandates unsympathetically. I would take the events of my life as good and perfect gifts from Thee; I would receive even the sorrows of life as disguised gifts from Thee. I would have my heart open at all times to receive--at morning, noon, and night; in spring, and summer, and winter. Whether Thou comest to me in sunshine or in rain, I would take Thee into my heart joyfully. Thou art Thyself more than the sunshine, Thou art Thyself compensation for the rain; it is Thee and not Thy gifts I crave; knock, and I shall open unto Thee. Amen.--George Matheson.

O Lord, keep me sensitive to the grace that is round about me. May the familiar not become neglected! May I see Thy goodness in my daily bread, and may the comfort of my home take my thoughts to the mercy seat of God!--J. H. Jowett.

Come, O Lord, in much mercy down into my soul, and take possession and dwell there. A homely mansion, I confess, for so glorious a Majesty, but such as Thou art fitting up for the reception of Thee, by holy and fervent desires of Thine own inspiring. Enter then, and adorn, and make it such as Thou canst inhabit, since it is the work of Thy hands. Give me Thine own self, without which, though Thou shouldst give me all that ever Thou hast made, yet could not my desires be satisfied. Let my soul ever seek Thee, and let me persist in seeking, till I have found, and am in full possession of Thee. Amen.--St. Augustine (354-430).

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PRAYER transcends time & space, our space & our time. Therefore, we can be united in prayer even when, especially when our times, our spaces, & our convictions divide us. Please hear this from Russ Mitman (Penn. SEConference Minister, in a pastoral letter to his churches, reprinted on p.A10, May/03 UNITED CHURCH NEWS), whom I am grateful to call a friend:

"It seems almost naive for me to say that the only thing that will bring us to the other side is prayer. Yet, it is prayer that is the unique arsenal faith communities have amidst hopelessness, fear and polarization. Praying for troops sent into the conflict *and* praying for peace are not contradictions. Praying for families fearing the worst for their loved ones *and* praying for our enemies, as Jesus commanded, is not a contradiction. Praying for those "for" the war and praying for those "against" the war are not contradictions. In fact, it is only prayer--prayer in the name of Jesus Christ--that gets us beyond the contradictions, not because we can do it by our careful crafting of the words, but because the Word beyond all words grants to us that which is beyond our understanding. Peace is not simply the absence of warfare; peace is God's reality, heaven's gift to those who pray unceasingly, 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'."

Russ's piece is titled, in UCN, "Why should we pray?" Many reasons why; those he adduces are especially pertinent to this war-aftermath time of sorrow & hope.

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