

Prayer Practice

a liturgy for anchoring ourselves
during uncertain times

ADDRESS

Creator God, maker of heaven and earth,
let my soul rise up to meet you
as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the
Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be forever.

Amen.

ENCIRCLING PRAYER

Encircle me,
O Sacred Three
and guide me in your ways.

CONFESSION

Most merciful God,
we desire to follow you,
and we confess that we have gone astray.
We are truly sorry and we humbly turn around.
Have mercy on us and forgive us;
That we might walk in your ways
in right relationship with all,
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

ABSOLUTION

Praise the LORD, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits.
The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger, and rich in love.
As far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
Praise the LORD, my soul.

PSALM 126

Remember when the Eternal brought back
the exiles to Zion?

It was as if we were dreaming—
Our mouths were filled with laughter;
our tongues were spilling over into song.
The word went out *across the prairies and
deserts, across the hills, over the oceans wide,*
from nation to nation:

“The Eternal has done remarkable things
for them.”

*We shook our heads. All of us were stunned—
the Eternal has done remarkable things for us.
We were beyond happy, beyond joyful.*

And now, Eternal One,
some are held captive and poor.

*Release them, and restore our fortunes
as the dry riverbeds of the South
spring to life when the rains come at last.*

Those who walk the fields to sow,
casting their seed in tears,
will one day tread those same long rows,
amazed by what’s appeared.

Those who weep as they walk
and plant *with sighs*

Will return singing with joy,
when they bring home the harvest.¹

ENCIRCLING PRAYER

Encircle me,
O Sacred Three
and guide me in your ways.

CONTEMPLATION

I open my life to you Lord,
I make space in this day for your coming.
I move from busyness to your stillness.
I open my heart to your love,
I open my ears to your call,
I open my eyes to your presence;
I open my life to you.²

Take some time to quiet your mind and sit in the presence of Jesus. Abide with the One who is always with you. As this season of sharing and listening comes to a close, bring the following question before God in prayer:

“Is there an image or word that defines this journey for you?”

PEACE PRAYER

Lord Jesus, your arms stretched out
upon the hard wood of the cross.
What was meant for evil,
God used for good, peace, and
the reconciliation of all things.
May your kingdom come.

THE BEATITUDES

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst
for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted
because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

ENCIRCLING PRAYER

Encircle me,
O Sacred Three
and guide me in your ways.

PRAYER FOR THE JOURNEY

O God, make clear to us each road.
O God, make safe to us each step;
when we stumble, hold us;
when we fall, lift us up.
When we are hard-pressed with evil,
deliver us;
And bring us at last to Your glory.
Amen.³

¹ *The Voice* translation

² Adapted from a prayer by David Adam in *A Desert in the Ocean*

³ Taken from “About This Book” in *Prayers and Readings From the Northumbria Community’s Celtic Daily Prayer* published by Collins.

Contemplation

sitting with Jesus

INTENT

We invite you to simply sit in the presence of Jesus. As we sit in Jesus' presence we abide in the One who abides in us (John 15:4). We turn our awareness to the God of Love who is with us always. As we sit in Jesus' presence we open ourselves to his grace.

POSTURE OF PRAYER

Make yourself comfortable – relaxed and yet alert. Feel free to close your eyes or allow your gaze to rest with a soft-focus in front of you.

CENTERING DOWN

Our minds can be quite busy and distract us from our intention to simply sit with Jesus. Our breathing can help drop our awareness to a more centered place. Notice your breathing for a moment. Is it slow, fast, shallow, or deep? To drop your awareness down from your mind, take a few deeper belly breaths. Allow your stomach to expand as you inhale and contract when you exhale. You may want to put your hand on your stomach and feel it rise and fall. Now draw your awareness to a place that represents the core of your being. It may be somewhere in the centre of your body. Our spiritual ancestors often thought of this place as the heart – the place where Christ resides within us, and where we commune with God. Imagine your heart expanding and becoming spacious to make room for more of God's presence. You may picture your heart as a flower unfurling, a camera aperture opening, or a pupil dilating to allow more light in.

LISTENING

From this space, simply rest in God's presence. Be open to God speaking to you through your imagination, thoughts, words, or bodily sensations. As you sit in Jesus' presence simply open yourself up to receive his heart for you

and his church – Cedar Park. Try not to bring rigid expectations to your time of sitting with Jesus. Gifts from God (e.g., Jesus' felt presence, a word, image, etc.) are received not manufactured or grasped. Often, simply sitting in God's quiet presence is the gift received in this time.

If it's helpful for you, feel free to re-read a portion of the Scripture passage in the liturgy. You may want to choose a different verse to meditate on each time you pray.

DISTRACTIONS

As distracting thoughts flow into your mind (e.g., What will I make for dinner? Did I remember to email Joan?) gently draw your attention back to your intention – to sit with Jesus. View your thoughts as boats floating down the stream of your consciousness. It is natural for thoughts of all kinds to come. Have a friendly attitude towards them. Do not actively resist or fixate on your thoughts. Do not wage war against the boats, or climb aboard. This is a non-violent prayer practice. Simply, detach from them by allowing them to pass by with an "inward smile." Then begin again.

TRANSITION

After a few minutes thank God for the time spent in one another's presence. Take a few deep breaths and when ready bring your awareness back to the room you are in and continue with the prayer liturgy.

NOTES

Feel free to take a few minutes to write down anything from your time of contemplation that you think is important.

Discernment

DISCERNING WELL

To discern well, we sit in the seat of abiding which is upheld by several supports.



1. Source—Is this from the Trinity we have come to know?

- Is it consistent with God’s character and promises? “I am with you always” (Matt. 28:20), “I will never leave you or forsake you” (Heb. 13:5)
 - Ask, “Does this exalt Jesus?”
 - Does this bless people’s humanity? Does it support justice for the oppressed, and compassion for the vulnerable? Does this honour the planet God made and loves?
 - Ask, “Is it really you Jesus?”

2. Scripture—Does it align with Scripture?

- Does it match God’s character as revealed in the Bible?
- Does it fit with Christ’s teaching in the beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount?

3. Body—Is this affirmed by others?

- It is helpful to ask others if what we think we sensed from God rings true to them.
- Viewing something from the wide variety of perspectives/vantage points represented in a group helps us see past our own biases. Ask, “Whose voice is missing from my discernment?”
- A group of believers listening to God and discerning together is often more trustworthy than one lone super prophet.

4. Spirit—What is the fruit of this experience?

- Does this ring true?
- Does this word lead to fear or comfort? Is it bearing fruit? “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” (Gal. 5:22-23)

WAS THAT JUST MY IMAGINATION?

“In asking ‘Was that God or my imagination,’ we also inadvertently set God’s voice and our imagination at odds, as if we were restricted to an either/or choice of opposing categories. It’s a little like pointing to the ocean and asking, ‘Is that water or is that blue?’ In truth, the answer to ‘was that God or my imagination?’ is frequently yes—not either/or but both/and. Your imagination provides a stage upon which God acts...”

– Brad Jersak, *Can You Hear Me: Tuning Into the God who Speaks*. 95-96