

Companions of Brother Lawrence
June 1st 2020

Words of Gathering

In your presence Lord, there is peace.
In your presence Lord, there is love.
In your presence Lord, there is sweet communion.
In your presence Lord, there is abundant life.

We have come into your presence Lord, to be filled with your peace.

We have come into your presence Lord, enfold us in your love.

We have come into your presence Lord, to share in sweet communion.

We have come into your presence Lord to enter into your abundant life.

(Margery Tate)

Hymn 469 (R&S) As we are gathered

As we are gathered Jesus is here,
one with each other, Jesus is here;
joined by the Spirit, built up in love,
part of the Body, the Church of God.
As we are gathered, Jesus is here;
One with each other, Jesus is here.

(John Daniels)

Words of Brother Lawrence for Day 1

We should fix ourselves firmly in the presence of God, by conversing all the time with him.

We should feed our spirits with thoughts of God, and from that derive great joy in being his.

Time of sharing

How can we learn to converse with God all the time?

What forms can this conversing take?

Are there things which get in the way of our conversation with God?

In this time of lockdown are we finding it easier or more difficult to maintain a conversation with God?

What can we do to restore this very special channel of communication between ourselves and God?

Song – Turn your eyes upon Jesus (sing through twice)

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace.

(Helen Lemmel)

Reflection on the Ascension Acts 1 v 12 – 14

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city they went to the room upstairs where they were staying. Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary, the mother of Jesus.

We thought we'd lost him by Nick Fawcett

(James)

“He'd left us to face the world alone, abandoned us when we needed him most.

Why?

How could he do it?

That's what we kept asking.”

In what ways might we or others be feeling like this at the moment?

“But then a strange feeling came over us.

I can't explain it, it was almost like a voice from heaven.

And when we looked at each other again we somehow knew he hadn't gone, not really.

Even though we wouldn't see him again, even though we wouldn't be able to talk to with him as we used to, we knew he was there with us,

There in Jerusalem, there in Galilee, there in Judea and Samaria, there in all the world, wherever we might choose to go.

And we knew he would be with us every moment, every day, even to death itself, waiting to receive us and welcome us home.

We thought we'd lost him, and for a moment it was dreadful. But the fact was we had to lose him before we could find him. We somehow knew he hadn't gone, not really.”

Time of Prayer for those on our hearts (followed by the prayer below)

Living Lord,

come close to the dying.

Come as company for the lonely,

with comfort for the terrified.,

in compassion for those who suffer pain.

May your strong arms cradle them,

bearing their disbelief and despair,

their patience, anger or tears.

At the end, may they know that you are there,

waiting for them as they let go,

catching them when they fall and

lifting them at last into new life.

Amen

(Encountered. Meeting God in ordinary places.

A Lent course by Claire Benton – Evans. Prayer for Good Friday.)

An Ascension Day Meditation by Rus Blassoples

The meditation to follow is based on this image painted in the Book of Acts, 'Why do you stand looking up towards heaven?' the two dressed in white asked.

'This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go' Acts 1: 11.

The orans posture is an ancient way of praying. Orans is Latin for praying. A prayerful posture shared by Jews, Muslims and Christians – and one – not unfamiliar to us as Anglicans.

Many priests in our Diocese pray this way, standing at the altar of the Lord. With elbows kept close to the side, hands outstretched, palms facing up, eyes lifted softly towards heaven... Perhaps a position similar to this happened to Jesus' disciples too as they witnessed his farewell.

A goodbye which may have broken them more than the sacred tale now tells. For when you love someone, saying goodbye, breaks you. So perhaps his disciples stood there in awe, in fear, grief, and utter disbelief at his leaving them (again).

Perhaps they stood there – speechless – in the orans position, as some art depicts; and perhaps – just perhaps – this is one of the primary ways Jesus comes back to us:

When life brings us to quiet, wordless places of prayer, Jesus returns.

When we are brought to our contemplative or heartbroken, wounded knees, Jesus returns.

When life makes us quite speechless – through grief or loss, Jesus returns.

Speechless through wonder and awe, Jesus returns.

Speechless through beauty, art, music, science, engineering, philosophy, architecture and nature, Jesus returns.

Speechless through experiences of human love, compassion, generosity of spirit, joy, courage, humour, laughter, friendship, family, Jesus returns...

The spirit of Jesus comes back to us...and we are able to live and walk life in new, undreamt of, and unfettered ways...

And what was snuffed out like an Easter Candle, begins to quicken and burn again – this time – from an interior place, forgotten, neglected, overlooked – but now remembered – the temple of the heart.

©Rus Blassoples

Light a candle (optional).

Prayer for our fellow Companions

Take the orans position (elbows to sides and palms lifted upwards) holding our Companion's names on the palms of our hands.

Pray or sing the Companion's prayer

O God, here we are, all devoted to you; make us according to your heart. O God thou art one make us one.

Short time of quiet in God's presence.

Thanksgiving

Thank you Lord, you have filled us with your peace.

Thank you Lord you have enfolded us in your love.

Thank you Lord, we have shared in sweet communion.

Thank you Lord you have given us your abundant life.

(Margery Tate)

Hymn 92 (R & S) - Amazing Grace

Grace (said to one another)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you and all whom you love now and forever more Amen