



Touchstone

Spring 2023

A Slight Change of Pace

Another Change of Pace

For many decades our retreats have been places where we have been teaching one another to listen deeply to God, one another and to the world around us. You've given me the privilege to do some research and exploration of my own to provide some tools to support our friendship circles in Christ.

John Vissers once described that role as my holding a Christ candle in a tunnel and saying, "Here's something over here to look at." Another more waggish perspective said, "Norm finds things that help him and if it can help him, it can help anyone."

As some of you know I have been using the Northumbria Community's, two volume "Celtic Daily Prayer" in my morning prayers and occasionally other times of the day. It has been life-giving in a gentle and surprising way.

Recently, a few of us had an opportunity to visit the Northumbria Community and participate in noon prayers, lunch and a tour and discussion of their life together. It was good to see a community continuing to practice what they recommend whether anyone is watching or not.

However, over time I found their daily scripture selections too sparse and have substituted the readings from the wider church found in the app called "Lectionarium".

In the spirit in which we've operated up to now, let me hold up another candle of light and say, "Here's something you might want to look at for yourself."

In this guide I'm offering their "Morning Prayer" outline blended with readings from the Psalms, Gospels, Acts and Epistles.

What's been helpful to me is that the structure of the prayers and readings (some choral) allows me to release control and just go where the structure takes me. It allows for a relaxed openness to God, offering hospitality to Jesus.

When we use the structure together, we will read slowly, with pauses between sections to allow for the prayers to become our own – connecting with the praise, longing, request, affirmation, confession ingredients in the liturgy.

We will hear one another's voices, sense the gift of presence of one another, and hopefully also sense a shared experience of the presence of God in our midst.

We aren't just saying words to create a mood, we are opening ourselves to the Spirit and offering the Divine Shepherd our hospitality and welcome.

We will use the "Morning Prayer" outline together and select from the included Psalms, Acts, Epistles and Gospels for the readings. We will assign a different reader to select the Psalm, Acts reading and Gospel conversation as the Spirit guides.

We will get in the Coracle of faith that is this time together and trust the wind of the Spirit to guide to where the Spirit desires individually and collectively.

Let's go on spiritual adventure together with Jesus present and speaking with and through us by the Spirit.

Morning Prayer from “Celtic Daily Prayer”

We'll say or sing together the sentences in bold type and our leader will say those not in bold.

Invocation of the Holy Spirit

Most powerful Holy Spirit, come down upon us
and subdue us.

From heaven, where the ordinary is made glorious,
and glory seems but ordinary,
bathe us with the brilliance
of Your light like dew.

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Opening sentences

**One thing I have asked of the Lord, this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life;
to behold the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple.**

Call	Who is it that you seek?
Response	We seek the Lord our God.
Call	Do you seek Him with all your heart?
Response	Amen. Lord, have mercy.
Call	Do you seek Him with all your soul?
Response	Amen. Lord, have mercy.
Call	Do you seek Him with all your mind?
Response	Amen. Lord, have mercy.
Call	Do you seek Him with all your strength?
Response	Amen. Christ, have mercy.

Declaration of faith

To whom shall we go?

**You have the words of eternal life,
and we have believed and have come to know
that You are the Holy One of God.**

Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory.

Prayers for others

Daily Reading

Psalm

Reading from Acts

Reading from Gospels

(Some suggested readings follow this liturgy. We can pause here and offer one another impressions and nudges we have received so far)

Canticle

Christ, as a light illumine and guide me.

Christ, as a shield overshadow me.

Christ under me;

Christ over me;

Christ beside me on my left and my right.

This day be within and without me,

lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.

Be in the heart of each to whom I speak;

in the mouth of each who speaks unto me.

This day be within and without me,

lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.

Christ as a light;

Christ as a shield;

Christ beside me on my left and my right.

Blessing

**May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,
wherever He may send you.**

**May He guide you through the wilderness,
protect you through the storm.**

**May He bring you home rejoicing
at the wonders He has shown you.**

**May He bring you home rejoicing
once again into our doors.**

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(The Northumbria Community. Celtic Daily Prayer Harper Collins Publishers.)

Psalms

Psalm 37

Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.

Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: he will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun.

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret – it leads only to evil.....

But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity.

Psalm 143

Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief. Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no-one living is righteous before you.....

I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done. I spread out my hands to you; I thirst for you like a parched land.

Answer me quickly, Lord; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me.... Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life.....

Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

Psalm 116. NIVUK

“I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord: ‘Lord, save me!’

The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The Lord protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me.

Return to your rest, my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.

For you, Lord, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

I trusted in the Lord when I said, ‘I am greatly afflicted’; in my alarm I said, ‘Everyone is a liar.’

What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will fulfil my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants. Truly I am your servant, Lord; I serve you just as my mother did; you have freed me from my chains.

I will sacrifice a thank-offering to you and call on the name of the Lord. I will fulfil my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord – in your midst, Jerusalem.

Praise the Lord.”

Psalm 131

My heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me.

But I have calmed and quietened myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.

The Ascended Jesus at Work

Acts 9:1-31 NIVUK

“Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’

‘Who are you, Lord?’ Saul asked.

‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. ‘Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’

The men travelling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, ‘Ananias!’

‘Yes, Lord,’ he answered.

The Lord told him, ‘Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.’

‘Lord,’ Ananias answered, ‘I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.’

But the Lord said to Ananias, ‘Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.’

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord – Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here – has sent me so that you may see again and

be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptised, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, ‘Isn’t he the man who caused havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?’ Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

After many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.

When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. He talked and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him. When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.”

Bread of Life

John 6 NIVUK

5000 Fed

“Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing those who were ill. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming towards him, he said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?’ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

Philip answered him, ‘It would take more than half a year’s wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!’ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, ‘Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?’

Jesus said, ‘Make the people sit down.’ There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, ‘Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.’ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, ‘Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.’

Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Trying to Leave the Crowds Behind

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they

saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. But he said to them, 'It is I; don't be afraid.' Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realised that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. Once the crowd realised that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

Bread of Life Conversations

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, 'Rabbi, when did you get here?'

Jesus answered, 'Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.'

Then they asked him, 'What must we do to do the works God requires?'

Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.'

So they asked him, 'What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: "He gave them bread from heaven to eat."'

Jesus said to them, 'Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.'

'Sir,' they said, 'always give us this bread.'

Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But as

I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.'

Dissension and Thinning the Ranks

At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' They said, 'Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I came down from heaven"?''

'Stop grumbling among yourselves,' Jesus answered. 'No-one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: "They will all be taught by God." Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. No-one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live for ever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.'

Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'

Jesus said to them, 'Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your

ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live for ever.’ He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

On hearing it, many of his disciples said, ‘This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?’

Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, ‘Does this offend you? Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you – they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.’ For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, ‘This is why I told you that no-one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.’

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

‘You do not want to leave too, do you?’ Jesus asked the Twelve.

Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.’

Then Jesus replied, ‘Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!’ (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)”

John 17 NIVUK

“After Jesus said this, he looked towards heaven and prayed:

'Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

'I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

'I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

'My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the

world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

'Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

'Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.'"

Peter's Experience. Matthew 17:1-9 NIVUK

“After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.’

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!’

When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. ‘Get up,’ he said. ‘Don’t be afraid.’ When they looked up, they saw no-one except Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, ‘Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.’”

Peter's Later Perspective and Advice 2 Peter 1:1-11, 16-19 NIVUK

“Simon Peter, Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is short-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’

We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

Wisdom from Letters to Friends

Romans 13:8-14 NRSV

“Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is already the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

Wisdom from Letters to Friends

Colossians 3:1-2, 4, 12-17 NRSV

“So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth, When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Wisdom from Letters to Friends

Ephesians 3:14-21 NIV

“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

A Celtic Meal with Jesus

A Prayer of Focus on God

Leader: We come in these moments to God,

All: In our need, and bringing with us the needs of the world.

Leader: We come to God, who has come to us in Jesus,

All: And who walks with us the road of our world's suffering.

Leader: We come with our faith and with our doubts.

All: We come with our hopes and with our fears.

Leader: We come as we are, because it is God who invites us to come.

All: And God has promised never to turn us away.

A Prayer of Confession

All: Holy God, maker of the skies above, lowly Christ, born amidst the growing earth, spirit of Life, wind over the flowing waters, in earth, sea and sky, you are there. O hidden mystery, sun behind all suns, soul behind all souls, in everything we touch, in everyone we meet, your presence is round us, and we give you thanks. When we have not touched, but trampled you in creation, when we have not met but missed you in one another, forgive us, and hear now our plea for mercy.

A Prayer of Invocation

Leader: Come, Father of the poor, come, Light of our hearts, come, generous Spirit, by the glory of your creation around us, by the comfort of your forgiveness within us, by the wind of your Spirited eddying through the years within these walls, renew us, so that we come glad to this circle of friends.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right to give our thanks and praise. It is indeed right, for you made us, and before us, you made the world we inhabit, and before the world, you made the eternal home in which, through Christ, we have a place.

All that is spectacular, and all that is plain have their origin in you; All that is lovely, all who are loving point to you as their fulfillment.

And grateful as we are for the world we know and the universe beyond our understanding, we particularly praise you, whom eternity cannot contain, for coming to earth and entering time in Jesus.

For his life which informs our living, for his compassion which changes our hearts, for his clear speaking which contradicts our harmless generalities, for his enduring presence, his innocent suffering, his fearless dying, his rising to life breathing forgiveness, we praise you and worship him.

Here, too, our gratitude rises for the promise of the Holy Spirit, who even yet, even now, confronts us with your claims and attracts us to your goodness.

Therefore we gladly join our voices to the song of the Church on earth and in heaven: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of Power and Might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

And now, lest we believe that our praise alone fulfils your purpose, we fall silent and remember him who came because words were not enough.

Setting our wisdom, our will, our words aside, emptying our hearts, and bringing nothing in our hands, we yearn for the healing, the holding, the accepting, the forgiving which Christ alone can offer.

(Silence)

All: Merciful God, send now, in kindness, your Holy Spirit to settle on this bread and wine and fill them with the fullness of Jesus. And let that same Spirit rest on us, converting us from the patterns of this passing world, until we conform to the shape of him whose food we now share. Amen.

Leader: Among friends, gathered round a table, Jesus took bread, and broke it, and said, 'This is my body - broken for you.' Later he took a cup of wine and said, 'This is the new relationship with God made possible because of my death. Take it, all of you, to remember me.'

Leader: Jesus, firstborn of Mary,

All: Have mercy on us.

Leader: Jesus, Saviour of the world,

All: Have mercy on us.

Leader: Jesus, monarch of heaven,

All: Grant us peace.

Leader: He whom the universe could not contain, is present to us in this bread. He who redeemed us and called us by name now meets us in this cup. So take this bread and this wine. In them God comes to us so that we may come to God.

The Peace *Standing together*

Leader: Christ who has nourished us, is our peace. Strangers and friends, male and female, old and young, he has broken down the barriers to bind us to him and to each other. Having experienced his goodness, let us share his peace. The peace of the Lord be always with you.

All: And also with you.

Take a moment and offer the peace of Christ to one another.

The Sharing of the Bread and Wine

Leader: The Body of Christ is broken for the life of the world. Here is Christ coming to us in bread and in wine. The Gifts of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

All: Offering a blessing & prayer to one another

Benediction

All: O God our Father, who throughout history gave people like us the gifts of courage, faith, and cheerfulness, to carry the word of your Gospel to every creature.

Grant, we pray, a like spirit to your friends here, even at this present time.

Further in all things the purpose of this community of your friends, that hidden things may be revealed to us, and new ways found to touch the hearts of all. May we preserve with each other sincere charity and peace, and, if it be your will, grant that this holy place of your abiding be continued still to be a sanctuary and a light; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We go in peace, in friendship, and hospitality, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thanks be to God!

Where Freedom Is, and Laughter

It's not my brother nor my sister but it's me, O Lord:
standing in the need of prayer.
We are so warm in our own self-esteem
that we freeze the folk around us.
We get so high in our own estimation
that we stand isolated on a mountaintop of self-righteousness.
That is why You came: Lord Jesus:
not to save the lecherous but to turn the righteous to repentance.
And it is me, O Lord.

It is just not true, Lord Jesus,
that if we had lived with You we would have turned.
The disciples lived with You,
heard Your words,
saw Your wonders,
dined with You and wined with You
and for two years were bathed in Your unspeakable grace.
Yet when You asked them to wait with You for one hour
they all fell asleep.
So You just had to climb on that cross
on the day the sun refused to shine.
So we confess we can't make it.
And most certainly we can't take it.

So we ask You to make us new.
You alone are in right relations with the Father.
Only in You can we be in right relations with anyone.
Give us grace not to try to go it alone.
Give us grace to go along with You:
where freedom is, and laughter:
legalities are swallowed up in love:
and no one is to blame
because You have taken it all Yourself.
Jesus. Lord and Saviour. It is so.
(from "The Whole earth Shall Cry Glory", George MacLeod)

A Meditation on Our Shared Friendship

Loving God quiet me down to listen to my life and your presence in it.

- **Reflecting on my years with these friends bring to my mind that for which I am most grateful.**
- **What are my hopes for us as we go forward together in some fashion?**
- **What are your hopes for us in the days ahead?**
- **What do you encourage me to offer to enrich our relationships and communication? How can I help?**
- **What have I noticed my friend Jesus saying to me about all this?**

Prayer for the Grace to Age Well

When the signs of age begin to mark my body
(and still more when they touch my mind);
when the ill that is to diminish me or carry me off
strikes from without or is born within me;
when the painful moment comes
in which I suddenly awaken
to the fact that I am ill or growing old;
and above all at that last moment
when I feel I am losing hold of myself
and am absolutely passive within the hands
of the great unknown forces that have formed me;
in all those dark moments, O God,
grant that I may understand that it is you
(provided only my faith is strong enough)
who are painfully paring the fiber of my being
in order to penetrate to the very marrow
of my substance and bear me away within yourself.

(Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ)

Gobsmacked

I've been referred to as odd before.

Nowadays, I prefer to refer to myself as “awed”. I want awe to be the greatest ongoing relationship in my life. I want to move through my days floored by the magnificence and generosity of my Creator. The breaking of a day, the silence between words, the light emanating from a real conversation, and kindness, truth, love and the apparently random hand of grace: I want to remain gobsmacked by all of it. Rendered speechless by wonder, I await the next unfolding. Peace, friends. Be awed today
(Richard Wagamese, *Embers*, Douglas & McIntyre)

God's aid

God to enfold me, God to surround me,
God in my speaking, God in my thinking.
God in my sleeping, God in my waking,
God in my watching, God in my hoping.
God in my life, God in my lips,
God in my soul, God in my heart.
God in my sufficing, God in my slumber,
God in my ever-living soul, God in mine eternity
(From *Carmina Gadelica*, III, 53 in *The Celtic Vision* Esther De Waal)

Amazing Day

i thank You God for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes
(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings: and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)
how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any—lifted from the no
of all nothing—human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?
(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)
(e.e.cummings 1894-1962)

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