

## **Carol reflection – February 14, 2021**

Do you pray in the dark?

Do you recite familiar words?

Now I lay me down to sleep...?

Our Father who art in heaven...?

Make me a channel of your peace...?

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change...?

Or, do you pray in the brightest light of day?

Do you have a conversation with God?

Is it mostly talking?

Or mostly listening?

I wonder how Jesus prayed?

Today's scripture says: 'In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.'

I am certain that Jesus knew all kinds of formal prayers.

Perhaps it was his practice to recite Psalms,

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. (Ps 23)

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein. (Ps. 24)

Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer (Ps. 61)

We know that he recited the start of Psalm 22 on the cross:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?)

Or perhaps he used some of the ancient traditional prayers of the Hebrew people that began by blessing God – essentially thanking God and recognizing God as the Creator and source of all.

Maybe Jesus had a conversation with God?

Mark's Gospel has Jesus praying at the start and at the end. And, on this occasion, when he has prayed, he then seems to be filled with an even clearer sense of mission and ministry.

Mark begins the Gospel with John the Baptist in the wilderness, then Jesus is baptised, he spends 40 days in the wilderness, and then he calls disciples and begins a

ministry of healing. Before we are finished with the very first chapter of Mark, Jesus has returned to a deserted place and prayed.

Simon and the others go to find him – we read that they hunted for him, and then told him that everyone was searching for him –

Clearly, Jesus found someplace secluded if it took that kind of effort!

And, then, once he was found, he was ready to start again.

‘Let’s go on to the neighbouring towns so that I may proclaim the message there also, for that is what I came out to do.’

Jesus comes out of prayer ready to preach and proclaim.  
Jesus comes out of some place isolated prepared to be in the midst.  
Jesus comes out to live love.

How timely for us.

We are in interesting time.

We are in a time of people still being in our own places – sort of deserted places for there are very few who can be with us.

And we are in a time when we wonder what we might be called to when this pandemic ends?

How will we reach out to one another?

What will we want to do?

How will we share a message of grace and love?

These are the days for wondering – for knowing that it is okay to not have all the answers. These are the days when it is okay for us to say that we are struggling with our circumstances.

Perhaps these are also the days to pray.

To read through the Psalms.

To have conversations with God in which we listen, and not just speak.

And, to recite prayers that truly belong to everyone:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
courage to change the things we can,  
and wisdom to know the difference

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen.

These are uncertain days, these are deserted places, these are isolated places.

Let us use this time to pray, and to know that God is with us, always.

Thanks be to God. Amen.