

BEGGING GOD TO PROTECT US FROM ALL HARM

**Keep us, O Lord, as the apple of Your eye,
hide us under the shelter of Your wings.**

Psalm 17

In times past, the Church celebrated Ember Days which were four separate sets of three days (Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays) celebrated during each of the four seasons. They are still set-aside for prayer and fasting in order to ask God for forgiveness and to beg Him for spiritual favors. It is meant to be a time of deepening our relationship with the Lord and praying for the entire family of God.



Let us pause and remember that we are always and everywhere in the presence of our loving and merciful God.

All things were created by You, O God.

All things belong to You, O God.

All of creation recognizes Your awesome presence, O God.

May all creation give you honor and praise!

O God come to our assistance.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

HYMN

Not my brother nor my sister, but it's me, O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer: (2 X)

It's me, it's me, o Lord, standin' in the need of prayer. (2X)

Not the preacher nor the deacon, but it's me, O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer. (2 X)

Not my father nor my mother, but it's me, O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer. (2 X)

Not the stranger nor my neighbor, but it's me, O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer. (2 X)



SCRIPTURE:

PSALM 32

So let every good person pray to You, O Lord, in time of need.

You are our Hiding Place, O Lord;

You save us from distress.

You surround us with cries of deliverance.

Your loving mercy surrounds us.

ROMANS 8: 28-39

We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.

If God is for us, who can be against us?

He who did not spare His own Son but handed Him over for us all, how will He not also give us everything else along with Him?

Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones?

It is God who acquits us.

Who will condemn? It is Christ (Jesus) Who died, rather, was raised, Who also is at the right hand of God, Who indeed intercedes for us.

What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?

As it is written: "For your sake we are being slain all the day; we are looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through Him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

REFLECTION NANCY BLOOMER

Fasting is a practice which intensifies prayer and opens us up to God's presence within us.

We need to pray. When we pray we remind ourselves that this is God's world, that God is in charge, that God has plans we can barely imagine. We need to approach the throne of God and ask for what we, and our country, and all of humanity and the Earth, need.

Prayer changes both the one who prays and the events prayed over.

Both the Old Testament and the Gospel readings relate stories about desperate situations which were remedied by prayer. Traditionally, prayer and fasting go together. Until recently, when you wanted something very much, when you were desperate for God's help, you not only prayed, you fasted. Fasting was the door to prayer. Fasting prepared the inner spirit to receive God's direction and God's answer. The more urgent the prayer, the more intense the fast.

I say "until recently" because one doesn't hear Christians speak much nowadays about fasting. Perhaps this practice is out of place in a society which views excess – abundant food, several cars for every family, lots of material possessions – as normal. Whatever the reason, fasting is underrated and underused and it should make a comeback because its benefits are needed now more than ever, because our prayer concerns these days are urgent and compelling.

Jesus fasted; Elijah fasted; King David fasted; fasting was part of the faith of ancient Israel; and it is, at least nominally, practiced among

Christians today. Fasting is an almost universal religious practice. Be creative in your fasting. While generally it means going without food and/or drink, there are a variety of other ways we might and can fast: from having an unkind response, to watching less television, or spending less time on our computer, to spending more time in prayer, or reading a book or learning more about the faith.

One of the things I love about the ancient stories from the Hebrew Bible is how the authors do not attempt to whitewash these all-too-human forebears. Dysfunctional individuals and families are the earthen vessels on whom God's plans depend. That can and should give us comfort, reminding us that we - flawed as we are - are part of God's plans, too.

The news these days is full of things I don't want to hear about: beheadings and suicide bombers; fears of election fraud and terrorist attacks; images of frightened and wounded children; colossal national debt; environmental degradation; the death toll in Iraq, all these things and more are disheartening and unnerving.

In this climate of tension and anxiety, how does one keep one's balance and live from the Center, from the Source, which is God? First of all, we need to pray. When we pray we remind ourselves that this is God's world, that God is in charge, that God has plans we can barely imagine. We need to approach the throne of God and ask for what we, and our country, and all of humanity and the Earth, need.

Second, I believe that prayer changes both the one who prays and the events prayed over. I don't know why, but it does. When we pray with faith, we are asserting our conviction that God can and is working in our lives.

Third, we need to pray without ceasing. The more important something is to us, the more we will not give up until what we pray for comes to pass. Jesus commended this practice. If we keep on praying for peace, peace will come eventually. If we keep on praying for justice, then justice will prevail, in God's own time and in God's own way. If we keep on praying for prosperity for all people (and not just for ourselves), and if we put our energies into attaining this goal, then it will happen. Every prayer is counted; every prayer matters to God.

There is an answer. We just don't know what it is yet; but God does.

I began this reflection by talking about fasting. Fasting is a practice which intensifies prayer and opens us up to God's presence within us. When we are open, then we will make decisions in keeping with God's will and we will pray for the things which God is praying for, too. Does God pray? Oh yes, I do believe He does. While we are praying for God to bless our doings, God is praying that we will bless His. When our prayers and God's prayers coincide, it is like Jacob and Esau meeting and embracing, laughing and rejoicing: the inconceivable becomes the actual.

So, I say, the antidote to fear, anger, stress, and worry is to turn off the TV, skip dinner, settle in your favorite chair and spend quality time with God. AMEN.

A PRAYER

May the Lord lead us and guide us along the right way so we will not go astray.

We are weak and we need Your strength and power, Lord, to overcome our weakest hour. Lord, help us through the darkness to see Your face. Lead us, Lord. Lead us!

Lord, help us walk in the paths of righteousness. Be our aid when Satan and sin oppress. We are putting all our trust in You. Lead us, O Lord, lead us!

Lord, we are lost if You take Your hand from us.

We are blind without Your light to see.

Lord, just always let us Your servants be. Lead us, O Lord, lead us!

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



LITANY OF BEGGING

Response: O Lord, deliver us.



From all danger
From all sickness
From all natural calamities
From all evil
From the deceit of the devil
From all sin
From all hardness of heart
From all lust
From all greed
From all dishonesty
From all immodesty
From a lack of charity
From a warlike mentality
From a spirit of disobedience
From all prejudice and bigotry
From all hatred
From all disrespect of life
From all disregard of the Lord's name
From all disrespect of our own bodies
From a spirit of anger
From all arrogance and pride

**From a disinclination to pray
From a lack of generosity
From all disregard of the Lord's Sabbath
From all disrespect of our earth and its resources
From all trivialization of the sacrament of marriage
From a disregard to a call to priesthood or consecrated life
From a spirit of laziness in regard to spiritual matters
From a lack of serving others as Jesus would have us do
From not seeing the face of Christ in others
From not attempting to be reconcilers and peacemakers
From not reading Sacred Scripture more often
From not caring for the widow and the orphan
From all disregard of the beauty of God's creation around us
From bad weather
From severe illnesses
From unemployment
From the loss of loved ones
From disregard of our own good health
From a disinterest to grow in intellectual and spiritual things
From all that keeps us from a spirit of joy and peace**

Let us pray:

O Lord, our God, You alone know all the needs and cares that burden our hearts and frighten us daily. We put our trust in You and know that You will grace us with strength and courage to face the difficult situations when they arise. May we always rely on Your abiding presence, love, and guidance in our lives. May we be open to Your Holy Spirit to direct us along right paths that lead us to You. Amen.

HYMN

**This day God gives us strength of high heaven,
Sun and moon shining, flame in our hearts,
Flashing of lightning, wind in its swiftness,
Depths of the ocean, firmness of earth.**

**This day God sends us strength as our guardian,
Might to uphold us, wisdom as guide.
Your eyes are watchful; Your ears are listening,
Your lips are speaking, Friend at our side.**

**God's way is our way, God's shield is round us,
God's host defends us saving from ill.
Angels from heaven drive from us always
All that would harm us, stand by us still.**

**Praying and fasting we thank You, Mighty and Strong One,
King of Creation and Giver of Rest,
Firmly confessing God in Three Persons,
Oneness of Godhead Trinity blest.**

Saint Patrick



A BLESSING PSALM 11

**May the Lord listen to you on the day of tribulation,
may the Name of the God of Jacob protect you.**

**May He send you help from the Holy Place,
and from Sion may He keep you safe.**

May He be mindful of your every sacrifice.

May He grant unto you according to your heart.

**May you be glad in your salvation,
and in the Name of the Lord Our God you shall be
magnified.**

May the Lord fulfill all your petitions.

**The Lord has been made the Refuge of the poor,
the Helper in the occasions of tribulation.**

May you hope in Him who know His Name.

Blessed be the Lord our God.

**On the day of tribulation He has become our supporter
and our refuge.**

You, O God, our God, are our mercy and our help.



Saint John Baptist de La Salle

**And all you holy Brothers who have gone before us,
help us to be people who keep our eyes on the Lord and discipline
ourselves through fasting and prayer.**

Live Jesus in our hearts. Forever!