



***Jesus saw a great crowd;
and he had compassion for them
and cured their sick.***

—Matthew 14:14

**NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
2 AUGUST 2020**

Invitation to Prayer—from *Meister Eckhart's Book of the Heart* by Jon M. Sweeny and Mark S. Burrows

In distress and want I ask, "Where, O God, are You?"
Here, I am as close to you as the warmth of your breath.

But this does not satisfy my mind, and so I ask again.
Here, in the confusions that make you trade life for death.

Still I ask what I have with my questions already said.
Here, in the doubts that rise against My descending truth.

And yet I am undone with deceptions ever old and new.
Here, let me give Myself to you with love that alone will soothe.

Gathering Prayer

Hovering Spirit,
you awaken us to this day
and await our presence in prayer.
Whether we come to you
with alert anticipation or tiredness,
you meet us as we are
and welcome us with the light of your love.
So, open the door of our hearts
that we might receive you
and in receiving you,
be filled with gratitude, joy and peace.
Amen.

Scripture Reading—Matthew 14:13–21

Pausing to wonder about the responses and actions within a narrative can bring a greater awareness of our own inner landscape and pilgrimage. You are invited to stop when you encounter the word “I wonder” in the reading below. Allow open-ended questions to emerge from your thoughts and feelings. For example, “I wonder how Jesus found the energy to care for others...” Or “I wonder if there will be enough...”

There’s no need to pose an answer, provide commentary or analyse what has come forth. Simply notice your wonderings and let them rest gently, prayerfully before you.

Prayer for Openness

In my stillness, move me,

O Spirit of Life.

In my silence, echo within
and speak a word for me this day.

Give me the courage to hear

and the will to respond

that your love might grow

in and through me.

Amen.

Now when Jesus heard of John the Baptist’s death, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.

I wonder...

When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat."

I wonder...

They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me."

Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

I wonder...

And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Going Deeper

Recall one of your wonderings from the Gospel reading.

- Did a feeling accompany your wondering? If so, how would you name the feeling as you consider it again now?
- What might the Spirit be saying to you?

When Jesus hears about John's death, he withdraws to a deserted place by himself.

- What has been your experience of solitude, especially at the beginning of the pandemic?
- What does Jesus' example of withdrawing for a time in this Gospel reading and in other places suggest to you? Is there an invitation for you?

After breaking the bread, Jesus gives it to his disciples to distribute to the people.

- In your mind, what might this say about Christian ministry and service?
- Is there something, or things, with which you've been gifted that you might be able to share at this time? What would this look like?

Silent Meditation

*You might spend some moments
away from thoughts and images, basking in God's love with and for you.*

How to meditate—from the World Community for Christian Meditation

Sit with your back straight and your feet on the floor. Close your eyes lightly. Then interiorly, silently begin to recite a single word — a prayer word or mantra. We recommend the ancient Christian prayer-word "Maranatha." Say it as four equal syllables: Ma – ra – na – tha.

Breathe normally and give your full attention to the word as you say it, silently, gently, faithfully and — above all — simply. Let go of all thoughts (even good thoughts), images, sensations and other words as they arise. Don't fight your distractions: let them go by saying your word faithfully, gently and attentively, returning to it with intention when your attention wanders.

Prayers of Intercession

In this season of long nights and south winds, we are mindful of our need for light and warmth for hope and peace that do not fade. These months have left many depleted—wary of too much uncertainty and upheaval, worn down by the refrain of concern and sorrow. So, hear us as we pray, dear God: *Hear my prayer, be quick to help me.*

We pray for those who are impacted by the pandemic at this time, around the world and close to home—especially Victoria—and for the quivering the pandemic brings to our own hearts: *Dear God, hear my prayer, be quick to help me.*

We pray for those who remain on the frontline of crisis—medical staff, carers, essential workers, those offering emergency relief: *Dear God, hear my prayer, be quick to help me.*

We pray for those who are impoverished in body, mind, or spirit, who are finding it hard to make it through the day and night, who feel alone in their pain: *Dear God, hear my prayer, be quick to help me.*

Finally, we pray for those on our hearts and minds this day...
Dear God, hear my prayer, be quick to help me.

Disciples' Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

Blessing

As this time comes to an end,
take a moment to recall a gift you received...
For the grace that has come your way, may you be grateful.
May you go with renewed strength and purpose
able and willing to share what has filled you this day.

The love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ and the communion of the Spirit be with us all.