



*Absolutely  
unmixed  
attention  
is prayer.*

*—Simone Weil*

## **FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST 5 JULY 2020**

### **Invitation to Prayer**

Jesus said, “Come to me, all you that are weary  
and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest...  
for I am gentle and humble in heart,  
and you will find rest for your souls.”

### **Gathering Prayer**

You who are found  
in the brilliance of creation,  
the darkness of life’s valleys,  
and the silence we keep:  
help us to let go, for a time,  
of routines and agendas  
that determine so much about us.

Welcomed by your hospitable Spirit,  
may our inhibitions and fears ease.  
Embraced by your unconditional acceptance,  
may we come home to our truest selves.  
Knowing that we are loved,  
may we live as people after your own heart.  
Amen.

**Scripture Readings**—Song of Songs 2:8–13 and Matthew 11:16–19, 28–30

*The lectionary readings for this week provide two contrasting responses to love’s invitation, two different orientations of the heart, both of which are part of the human experience.*

*The Song of Songs speaks of requited love—the longed-for reunion of the lover with the beloved. The Gospel presents the lament of Jesus over unrequited love. He came that all might know God’s love, but we sometimes ignore, resist or push away.*

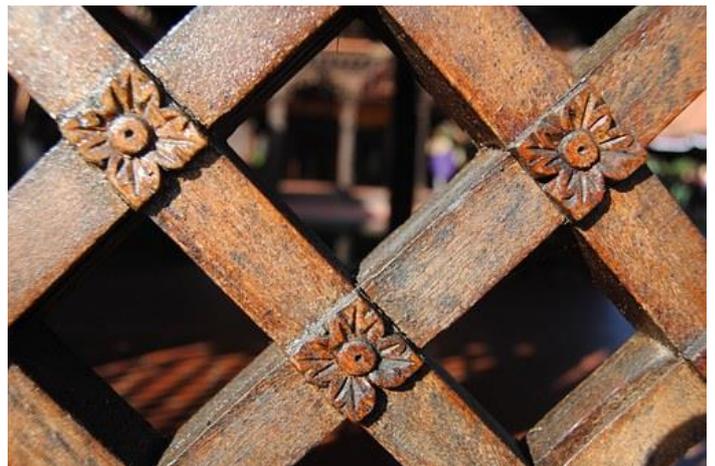
*Read slowly each passage in turn, allowing for transition space between them. Notice the responses within you as you read. Where do you sense an uplift or draw? Where do you feel like pausing so you can soak up or try to understand what is being said? What, if anything, leaves you cold, confused, indifferent or distracted? Rather than judging or analysing, simply notice.*

The voice of my beloved!  
Look, he comes,  
leaping upon the mountains,  
bounding over the hills.  
My beloved is like a gazelle  
or a young stag.  
Look, there he stands  
behind our wall,  
gazing in at the windows,  
looking through the lattice.  
My beloved speaks and says to me:  
“Arise, my love, my fair one,  
and come away;  
for now the winter is past,  
the rain is over and gone.  
The flowers appear on the earth;  
the time of singing has come,  
and the voice of the turtledove  
is heard in our land.  
The fig tree puts forth its figs,  
and the vines are in blossom;  
they give forth fragrance.  
Arise, my love, my fair one,  
and come away.

Jesus said, “But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; We wailed, and you did not mourn.’

“For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.’

“...Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”



## Going Deeper—*Gazing in the windows, looking through the lattice*

Spend a few moments pondering the photos of the different windows.

- Look at each one individually for a time. How does it reflect a season of your life?
- Which photo best symbolises your relationship with God at this time?



Bernard of Clairvaux was an abbot living in 12<sup>th</sup> century France who led a renewal movement in the Christian Church, in part, through his stirring sermons on love. Preaching to celibate priests and monks, Bernard wrote eighty-six sermons on the first two chapters of the Song of Songs hoping to encourage their acceptance of God's gracious gifts. Here is a portion from Sermon 74 in which he speaks of his own encounter with the Bridegroom / Word:

*You ask then how I knew he [sic] was present, when his ways can in no way be traced? He is life and power, and as soon as he enters in, he awakens my slumbering soul; he stirs and soothes and pierces my heart, for before it was hard as stone, and diseased. So he has begun to pluck out and destroy, to build up and to plant, to water dry places and illuminate dark ones; to open what was closed and to warm what was cold; to make the crooked straight and the rough places smooth, so that my soul may bless the Lord, and all that is within me may praise his holy name.*

- How would you describe your experience of encountering the Beloved? Or are you in a time of yearning and waiting?
- What difference has this encounter made in your life? Or what is it like to wait just now?

## Reflections in Solitude and Silent Meditation

*You might read the Reflections in Solitude now followed by some moments away from thoughts and images, silently basking in God's embrace.*

### Prayers of Intercession

Like winter rose buds shivering among dried leaves, the harshness of this season has left us fragile and uncertain. The beauty and joy of former days has past and even the shyest hope now takes tremendous effort to hold. So, come to us, Gracious God. Envelope us with warming light and may your love shine on us as we pray.

We bring to mind those who are suffering and in pain at this time—those who are living with disease of the body, mind and spirit; those who await test results or are undergoing treatment; those who are grieving or lonely... We pray: *Let love shine, O God.*

We bring to mind our earthly home, your holy body that provides for and sustains us. Enable us to know deeply our connectedness and interdependence with all that is. Show us how to live with a greater harmony and simplicity... We pray: *Let love shine, O God.*

We bring to mind those who are on our hearts and minds this day...  
We pray: *Let love shine, O God.*

### 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

May we know ourselves as those who are loved  
by the One who is humble and gentle in heart, who has given this time of rest for our souls.  
As we rise and take up our routines and tasks once again,  
let us live from the place of stillness and quiet within, loving as God has loved us.

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