

ST. TEILO'S, WHITCHURCH - 28TH OF NOVEMBER 2020

PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE IN FRATERNITY

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

Amen.

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

Leader: Today we gather online to pray together, each of us in our own homes, but united here in St. Teilo's Church by our common Christian faith. I welcome you today, to pray with me and with each other for the unity of Christians in fraternal love. Today we are going to be thinking about the idea of fraternity as during this time of pandemic we seek new ways to support each other and the many who are affected by sickness and the loss of loved ones. May we recognise our common call as children of the Father and brothers and sisters of Jesus, our Saviour.

Penitential Rite

Reader: For the times we have lashed out in anger and not looked for peaceful solutions to our problems.. Lord have mercy – **Lord have mercy.**

For the times we have been blinded by fear, greed or pain and have not found room in our hearts to make others welcome. Christ have mercy – **Christ have mercy.**

For the times we have failed to reach out to those who most needed our help. Lord have mercy – **Lord have mercy.**

Prayer said by the Leader:

Lord, Father of our human family,
you created all human beings equal in dignity:
pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit
and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter,
dialogue, justice and peace.
Move us to create healthier societies
and a more dignified world,
a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war.

May our hearts be open
to all the peoples and nations of the earth.
May we recognize the goodness and beauty
that you have sown in each of us,
and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects,
and shared dreams.

Amen

The Word of God

Let us listen to the words of the Gospel of Mark (Mark 1:1-8)

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way.

A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.

and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptized by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. John wore a garment of

camel skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he said, "Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. The Gospel of the Lord: **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

A reflection on the role of religions in building fraternity from Pope Francis encyclical: Fratelli Tutti (Fraternal Love) (Paragraphs 271 – 274)

The different religions, based on their respect for each human person as a creature called to be a child of God, contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society. Dialogue between the followers of different religions does not take place simply for the sake of diplomacy, consideration or tolerance. In the words of the Bishops of India, "the goal of dialogue is to establish friendship, peace and harmony, and to share spiritual and moral values and experiences in a spirit of truth and love".

As believers, we are convinced that, without an openness to the Father of all, there will be no solid and stable reasons for an appeal to fraternity. We are certain that "only with this awareness that we are not orphans, but children, can we live in peace with one another". For "reason, by itself, is capable of grasping the equality between men and of giving stability to their civic coexistence, but it cannot establish fraternity".

In this regard, I wish to cite the following memorable statement: "If there is no transcendent truth, in obedience to which man achieves his full identity, then there is no sure principle for guaranteeing just relations between people. Their self-interest as a class, group or nation would inevitably set them in opposition to one another. If one does not acknowledge transcendent truth, then the force of power takes over, and each person tends to make full use of the means at his disposal in order to impose his own interests or his own opinion, with no regard for the rights of others... The root of modern totalitarianism is to be found in the denial of the transcendent dignity of the human person who, as the visible image of the invisible God, is therefore by his very nature the subject of rights that no one may violate – no individual, group, class, nation or state. Not even the majority of the social body may violate these rights, by going against the minority".

From our faith experience and from the wisdom accumulated over centuries, but also from lessons learned from our many weaknesses and failures, we, the believers of the different religions, know that our witness to God benefits our societies. The effort to seek God with a sincere heart, provided it is never sullied by ideological or self-serving aims, helps us recognize one another as travelling companions, truly brothers and sisters. We are convinced that "when, in the name of an ideology, there is an attempt to remove God from a society, that society ends up adoring idols, and very soon men and women lose their way, their dignity is trampled and their rights violated. You know well how much suffering is caused by the denial of freedom of conscience and of religious freedom, and how that wound leaves a humanity which is impoverished, because it lacks hope and ideals to guide it". [It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an "ecological conversion", whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience. Care for nature is part of a lifestyle which includes the capacity for living together and communion. Jesus reminded us that we have God as our common Father and that this makes us brothers and sisters. Fraternal love can only be gratuitous; it can never be a means of repaying others for what they have done or will do for us. That is why it is possible to love our enemies. This same gratuitousness inspires us to love and accept the wind, the sun and the clouds, even though we cannot control them. In this sense, we can speak of a "universal fraternity".

Intercessions

Leader: We are called to “Prepare a way for the Lord” and “make his paths straight.” Let us consider how we can live our lives differently as we pray:.

Reader: We pray for all Christians: that God may bring us renewed humility and compassion as we approach the well being of creation and all who live in the world. Lord, in your mercy All: **Hear our prayer.**

Reader: We pray for world leaders: that through God’s grace they may work for peace in our world. Lord, in your mercy All: **Hear our prayer.**

Reader: We pray for all who are homeless, in our local community and throughout the world: that they may find a place of safety, of welcome and belonging. Lord, in your mercy All: **Hear our prayer.**

Reader: We pray for all who are displaced and who long to return home: that God may grant them strength and courage as they try to build new lives. Lord, in your mercy All: **Hear our prayer.**

Reader: We pray for our churches and local communities: that through the grace of God we may always be bearers of Jesus to the world. Lord, in your mercy All: **Hear our prayer.**

Reader: We pray that God may open our hearts to make room for the needs of others. May we be moved to reach out to all those who are in need and bring hope to those who despair. Lord, in your mercy All: **Hear our prayer.**

Bringing all our prayers together, let us say that Jesus taught us to pray to the Father of all creation: **Our Father,**

Leader:

Let us pray,

O God, Trinity of love, from the profound communion of your divine life, pour out upon us a torrent of fraternal love. Grant us the love reflected in the actions of Jesus, in his family of Nazareth, and in the early Christian community.

Grant that we Christians may live the Gospel, discovering Christ in each human being, recognizing him crucified in the sufferings of the abandoned and forgotten of our world, and risen in each brother or sister who makes a new start.

Come, Holy Spirit, show us your beauty, reflected in all the peoples of the earth, so that we may discover anew that all are important and all are necessary, different faces of the one humanity that God so loves. **Amen.**

Blessing by the Leader: May Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, bless us all in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**