

Welcome to

A Space to Be



March 2021

Find a quiet place to meditate, to pray & be.
Maybe looking out to the garden or sitting in your favourite chair.

As you come to prayer now, pause and be still; breathe slowly
and become aware of God's presence with you right now.
You might like to light a candle.

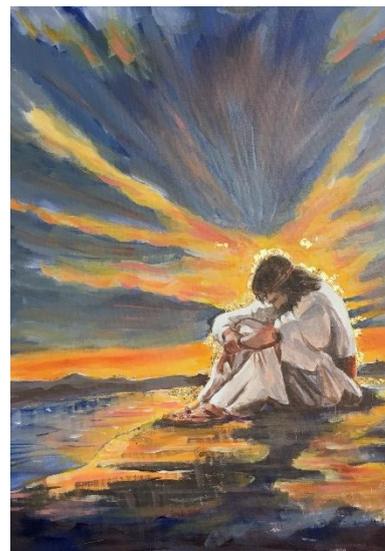
*Loving Father, I still my soul now and remember that
You are here with me, You are here in me, You are
here for me.*

Lord Jesus, I worship You.

Holy Spirit, I welcome You.

Begin by reflecting on how Jesus was led into the wilderness before He began His ministry.

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. The tempter came to Him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"
Matthew 4:1–4



It is the Holy Spirit who leads Jesus “into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Matt. 4:1). This isn’t the sort of thing we expect the Holy Spirit to do. Isn’t He supposed to protect us from satanic onslaughts, not lead us into them?’

If you are in the wilderness, could it be the Holy Spirit who has led you into this dry and difficult place? And if so, why?

Lord, I am often hungrier for physical food than the spiritual variety... increase my desire for “every word that comes from the mouth of God”

I pray for others who feel dry as dust. I pray for those who find themselves in wilderness places. As they feel emptiness and longing, may they hunger for Your word and may You sustain them.

Take time to get your heart right with the words of Psalm 51:1–3, 10–12:

‘Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me . . . Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.’ Amen.’

We are in the middle of the Lent pilgrimage to Easter. In the midst of the pandemic and after a cold winter, we long for spring warmth and at last we see signs of new life. Lent can be a spiritual springtime, a new beginning; a season where we return to the Lord, our first love, as we read in the prophet Joel:

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain-offering and a drink-offering
Joel 2:12-14

“Return to me with all your heart”, says the Lord.

Is there anything unexpected in this invitation?

How do you find yourself responding to it?

How do you hear the call to return to God “With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning”?

Do you experience the Lord as “gracious and merciful” as in the passage?

Is that how you normally think of God?

Does a particular moment of grace and mercy stand out to you from your journey with God?

Is there an invitation to you here and now?

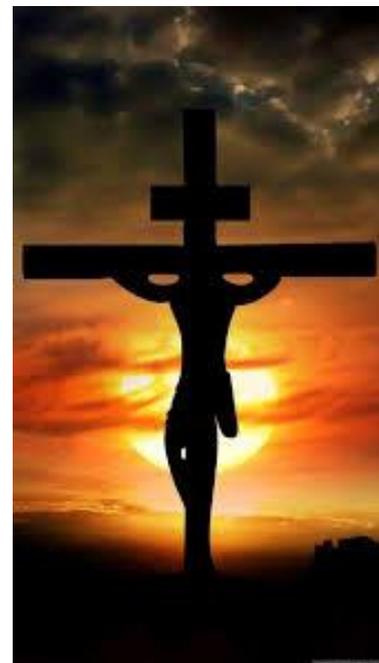
Express what you are feeling, in the form of a prayer to God.

Drawn to you by Audrey Assad

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6Yo_5KRQtl&list=RDy6Yo_5KRQtl&start_radio=1&t=4

Reflect on this passage from Isaiah, which foreshadows the way Jesus would suffer persecution for the sake of his love for us.

*Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.*



Isaiah 53:4-6

Jesus, I am amazed by your sacrificial love for me. You were persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for the sake of rescuing and healing a wandering sheep like me.

Lord, help me to see who You want me to love today, even if it requires sacrifice. I listen as You bring to my mind those who need to experience Your love through me.

Think of the anger, sin, and woundedness of the world being poured out upon Jesus. He did not deserve the scorn of the world. Yet God, in Christ, took this violent hatred upon himself, carrying it with Him into the grave, so that He might carry us into the liberating love of the kingdom of heaven. Maybe this is what it means to be blessed.

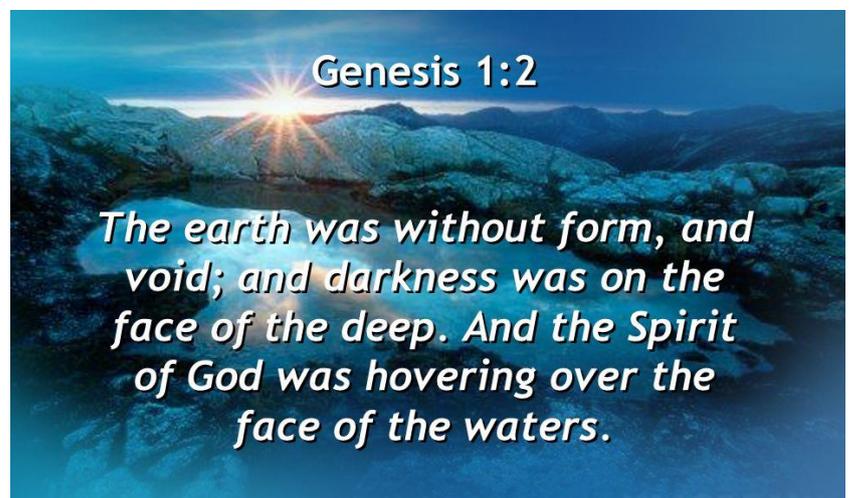
Jesus you have done something for me on the cross that I could never do. Whenever I face difficulties and accusation, I know that I am journeying alongside You, the one who is utterly familiar with suffering.

'We have all come through 2020, a year like no other in living memory, and now we are in 2021, carrying all the hopes and dreams of a new beginning, but also the many fears and troubles of the year just passed. The season of Lent gives us a heaven-sent opportunity to reflect prayerfully on our recent experience and the difficulties and the possibilities it has set before us. Last year challenged us individually and collectively, in ways no-one could have imagined. It has confronted us with the question of whether we want to go back to how things were, or to 'grow back better'. It has challenged us to reflect on what kind of people we truly desire to become and what kind of world we hope to pass on to future generations. Each of us has our own personal role to play in the great story of transformation.

'Transformation', we might well think, is not for us little people. Saints and heroes do transformation, not humble pilgrims on a rocky road. Actually the very opposite is the truth. Transformation happens, one pilgrim at a time, step by painful step, precisely on the rocky roads of life. The Gospel gives us both a vision and a map for this journey. We could see the experience of 2020 as a particularly difficult stile we have had to climb, as we move from the field of all that is past to the field of all that we can become. If we go over this stile and embrace this invitation to transformation, we will discover that the path leads us first through the kind of upheaval we are all experiencing in our times, but also holds out the promise of a very new and different tomorrow.

Upheaval, it turns out, is the catalyst for change. In the beginning, we recall, the Spirit hovered not over order but over chaos, bringing forth a new creation.'

*Taken from the introduction to a
Lent retreat by Pray as You Go.*



To conclude:

In Hosea we read God's promise of healing and restoration to the people of Israel

I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily, he shall strike root like the forests of Lebanon. His shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive tree, and his fragrance like that of Lebanon. They shall again live beneath my shadow, they shall flourish as a garden; they shall blossom like the vine, their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

Hosea 14:4-7



Remain with these words and let yourself be refreshed by them. Imagine that you yourself are flourishing like a garden or blossoming as a vine as you also live beneath God's shadow.



Lord, accept that within me that is good...

I offer to you Lord, the fruit of my lips...

You have given all to me.

To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours;

do with it what you will.

*Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.*

Amen