

INSPIRED WORD
February 21, 2018

PRAYER

God is here. And Lord, we thank You for calling all of us here in this place to give You praise, and we ask You to pour forth Your Holy Spirit upon us and touch our hearts and our minds so that our praise might be true, from the depths of our beings this evening. Holy Spirit, we ask You to come, come with Your glory, come with Your gifts, come with Your love, and set this place, these little logs, all of us here, on fire.

REVIEW / INSPIRED TEACHING / SCRIPTURE

The week before Ash Wednesday, Marilyn reviewed the inspired word that we receive here each week and showed us how God has given us a mission and that He has gifted us for that mission. And we were asked to write in these little books something maybe from that word that struck us on what we want to be working on for Lent. But just a reminder that in order to be effective in this mission, we need to learn to hear God's voice, because if we're not hearing God's voice in what we're doing, then we're basically doing our own thing. And that's the reason for our Lenten journey, to return again to the heart of the One Who loves us and loves everybody, loves those He would send us to, so that each and every person can be equipped with a heart of love to carry out that mission of going out. We have to know the love to take the love. Katerina began by reminding us of this scripture in **Matthew 13:3-8**: *A sower went out to sow and as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on the rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep and when the sun rose it was scorched and it withered because of lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil and it produced fruit, a hundred- or sixty- or thirty-fold.* The question is: What do we need to do to plow up our hearts so that they are good ground for the seed? Some of the questions that Katerina asked were these: What change or attachments do I need to drop in order for my heart to be plowed up? What obstacles do I have for this year that God needs to act in me that show His good and His glory? What is weakening my prayer? What is weakening my gratefulness to God? Is there unforgiveness? Am I still struggling with a hurt I just can't forgive? She encouraged us to write in our journals two or three things that the Holy Spirit brought to mind as we prayed and then to bring those to the Lord, asking Him to heal, to redeem, to purify the places we are willing to give over to Him. And then to also ask for the grace to give those over because by ourselves we can do nothing. However, we are not asked to do it by ourselves. So together we can say what it says on the front of our journal: "I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me." So when we get in a little hard place, we just look at the front of our journal and say, "No, I can't do it but I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me." So in the following weeks, the Lord spoke to us in prayer and in

prophecy. And why is this important? When we come here, we ask the Lord to speak to us. We say to Him, "We are gathered here, Lord, we gather to praise You, mostly to praise and worship You." But in that praise and worship, as our praise and worship goes up to God, He responds to us and He gives us words, prophetic words, He gives us images, He gives us different things that can help us in this journey that we're on. I pulled a few things from those words but what we would really like you to do is spend some time praying over this inspired word. From January 31, after we heard the call, we heard a prophecy. And the prophecy invited us to come, come. "Come, my beloved, come. Come you who are old, come you who are young, come you who are strong, come you who are weak, come you who are sure, come you who doubt, come you who are ready, come you who would say 'one more minute, Lord', come, my beloved, come." Now that covers a lot of people, doesn't it? Old, young, doubtful, strong, weak. The Lord is calling us to come, come, come. And He says, "Fear not that which ails you but rather say, 'I trust'. Fear not the roadblocks but rather say 'I see a new path'. Come, my beloved, I wait for you. Let nothing keep you from me. Come and rejoice, come and be happy. Come, my beloved, come." Now you could reflect on that for a really long time, if that's where the Lord leads you. And right after that was a prayer, an exhortation, asking the Lord to help us respond to that word. "You know, you heard the call to come, to say "yes, Lord, yes, I come. I hear You; I walk with You; I walk into Your love." And after that, a confirmation: "I confirm those words 'Do not be afraid.' Walk into the love of Jesus." And then a little later, this image: "Just a minute ago I saw the hands of Jesus outstretched with the nail holes in His hands and His arms just open wide, and the sense there is that He says, 'I am your holiness. Come to me.'" So you see how the prophetic word and the prayer and the confirmation and the image all work together for the Lord to say, "Come to me. I am your holiness." And then a little later, a sharing, and the heart of the sharing was from something someone heard up here on this altar: "Come, follow me, and your life will be changed forever. I will transform you into the beautiful being that you were meant to be." What wonderful promises in the word of God. And on February 7, the Lord invited us again to come, so "come" seems to be the word. "Come to me. Come be filled with my love. Yes, I have given you a mission but before you leave, come and experience all that I have to give for it is in your receiving that you shall be able to speak, able to share, able to encourage, that you may be able to bless others and be able to help others." In **Jeremiah 29:13**, the Lord promises: *If you seek me, you will find me, if you seek me with all of your heart.* So that's what we're encouraging this Lent, once again to return to your first love, to return to the heart of God by using our prayer journals and also reflecting, of course, on the scriptures. The scriptures are like the epitome of God. But we have this beautiful season of Lent, the 40 days, where we can seek the Lord, and the Church gives us prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Our prayer can include the things we are asking God to transform in us, in addition to scripture readings and adoration, which we're so privileged to have right here. Write down what you hear in the inspired word. That's a really good way to use your journal. Maybe during the prayer meeting tonight, you're going to hear something that touches your heart; write it down in your journal. Take it home with you. Then you don't have to wait for it to be transcribed because the word that struck you is written down in your journal

and you can say, "Yeah, I heard God say that." Include that in your reflection as the Lord leads. Now, I know we're all working to draw closer to the Lord and I wonder if anybody would be willing to share one thing that they might be doing this season to grow closer to the Lord?

SHARING

This is a simple little thing and it came to me prior to Lent, but it is so simple that I'm kind of embarrassed to say it. But it's to kneel at the end of my bed, in the morning or at night, for five minutes, that's it, in front of a picture of the Lord, and just not read anything, just talk to Him. And I've been doing that. If I forget to do it at night, then I do it the next morning but five minutes each day. And it's just so simple; it's just a meeting with God.

SHARING

I think it's the simple things that He loves. One thing I've been trying to do... I'm a great planner. And not this year but last year, Chuck and I went away for a little Ash Wednesday retreat. We went up to the Hermitage; there's no wi-fi, nothing. That was a little hard but we managed. Anyway, we were just praying about what we were going to do and I came home with my journal full of two pages of things I was going to do. And I did most of those things. But this year we went again and I said, "No, no, no. Write nothing in your journal. Get up each morning and say, 'Lord, what is it that You and I are going to do today?'" That's kind of scary, because that means I have to really be alert and really be looking for Him and His presence. That's why I want to draw closer to His heart so that I can hear His voice and know that's His voice. So that's a little thing that the Lord showed me. Anyone else?

SHARING

This kind of relates a little bit to what was just said, and it's very simple, but I was reading in a daily reflection awhile back, and it might have been one of the feast days concerning the cross, maybe the feast of the Holy Cross. But to just try, at some point every day, to look at a crucifix for 30 seconds or a minute or two or whatever. But just try to say thank you. I can't obviously understand it completely but just try to take that in.

PRAYER

Thank You, Jesus, for Your great sacrifice for us. Thank You!

SHARING

As we grow older, it is very difficult, and we are so blessed to have Jesus in our hearts, bringing hope. Not just a passing hope but eternal hope, to help us to navigate through these tough times and hurting times of life. My purpose is to share with more people on a weekly basis about the fact that there is hope in Christ.

SHARING

Thank you. That's really bringing life. I think we're going to have some wonderful testimonies as to how during this Lenten season you drew closer to the heart of God. There's nothing more beautiful than that.

SHARING

Let's just start with the Lord because that's what it's all about. It's not necessarily about how we feel, about what we do; it's just about who He is, and everything else flows from that.

EXHORTATION

The Lord wants us to carry out His holy love and to be a witness of His love to each other.

WORD OF WISDOM

How do we carry it with us? Only by power of the Holy Spirit, which is the Lord's love living inside of us, the gift of grace that helps us become who God is calling us to be.

SCRIPTURE / PRAYER / EXHORTATION

Matthew 3:16-17: *And after all the people had been baptized and Jesus had also been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased."* How many beloved sons and daughters do we have here tonight? If you believe that, say amen. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus was led and He did His ministry, in the power of the Holy Spirit. And Lord, we're praying that Your fire fall. We're praying that Your fire fall. And just like before the Second Vatican Council or fifty years ago when the whole Church said, "Renew in our nature wonders as a second Pentecost", this church here says the very same thing. Now, O Lord, renew in our midst Your power as a second Pentecost. Can you say amen to that? Now when you say amen to that, be very careful. When you say amen to the Holy Spirit, you say, "Here I am, and I am ready. Lord, I open my heart to you and I want to be used by You." Say it again – Amen. Let that fire fall.

PRAYER / EXHORTATION / SHARING

One phrase in that song was "Lord, restore the joy." Sometimes you think that maybe the joy is, well, the flames gone out, right, in the midst of life, in circumstances? But oh no, no, no. The fire of God burns within us; His presence is with us, right? We're beloved sons and daughters, amen. He guides us, He loves us, He leads us, and we have the joy, don't we? You want to say amen to that? Lord, we want that fresh fire tonight too. We want that fresh fire. We don't want to look like zombies here. We want to look like we're joyful people, in the power of the Holy Spirit. As someone once said, "Let the joy in your heart inform your face." That's good to remember, right? That's what we want, Lord. We want that fire. We really want – in the power of the Holy Spirit. We want to be people on fire. That's why we gather here tonight. We're going to stoke that fire again. We don't want our love to grow cold. We're calling out here. So when we do that, let's pray that with sincerity, because when you say amen to the Holy Spirit,

He hears you. Light that fire in our hearts again, Lord. Renew joy, renew zeal, renew commitment, renew courage, renew strength, renew confidence, renew hope, renew love. And on this day a great man died and went home to Jesus. And I'm talking about Dr. Billy Graham, a man whose heart was filled with zeal and love of the Lord. Today he went home to be face-to-face with the Lord that he served for 99 years of his life. Lord, that we might have that zeal, that we might have that commitment, that we might have that love, that we might have that spirit of evangelization and trust in You, Jesus, like your servant Billy Graham. And Billy, as you stand there before the Lord, I'm going to ask you for prayer; I'm going to ask you to pray for us who are here, that we might have a portion of that zeal, a portion of that commitment, a portion of that trust that you had. So ask Jesus to pour that forth upon us. We thank you for your life.

SCRIPTURE / IMAGE / SHARING

Before I came to prayer group tonight, I just opened up the Bible looking for just something from the Lord, and it was from **Matthew 5:14-15**: *You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl, instead they put it on a stand and it gives light to everyone in the house.* When I was thinking about that scripture here tonight, an image of a hurricane lamp came. And I remember a line in a movie one time, and it said, "You can't shine if you don't fill your lamp." And the ways we fill our lamp is by coming here and spending that time alone in prayer, whether it's at home, in front of the Blessed Sacrament, listening to praise music, being a community or alone before the Lord. And in this darkness of the world it definitely needs the light of the Lord. So Lord, light our light again.

PROPHECY

Put it down, my beloved, put it down. Put down that which binds you. I call you and I call you, but you come not because you are bound. And so I say to you, put it down. You know what it is, my beloved. And yet you hold on to it, and you allow it to bind you. How can you move? How can you burn? How can you shine if you hang on to that which prevents? I am the Lord your God. I am he who will allow you to do all things through me. But you must put it down. I call to you, my beloved. I say to you, come. Let it go; put it down.

PRAYER / EXHORTATION

And Lord, with that word, You provide the grace. Help us to do that, Lord, as You identify anything that we must put down to draw closer. Show us that. Spirit of God, come. You are the love of the Lord, the love of God – the Father and the Son. You are the Spirit of wisdom and consolation and understanding. Show us, O Lord, deep within, those things that bind us – now, here in this place, in our lives. Help us to identify those and lay them down. Let's just take a minute to allow the Spirit to speak to us and bring to mind any such thing.

SCRIPTURE / EXHORTATION

We lay it down so we're not burdened as we rise before the Lord. When the rich young man said to Jesus, "What must I do to be perfect?", Jesus said, "Follow the commandments." The man said, "I've done that since my youth." Jesus said, "Alright. For you to really be perfect, give away all that you have and follow me" (**Matthew 19:16-21**). Because you can't follow Him when you're carrying a bunch of junk, and it could be really good junk, but compared to the everlasting life and the glory that awaits us, it's nothing. It's a battered penny compared to a gold coin. They're both golden but one has almost no worth and one has much worth. Let go of the pennies so you have a free hand to take the gold that the Lord offers.

IMAGE

After that word and as Cece was playing that song, "I arise when He calls my name, no more sorrow, no more pain," I had an image of the Lord Jesus just walking through this assembly. And He had a basket. It was a basket like I would imagine they had when He walked the earth, when He was alive then in His humanness. He had this large... it looked like a reed basket. And He was walking through this assembly and He stopped in front of each person here and He said, "Will you lay it down into my basket?" And some were able to and some were not. And for those who were able to, He placed His hand on their head and said the words of that song: "Arise and walk. You are free." And for those who were not, He said, "Do not fear, for each day I come and I say, 'Are you ready to lay it down, that you may rise and walk and go free?'"

SENSE

I think that the Lord is putting on my heart that there's a reason for this laying down. And the reason is that once we get rid of all of this, He wants us to receive everything. But unless we get rid of this, He doesn't have you to fill up. So that's why I think He's calling all of us to do this.

EXHORTATION / SCRIPTURE

I believe that God has begun something here tonight, that He's going to continue with us in the weeks to come as He draws us closer to His heart. So I encourage you to take whatever struck you tonight, read your scriptures, and just say, "Lord, draw me closer to Your heart." And Betsy, when you shared that about He's emptying so as to fill us, there's this scripture in **Ephesians 3:14-19** that's going to be the closing prayer for us all. *For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and the length and the height and the depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.* He wants to empty us so that we can be filled with all the fullness of God. Amen.