

Resources for Days of Prayer & Fasting



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The Sisters of the Transfiguration are women in the Episcopal Church, lay and ordained, living together under religious vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience. Our convent is in Glendale, north of Cincinnati, Ohio. We are dedicated to sharing the love of Christ according to our varied gifts. Our active ministries include Bethany School, St. Monica's Recreation Center, The Transfiguration Spirituality Center, Food for the Soul, and commitment to care for God's creation. Our primary ministries are prayer and worship, which we offer on behalf of all people and which strengthen us for ongoing service. We trust that God uses these offerings for good as God wills to do.

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Introduction

The articles, prayers, and other resources included here are shared by the Sisters of the Community of the Transfiguration, to be used, adapted, passed on in any way that is helpful. Most have been written by a Sister. Some are gifts from others. They are offered as support for those praying and fasting on behalf of people who are suffering due to war, terrorism, climate change, environmental destruction, stolen human rights, loss of due process, human trafficking, slavery, racism, heterosexism, sexism, and other acts of greed, power-hunger, injustice, and hatred.

With consistent, communal, loving prayer, supported by fasting, we can stand compassionately on behalf of those being hurt by destructive policies as well as offering intercessions for those whose choices are causing the harm. We entrust these acute needs to God, giving thanks for the privilege of prayer, believing that prayer makes a difference in ways we can never understand.

Prayer *IS* Action:
Resistance is *Not* Futile

There are many ways actively to resist policies and actions which are opposed to human rights and basic kindness. We can speak out through writing strong, reasoned, courteous letters and emails to those in power and making phone calls to their offices. Posting thoughtfully, resisting nastiness on social media is helpful – an ongoing source of encouragement to others. Turning up at protests, as you are able, can add strength to the millions of voices putting pressure on those in power. Prayer strengthens and can guide all other forms of action.

This has nothing to do with annoying “thoughts and prayers” which are ubiquitous following a disaster. Far more real is costly, loving, subversive prayer – holy action. Such prayer demands hard work and sacrifice. It is *not* the last resort of those who can no longer do the “real work” of protest. By the grace of God, quiet, intense prayer touches hearts, minds and lives in ways we can’t begin to comprehend. This kind of prayer also gives strength to the efforts being made in other ways. It makes a difference. Prayer *IS* action.

The Sisters of the Transfiguration and many of our CT Oblates and Associates believe that we are called by the Holy Spirit to offer a weekly day of fasting and focused prayer for those who are suffering under current authoritarian regimes. We are praying for:

- Our sisters and brothers who are immigrants in this land of immigrants, and who are being targeted for arrest without cause or warrant, suffering imprisonment and deportation;
- Our sisters and brothers in places of war, terror and flat-out genocide: Ukraine, Gaza, Myanmar, South Sudan, and too many others;
- Our sisters and brothers, the Israeli hostages taken in the attack by Hamas on October 7, 2023 and their grieving families;
- Our sisters and brothers living in places of famine, in food deserts;
- Our sisters and brothers who are victims of gun violence, those working to get sensible gun laws, and those who are afraid they might lose their guns;
- Our sisters and brothers; dedicated civil service workers who have lost their jobs, and those who do not know from one day to the next whether they have a job;
- Our LGBTQI+ sisters and brothers wherever it is unsafe to live in or to admit to an identity other than on either end of the gender spectrum;
- Our sisters and brothers; victims of sex trafficking, including countless indigenous women and girls;

- Our sisters and brother who live in fear because they speak with a different accent or have darker skin or worship differently;
- Our sisters and brothers; victims of climate change; enduring increasingly powerful storms, extremes of heat and cold, famine, and those working to protect our environment and all of God's creatures;
- Our sisters and brothers in spite of themselves who order and enact inhumane policies;
- Other humanitarian crises which arise around the world, and which continually break our hearts. We offer that brokenness as part of our prayer.

Each week we focus on a particular need, believing that the strength of our prayer is multiplied as we join together. The focus of each week's offering is on our website at www.ctsisters.org and on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ctsistersglendale.

We are intensifying our prayers by fasting. Fasting prayer is an ancient practice, known in most religions for thousands of years. It is part of the offering, and a way of helping to keep focus. When pangs of hunger hit, it is a reminder of the privilege we have to choose to fast. Many don't have a choice, whether because they are imprisoned, because war and genocide have made food scarce or unavailable, because they are living on the street, or for countless other reasons. The pangs remind us to continue to pray, when energy lags.

Some of us cannot fast for health reasons. Diabetes and other conditions make fasting dangerous. To fast during illness is to risk extending the illness and reducing strength going forward. Yet there are other fasts we can offer. One of the most difficult is fasting from social media, from email, from all of our electronic devices for the day. Another is fasting from one meal, or having simpler, smaller meals than usual. We might fast from talking, for those for whom talking is a constant desire, or fast from a preference for solitude and give time to someone who is lonely. It might be an intense time of rehoming items we've hoarded or prayerfully removing invasive plants. For each of us, it is a personal choice, to be made through prayer and discernment, and to be supported by all of us together.

During our days of fasting, we write letters and emails to elected representatives; sending calm, loving, rational arguments on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves.

We welcome all who wish to join us each week on Monday. Pray where you are. Come spend some time at the Convent. Offer what you can to enhance your own prayer. If you wish, please let us know that you are part of this effort in whatever way the Spirit leads you. Email FastingCT@gmail.com to be added to our list. We will be praying for you and your effort and will send out occasional updates and resources.

Resources

American Friends of the Diocese of Jerusalem

<https://afedj.org/>

The American Friends Service Committee

<https://afsc.org/>

Brooks, Svevo, et al, *A Guide to Political Fasting*. Eugene, OR: Nonviolent Tactics Development Project, 1981

<https://nonviolence.rutgers.edu/files/original/2cdc488c7f145abccdb2a220c27d57d33b7f1374.pdf>

The Episcopal Peace Fellowship

<https://www.episcopalpeacefellowship.net/>

The Episcopal Public Policy Network

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/office-government-relations/eppn-sign-up/>

Five Calls – both the website and the app, which can be downloaded for free at the App Store.

<https://5calls.org/>

Kelly Latimore Icons Iconographer Kelly Latimore has generously given permission to reproduce some of his icons in this publication. They speak vividly about the struggles of people for whom we are praying. If you wish to share these icons beyond what is here, please go to his website at <https://kellylatimoreicons.com/>. High quality downloadable copies are only \$25 apiece, and worth every penny. Plus you will have the chance to browse Kelly's other extraordinary work which is well worth your time.

As we find further resources, they will be posted on our website, on our Facebook page, and shared with those who have asked to join the mailing list.

Reflection on Prayer and Fasting

The fact that fasting is a valuable spiritual practice and discipline is attested to by countless people from diverse faith traditions over millennia of human history. However, as with any spiritual practice, it needs to be offered wisely, with clear focus, and with vulnerable love for the One to whom we make the offering.

There is no point to fasting and self-denial unless they are prayerfully offered with clarity about our motivation. Fasting just to fast or due to tradition or external pressure, fasting to feel or appear holier, to lose weight, fasting as a form of self-punishment, can be destructive motivations, and, as Jesus points out, have their own form of reward (Matthew 6:1-18). It's essential, then, to consider the purpose of any practice of self-denial, and go into a time of fasting with a clear, prayerful purpose in mind.

Those things offered in a fast might include – but are not limited to – food or specific categories of food/beverages, use of electronic devices or of specific links on those devices, chattering, media noise, gossip, mentally criticizing or judging other people, pleasurable but otherwise harmless activities like hobbies, games, novels, and so forth.

For some people, fasting from food can cause physical harm, for example if they have been afflicted with diabetes or other conditions which require regular eating to protect health. For some, it can cause psychological harm due to the consequences of an eating disorder or childhood abuse. For some, it can cause spiritual harm due to approaching fasting as an absolute obligation or a sign of virtue. Thus fasting from food, especially, needs to be considered carefully, prayerfully, with realistic concern for the individual. In the Jewish tradition called *pikuach nefesh* – preservation of life is far more important than fasting. Thus those who cannot fast for medical reasons are not only dispensed from fasting but are actually *prohibited* from fasting. Learning from our Jewish sisters and brothers about preventing harm in how we exercise this sacred practice can help us to identify healthful and loving ways to fast as part of our prayers.

So why fast or practice self-denial in the first place? There are many reasons. As Paul points out in I Corinthians 9:25, athletes exercise control in order to win a wreath that will dry out, but we exercise self-control for higher purposes. We are easily distracted from prayer, from worship, from being aware of the needs of others. Choosing to fast for a time, whether from food or other practices, enables us to concentrate on God's presence with us, on our relationship with God, on our service to others, on intensive intercession, on discernment. Times of such fasting help us to remember what is truly important and listen with care.

Fasting from food as we are able can be valuable for reminding us that it is an immense privilege to be able to fast voluntarily. There are millions of people for whom fasting is not optional because food and clean, safe water are scarce or not available at all. Intercession for those in food deserts, in places of famine, in places where food aid is kept out by those exercising power and hatred, can also lead us to discern ways in which we can make even a small difference – can lead us to creative action.

Other forms of fasting might include choosing to keep silence and/or choosing to leave our phones in our pockets for a time. Such seemingly simple disciplines provide opportunities to be more aware of the others around us, to pray for them, to be attentive to those we need to forgive or who have cause to need to forgive us. Such practices can break us out of the habit of hiding behind whatever we are fasting from – avoiding the hard work of real relationship. They can help us to be more actively involved in the essential connections needed in healthy community life.

Choosing times beyond Lent to forego desserts, snacks, fast foods, alcohol, and other enjoyable but nutritionally arid treats can be a commitment to honor God's creation of our bodies. Such offerings can enhance living in thankfulness. They can aid us in becoming increasingly responsible stewards of the temples of the Holy Spirit in which we are privileged to live. Fasting from kinds of food whose production is particularly harmful to the environment can increase our awareness of our responsibility as stewards of God's creation.

Sometimes we fast to overcome things that are harmful. Complaining, self-pity, grumbling, nurturing resentments, mocking others either privately or publicly, for example, are all destructive practices – destructive to ourselves, destructive to community life, destructive to the way we live our faith and witness, destructive to the world around us. These attitudes have spiritual power which harm us and others. Focused times of fasting from them can help us gradually to overcome them and grow as people who make joyful, contented sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving regardless of circumstances. As Paul urged in the first letter to the Christians in Thessalonica, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit." (I Thess 5:16-19.) That teaching is not "Don't worry. Be happy." It is part of how we choose to act in the world – to influence the world in spirit and in witness.

An example of this reality came from a pastor in Chicago, enduring extreme heat. She wrote, "Here in Chicago (like much of the US) we are in a heat wave. The other evening, the news showed a place in Montana that got 4 INCHES OF SNOW! I was so jealous; not only am I heat intolerant, but I love snow and cold. It occurred to me to see if,

instead of cussing out the heat and being angry that WE didn't get snow, what if I changed my perspective to "I am going through a period of fasting from snow and cold. How can I grow and become a better person through this?" Believe me, the struggle is REAL."

It is an act of faith that a genuine fast, offered to God from our heart, can deepen and intensify our prayers and can make a positive difference in the world. It is not suffering for the sake of bribing God to do something for us. How insulting to a loving God is that assumption? Fasting is temporarily abstaining from, offering those things which can distract us from God's presence with us, God's guidance in us, God's love embracing us. Fasting as part of our prayer is a practice which can lead to breaking down walls and helping us to become more vulnerable to what is good. It helps us to grow in humility and awareness of how much we need each other. It is a way of clearing the decks, as it were, of freeing ourselves from endless, time and soul-consuming distractions. It is an offering of love, working in cooperation with God, focusing our prayers on behalf of those most in need. It is one of the many privileges we are given as loving stewards of this world, to care for the awesome, complex, interwoven life we share.

Mary in the Streets: The Magnificat as a Dangerous Song for Our Time

The Very Rev. Allison Burns-LaGreca
Rector, St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Stone Harbor, NJ

Today, we celebrate Saint Mary the Virgin, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ. But if we are honest, much of the Church has tamed her. We've painted her as silent, passive, almost fragile. We've reduced her to a sweet figure in blue robes, speaking in gentle tones, smiling down at the baby in her arms.

That is not the Mary we meet in Scripture.

In Luke 1:46-55, Mary sings the Magnificat and it is not a lullaby. It is a song of uprising. It is a declaration of the great reversal of God's Kingdom. It is political, economic, and spiritual all at once. It is a direct challenge to every throne and empire that believes its power will last forever.

Mary is young, poor, unwed, living in an occupied land. And yet, she stands in the long line of prophets, speaking with the authority of one who has heard God's heartbeat. She names what God has done, is doing, and will do. And she dares to speak of it as if it has already happened.

"He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty."

Do you hear the past tense? Mary speaks as though God's justice is already accomplished. This is not wishful thinking; it is prophetic certainty. She sees the world as God sees it the truth breaking in through the cracks of empire.

Sidebar: When Mary's Song Was Banned

The Magnificat has not only been revered in churches; it has been feared by tyrants.

- Argentina, 1970s-80s: During the "Dirty War," the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo women whose children had been abducted and disappeared began to gather publicly, holding up pictures of the missing and reciting the Magnificat. The military junta banned the public reading of Mary's words, recognizing them as a subversive threat.

- Guatemala, 1980s: The Magnificat was seen as so politically dangerous to the ruling military dictatorship that it was removed from public worship in some areas, because it called for the very reversal the regime feared.

Oppressors have always known what some Christians forget: the Magnificat is a revolutionary anthem.

The Magnificat is not safe.

It is not sentimental.

It is dangerous.

And if you want to see Mary today, you will not find her sitting quietly on a church pew avoiding controversy. You will find her in the streets of D.C., walking past armed patrols and surveillance cameras. She is linking arms with the undocumented mother whose baby is in detention. She is standing beside the queer teen who is told they are unloved. She is feeding the hungry on the steps of the marble buildings where decisions are made about who gets to eat.

Mary's voice still echoes in those streets:

"The proud – scattered.

The mighty – brought down.

The lowly – lifted up.

The hungry – filled."

Her words are not metaphor. They are marching orders for the people of God. The Magnificat is a call to scatter pride wherever it builds walls, to topple every throne that crushes the vulnerable, to lift those bent under the weight of injustice, and to feed those who are left hungry by systems designed to keep them that way.

Sidebar: Mary and Liberation Movements

Mary's song has inspired liberation movements around the world:

- South Africa: During the anti-apartheid struggle, Christian communities often sang or recited the Magnificat as an act of hope and defiance against the regime's racial injustice.
- El Salvador: Archbishop Óscar Romero and base communities in rural parishes recited the Magnificat as a prayer of resistance against military oppression and economic exploitation.
- Civil Rights Movement in the U.S.: While less often directly quoted, the themes of the Magnificat, lifting the lowly, filling the hungry, challenging unjust power were at the heart of sermons, marches, and songs that fueled the movement.

This is not work for the faint of heart. It is work that will be misunderstood, resisted, and even condemned by those who prefer a quiet Mary and a tame gospel. But the real Mary will not be silenced. She will keep singing until the world is turned upside down or rather, right side up.

And she looks us in the eye and asks, "Will you join me?"

Joining Mary means believing God's promises even when evidence is thin. It means choosing solidarity over safety, truth over comfort, and mercy over fear. It means standing where it is dangerous, and singing the song of God's Kingdom until it drowns out the anthems of empire.

Mary's Magnificat is still dangerous.

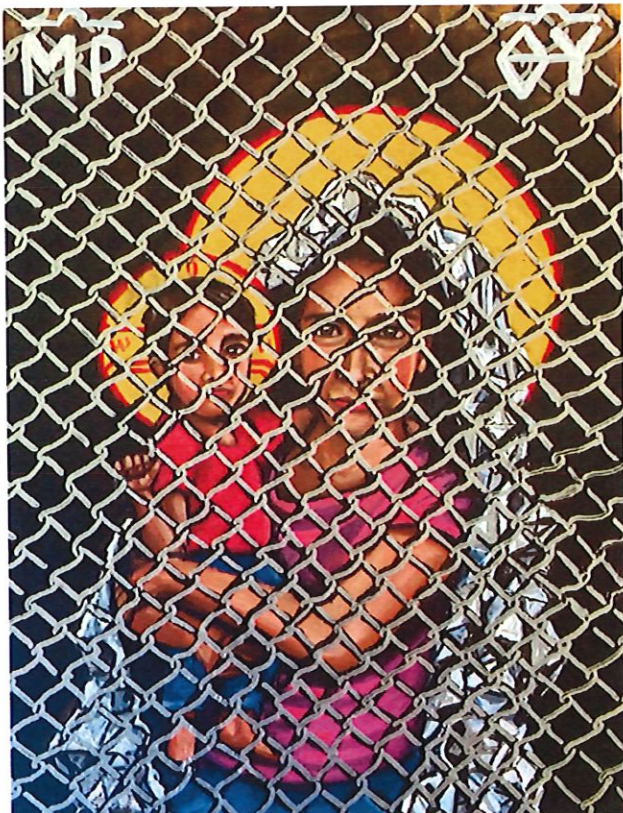
It is still beautiful.

It is still God's truth breaking into the world.

Her song is our song.

Her fight is our fight.

And her courage is the courage we need until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.



Mother of God: Protrectress of
the Distressed
Kelly Latimore

Creative Resistance:
A Sacred Gift from *Friends of Silence*

One of the many gifts of love to be found on the internet is a group called Friends of Silence. (<https://friendsofsilence.net/>) An offering they recently made is a program called *Creative Resistance: Weaving Small Paths of Beauty in Heart-Rending Times*. What a wonderful way of standing in opposition to the hatred and ugliness which seem to be taking over too much of our country, our planet. That many people are hungry for the kinds of hope and truth to be found in beauty – especially in beauty we are privileged to help create – was made evident by how quickly the program filled up.

Enhancing offerings of prayer and fasting for those who are suffering by finding ways of “Weaving Small Paths of Beauty in Heart-Rending Times” can be meaningful.



Dorothy Day and the Homeless Christ
Kelly Latimore

Prayer can be offered in many forms – with and without words. Physical expressions like walking or sitting with open hearts in natural beauty, various forms of caring for and restoring God’s creation, growing food for hungry people, handwork which makes items of beauty and utility, which provide joy to those to whom they are given, creating opportunities for children to learn to add to beauty, sharing a cup of coffee and a listening ear, can all be prayer.

Other options include

writing: prayers, poetry, hymns, stories, letters which echo hope, truth, grace, kindness. Do you sing? Sing songs and hymns which reflect the longings in your heart for goodness and justice. It doesn’t matter whether you have a beautiful or trained voice, only that you are weaving beauty from your heart in these heart-rending times. What matters most is the love, the care for those in need, the strength and compassion with which these and other actions are offered.

Equally important is that we offer our fasts, our prayers together. Whether or not we can be physically together, two or three or more people can make offerings on the same day, can connect on the phone, in internet rooms. God gives us gifts of love, grief, yearning to make a difference in the lives of those who are suffering. We cannot control what others will do, nor can we know how God will make use of our various offerings. We can only offer what we have to give together, trusting that offering of our time, our hunger, our creative efforts to add beauty to this world are part of prayers which our loving Creator will use. For that we give thanks.



Christ in the Rubble
Kelly Latimore

Prayer and Fasting: The Wisdom of Dr. Seuss in Light of our Baptismal Covenant

When the current chaos becomes too much to cope with, sometimes it helps to turn to childhood wisdom. It helps to re-enter a time when, at least in dreams and stories, it seemed that one person, or a few people, really could make a difference. When Dr. Seuss (Theodore Geisel) wrote and illustrated *Horton Hears a Who*¹, could he possibly have imagined how badly that wisdom would be needed more than seventy years later?



La Sagrada Familia, Kelly Latimore

The classic story of Horton the elephant, whose exceptional hearing enables him to recognize and ultimately save a community of miniscule beings, can serve as hope and challenge. Seuss writes of a microscopic planet – a tiny speck of dust – inhabited by a whole race of beings called Whos. As it falls through the air toward a pond, Horton hears their cries for help and catches the planet – Who-ville – and places it “on a very soft clover”. Others in the jungle think that Horton is crazy. They don’t believe that valuable life which they can neither hear nor see, exists on that dust speck. Dr. Seuss takes Horton through all kinds of threats as he struggles to save the Whos. A concerted effort on the part of every Who in Who-ville enables the self-righteous to hear the truth.

Throughout the book, Horton explains his actions by saying, “A person’s a person, no matter how small”.

¹ Geisel, Theodore [Dr. Seuss]. *Horton Hears a Who*. New York: Random House, 1954, 1982.

Lost Wisdom and Increasing Brutality

That wisdom has been lost to too many people in power. Countless human beings, immigrants to this nation of immigrants, are arrested without cause, without warrants or due process. They are imprisoned; many sent to concentration camps under brutal conditions. Many are randomly deported to other countries, regardless with their country of origin. They are victims of hatred, of blindness to the fact that they are human beings with the same inalienable rights due to all people. They are God's beloved children, treated as disposable trash by those who choose to be blind and deaf to their humanity.

Essential health care and jobs are disappearing. Teachers are punished for teaching facts. Wars inflicted to steal land, terrorism, and genocide are causing incalculable suffering. Evil is running rampant and claiming countless victims.

Like the Whos in Who-ville, their cries and the cries of those who are trying to help are going unheard by those who cannot see beyond their greed for power, wealth, adulation, and the irrational assumption of the superiority of those with light skin. It's a helpless feeling to see shameless evil being carried out against other human beings, and to be unable to do anything to stop it.

God's Call Out of Helplessness

But are we truly helpless? We serve God who hears the cries of the poor, the disenfranchised, the prisoners, the disappeared. We serve God who has given us the right and responsibility of prayer. Our call is to intense prayer, rooted in our Baptisms.

As members of the Episcopal Church, we regularly renew our commitment to Christ through our Baptismal Covenant.² Our part of this sacred Covenant with God includes actions which can be costly. It includes the expectations that we will "persevere in resisting evil", that we will "proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ", that we will "seek and serve Christ in all persons", and that we will "strive for justice and peace among all people, and "respect the dignity of every human being". These promises are rooted in the strength-giving commitment that we will "continue in the Apostles' teaching, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers". These promises now compel us to act through non-violence as we are able; to resist on behalf of the victims of ruthless inhumane policies.

² "Holy Baptism", *The Book of Common Prayer*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, 304-5.

Resistance in Communal

Fasting is an essential part of this work. It is a spiritual discipline practiced by many faith traditions for millennia. Jesus assumed that his followers would fast from time to time, and taught that fasting is not about calling attention to ourselves.³ There are many reasons to fast, but the one that draws us into acting now is together, quietly, intensifying our offering of intercessory prayer. We are quietly making as much good spiritual noise as possible. Our faith calls us to act together; a diverse family of people who love and serve as we are able and know that non-violent action can make a difference⁴. In this context, we are joining with others of many and no faiths in giving what we have on behalf of the victims of deliberate, hatred-based injustice.

In *Horton Hears a Who*, it is only when Horton has endured disbelief, mockery, and capture, and when all the Whos join together to make as much noise as possible, that others in the jungle hear them and recognize their value. They are finally able to receive the truth Horton has been proclaiming that “a person’s a person no matter how small.” Just so, the more people of faith and passion who come together in intensive prayer, undergirded by the compassion and strength to which focused fasting can bring us, the more inexorable love we will pour out. One mind-boggling conviction which takes us into this effort is that God – the Creator and Sustainer of this incredible universe and this human-battered planet – has chosen to need us, to partner with us, to receive our prayers which often seem feeble and meaningless, and use them for good.

Consider the International Fast for Life, the fast for nuclear disarmament in 1983.⁵ It didn’t lead to a magical “holy zap”, instantly removing all the nukes instantly. However, it caught the attention of a variety of world leaders, put pressure on the powers-that-were, and increased public awareness and urgency for disarmament. The Fast helped lead to reduction of development and deployment of nuclear weapons. The effort required a core group of intense fasters, a larger, international community of people who offered fasts as they were able, and those who saw the sacrifices being made and were influenced to other sorts of action. In their 1981 pamphlet, “A Guide to Political Fasting”, some leaders of the Fast wrote that fasting represents an attempt “to radically exorcise a deeply rooted evil”.⁶ That is our prayer, too.

Not everyone can fast from food. Diabetes and other health issues can make such fasting impossible. There are, however, many kinds of fasting. Simpler meals, fewer meals

³ Matthew 6:15.

⁴ <https://tcf.org/content/report/nonviolent-movements-can-save-a-world-in-crisis/>

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fast_for_Life provides a helpful history and overview of this life-affirming, sacrificial action.

⁶ Brooks, Svevo, et al, “A Guide to Political Fasting”. Eugene, OR: Nonviolent Tactics Development Project, 1981, i.

with only essential nutrition is one approach. Passing up pricy coffee drinks and giving the money saved to organizations working for the same cause is another. Fasting from social media is a huge offering for some people. Reaching for our phone can be a reminder to pray instead. A deliberate choice to fast from complaining, from judging even those whose acts of evil leave us sickened, and praying for them, is a healing offering. Setting aside time normally given to pleasurable activities to write letters to or call elected officials – putting pressure on them to act with justice, mercy, kindness, can be valuable action. The possibilities are practically endless and can be discerned in prayer and thoughtful conversation. What is essential is discerning why one is offering the prayer-fast, what one hopes to achieve, and how genuine the offering. It also helps to pray that God will support us and strengthen us in our efforts, will provide wisdom, and will join us to non-violent efforts around the world.

Consistent, faith-based fasting in any form also requires communal support and serious preparation. As Brooks *et al* emphasize, “it requires readiness of spirit, mind, and body, and should be entered into only after careful preparation of the faster and of her/his support community.”⁷

Making the Commitment

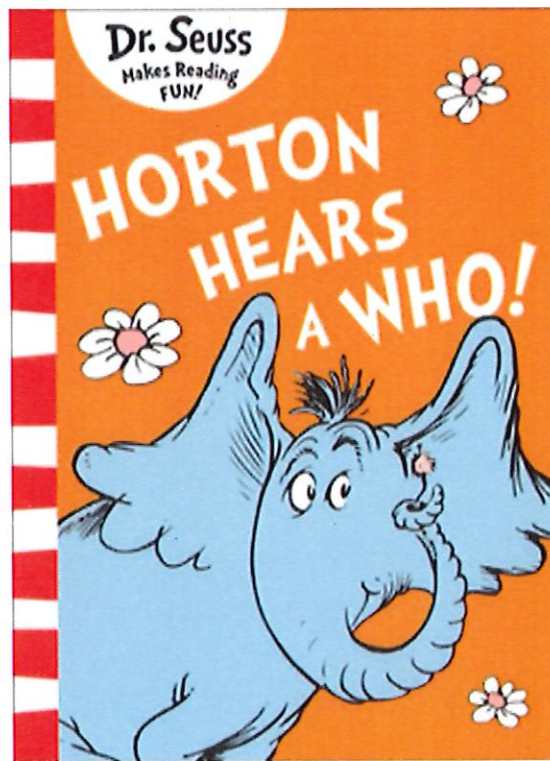
Fasting of any kind can be a difficult, but valuable sacrifice, offered especially in times of crisis and complexity. We grieve with and pray for the victims of the Hamas attack on Israel, those raped and murdered, the hostages and their families, as well as for the countless people in Gaza who are victims of what many are calling genocide. We grieve for those who are under threat of imprisonment, torture, and death in many countries only because they were born LGBTQI+ rather than safely at either end of the gender spectrum. A list of the causes for which people might choose to offer fasting prayer would take pages.

Fasting for causes, both political and religious, has been a practice throughout human history and continues today. Many have been willing to lay down their very lives peacefully to call attention to and pray against the kind of brutality which calls us to this commitment.⁸ Our prayer is that our fast will be used by God as God chooses for those who are suffering. There is nothing heroic about what we are doing. We are merely offering what we can in concert with others who can do more.

⁷ ii

⁸ In modern times, Mahatma Gandhi, Cesar Chavez, Marion Wallace-Dunlop, Alice Paul, the fasters of the International Fast for Life, protesters against the genocide in Gaza, and countless others have offered prolonged, public fasts to pressure governments to change policies.

Horton the elephant had to work against tremendous odds to save the Whos, who were also working hard together to be heard. We have a seemingly impossible juggernaut of evil to stand against. But we are invited together into self-giving cooperation with the ultimate Source of love and goodness. Prayer, undergirded by fasting, has made a difference in the past and will make a difference, by God's grace, amid the horrors our world is enduring now. We are unlikely to see the outcome of our offerings, but we can trust that they will not be wasted – that we are not helpless – that we can do something strong and positive. We know, with Horton, that “a person's a person, no matter how small”, or the color of their skin, or where they were born, or whatever their gender or abilities. And so, we choose to act, inviting others to join with us if it seems, after prayerful discernment, that this is their call in these times. As with every vow in our Baptismal Covenant, we say of this offering, “We will, with God's help”.



“A person's a person, no matter how small.”

Scripture About Care for the Foreigner/Stranger/Sojourner
NRSVUE unless otherwise indicated

"You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt." Exodus 23:9 (ESV)

You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.
Deuteronomy 10:19

"When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."
Leviticus 19:33-34 (ESV)

'Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow.'
Then all the people shall say, 'Amen!' Deuteronomy 27:19 (NIV)

When they were few in number, of little account, and strangers in the land, wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another, he allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account, saying, 'Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm.'
1 Chronicles 16:19-22

I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy, and I championed the cause of the stranger. I broke the fangs of the unrighteous, and made them drop their prey from their teeth. Job 29:15-17

The Lord watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. Psalm 146:9

For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever.
Jeremiah 7:5-7

You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who reside among you and have begotten children among you. They shall be to you as citizens of Israel; with you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. Ezekiel 47:22

Thus says the Lord of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.

Zechariah 7:9-10

You have heard that it was said, 'you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy'. But I say to you, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you. Matthew 5:43-44

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. Matthew 25:35

Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of my brethren you did it to me. Matthew 25:40

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.

Luke 10:27 .

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. Acts 10:34

Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Romans 12:13

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. Romans 13:8

Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Romans 13:10

In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all. Colossians 3:11

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. Hebrews 13:1-3

Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the friends, even though they are strangers to you; they have testified to your love before the church. You do well to send them on in a manner worthy of God; for they began their journey for the sake of Christ, accepting no support from non-believers. Therefore we ought to support such people, so that they may become co-workers with the truth. 3 John 1:5

Prayers and Wisdom for Needs in our Times

"We cannot do great things on this Earth, only small things with great love."

Mother Teresa

"Holy Wisdom, Soaring Power, encompass us with wings unfurled, and carry us, encircling all, above, below, and through the world."

Hildegard of Bingen

Prayer Before Reading the News

Rabbi Irwin Keller

Elohai neshamah shenatata bi tehorah hi.

My God, the soul you have placed in me is pure and vulnerable. I am afraid that looking at today's news will be painful. Encircle me in a robe of light so that I can witness the wounds of the world without being wounded myself. Let me learn what I need to know in order to be of my greatest use, without being overwhelmed by despair. I feel your protective light now as I open myself to the world's suffering and the world's joys. Amen



Photo by Faith Lang, Oblate of the
Community of the Transfiguration

Prayer for one who must eat on a day of fasting

Dear God,
As I must eat on this day of fasting
please help me to offer my sacrifice of
_____ to deepen my compassion
and strengthen my prayers.

As I hold in my heart the
victims of cruel policies and violence,
please let your love for them
flow through me. Grant me guidance
to know what more I can do.
Lead me into courage to speak and act
for those who cannot speak for themselves.

For you are God of compassion, of justice,
of strength – the lover of those the powerful
would throw away.

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God of compassion, receive the prayers we offer for your children who are immigrants to this country; who are being treated with cruelty and injustice. Let those making vicious decisions and acting on them be faced by the truth of what they are doing, and that as they do this to others, they are doing it to you. May mercy and justice prevail, in the Name of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

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Jesus, I don't know how to pray in the face of so much evil. There are not words strong enough to say what needs to be said. Holy Spirit pray in and through me, transforming what little I have to offer into the prayer that needs to be prayed. *Amen.*

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Come, Holy Spirit, blow hope and peace through this land, through this world.

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Generous God, grant us grace so that our prayers will shine light in the midst of darkness, love in the midst of hatred, compassion in the midst of cruelty. As we pray, may the hardened places in our own hearts be softened by you.

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God of power and might, let the strength of your love strengthen our prayers for so many victims of greed, fear, prejudice and hatred. Teach us how to pray, to transform our anger into intense love for those most in need.

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I believe that hope is a form of resistance that disrupts and pushes back 'when the world feels small and dark and frightful, at the mercy of cruelty and revenge'.

Westina Matthews

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Holy One, source of all wisdom, fill us with the kind of overflowing hope which is true resistance, that our prayers might serve you through those in greatest need.

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God of mercy and justice, help your children in Gaza, suffering constant violence, disease, and starvation at the hands of a government which has forgotten its own history. Call forth prophets with courage and voices so powerful that even the proudest, most vindictive political leader must stop and listen. Help and protect the innocent and show us what we can do to make a difference.

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Loving God, receive my open hands, holding in prayer those in shamefully preventable need, and a heart broken by those who cause such evil to their victims. Have mercy.

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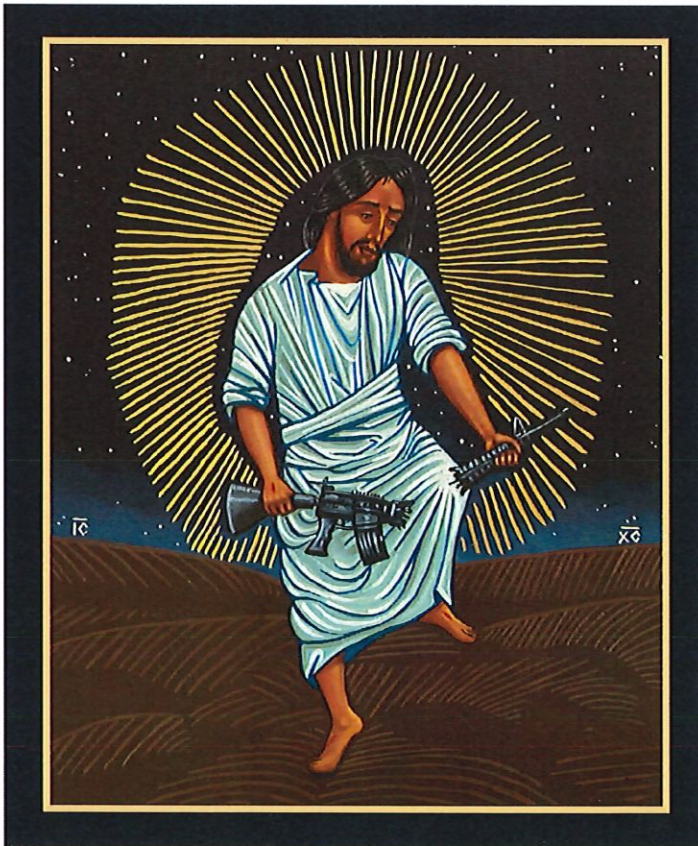
'Lord, as you will, and as you know, have mercy.'

Macarius the Great, Desert Father

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May your love and mercy flow through our prayers to those most in need.

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Christ Breaks the Rifle
Kelly Latimore

God of mercy and justice, look with sorrow upon those suffering in Gaza who are displaced from their homes, facing mass starvation, enduring a collapsed healthcare system, and grieving the loss of countless loved ones.

In this time of devastation and despair, let us not be silent. Hear our grief, sorrow, and outrage. May their endurance, courage, and hope stand strong where the buildings, water systems, crops, and olive groves could not. Let the cries of the innocent be heard, and guide all nations to act with conscience, seeking a just peace rooted in truth, dignity, and the shared humanity of your children. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

Episcopal Diocese of Northern California,
adapted from the Episcopal
Public Policy Network

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God of blessings, the universe sings of your glory.

Deepen our gratitude for all you have made and awaken in us a renewed commitment to care for the earth and each other.

Give us all the tools to listen to those most affected by climate change and with courage to act urgently and wisely, so that our common home may be healed and restored and all people, and generations to come, may delight in it.

- Adapted by Episcopal Relief and Development from the COP27
Climate Summit prayer from the EcoJesuits

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Lord Jesus, You experienced in person torture and death as a prisoner of conscience. You were beaten and flogged and sentenced to an agonizing death though you had done no wrong. Be now with prisoners of conscience throughout the world. Be with them in their fear and loneliness, in the agony of physical and mental torture and in the face of execution and death. Stretch out your hands in power to break their chains. Be merciful to the oppressor and torturer and place a new heart within them. Forgive all injustices in our lives and transform us to be instruments of your peace, for by your wounds we are healed.

from Amnesty International

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Judge of all the world – of every person and every action – give wisdom and compassion to the Supreme Court and to all judges and magistrates who are the last bastion of hope for true justice and protection of the powerless and innocent against laws based on greed, ego, and power-hunger. Let each case brought to the courts be decided based on what is true, good, Constitutional. Protect your children through the actions of those who have the power of righteousness and right. May your loving will be honored in each decision.
Amen

My eyes fast – from glancing at what I should not – vowing to bring compassion to my glances.

My ears fast – from listening to what I should not – vowing to listen beautifully and patiently to those around me.

My tongue fasts – from speaking unkind words, from gossiping – vowing to speak words of love, words of tenderness.

My touch fasts – from a touch that would grab and desire to possess – vowing instead to bring comfort.

My heart fasts – from anger, lust, greed – vowing to be a seat for God's breath, Divine spirit.

May this fast be blessed for all who fast and cannot fast.

Omid Safi Krista Tippett's interview with Muslims from around the world on their experience of Ramadan. On Being, May 14, 2020.

Fast from judging others; feast on the Christ dwelling in them.

Fast from emphasis on difference; feast on what we hold in common.

Fast from apparent darkness; feast on the reality of light.

Fast from thoughts of illness; feast on the healing power of God.

Fast from words that divide; feast on phrases that reconcile.

Fast from discontent; feast on gratitude.

Fast from anger; feast on patience.

Fast from pessimism; feast on optimism

Fast from worry; feast on God's love.

Fast from complaining; feast on appreciation.

Fast from unrelenting pressure; feast on unceasing prayers.

Fast from bitterness; feast on forgiveness.

Fast from self-concern; feast on compassion for others.

Fast from personal anxiety; feast on eternal truth.

Fast from discouragement; feast on hope.

Fast from laziness; feast on enthusiasm.

Fast from suspicion; feast on truth.

Fast from thoughts that weaken; feast on promises that inspire.

Fast from idle gossip; feast on purposeful silence.

Fast from problems that overwhelm; feast on prayer that sustains life.

We Dare to Say: Praying for Justice and Peace, (eds. Sylvia Skrepichuk & Michel Cote)

Source: Washington National Cathedral, March 5, 2025

Prayer for ICE

O God, forgive me.

Hatred is welling up in my heart
against those who, hiding behind masks,
viciously terrorize and abduct people
who have only sought safety and freedom
in our country – this country
which is supposed to be
a place of welcome and refuge.

Help me to see and pray truly for
the human beings behind the masks,
whose hearts beat behind body armor,
seemingly without the compassion which
you planted in them from the beginning.

Holy Spirit, pray through me for those who,
when this nightmare ends will say,
“I was following orders”.
Pray through me for guards in concentration camps.
Pray through me for those whose orders they follow.
Pray through me and in me that I might
honestly confront
my own capacity to do evil.
Help me to see clearly,
so that I might pray truly for those I’d rather judge,
with the compassion I now lack,
which you planted in me from the beginning.

Open all of our eyes.
Open all of our hearts.
That we might truly see you in every other human being
and act accordingly.

May it be so, through the love of Christ our Lord.

Prayer for the President and his followers

God Who Is Love,
In your compassion,
Have mercy on and
bless the President of the United States
and all of his followers.
Bless them with the grace of humility;
 the vision to know when they are wrong.
Bless them with the desire to choose what is best
 for those who need it most.
Bless them with the grace of shame;
 the will to change destructive choices.
Bless them with the grace of courage;
 to turn back from harmful practices and policies.
Bless them with the grace of sacred servanthood
 that sets them free to help those most in need.
Bless them with the grace of loneliness;
 holy emptiness that only you can fill.
Bless them with the grace of wisdom;
 that fills them with hunger for your vulnerable love.

And, oh loving and forgiving God,
Bless us with willingness to stand up against what is wrong
 yet pray for those who do wrong,
 leaving judgment to you.
Bless us also with the gifts we ask for them,
 and have mercy on us,
 that we might grow in love and become more open
 channels of your compassion for all.

To Start a Day of Fasting Together

Each person offers one sentence in turn.

O God who is with us, enduring the evil we inflict on each other, we grieve, feeling helpless to stop irrational, inhumane treatment of immigrants and their children.

We grieve for those in Gaza, in Ukraine, in so many places of heartless war, terrorism, and violence.

We are angry that basic human rights have been stolen, that too many in power viciously, coldly, without care for those they afflict, enact unjust policy.

We fear for our planet – this beautiful world you gave us as our home to care for.

We have felt helpless to make a difference, as the juggernaut of hatred and shameless destruction shatters lives.

But we can pray.

We pray for those thrown into hellhole detention centers for no reason other than dark skin and different accents.

We pray for those sent randomly to countries where they are strangers.

We pray for those living in fear, hiding, desperate, wanting only to live, to work, to love.

We pray for those who do not know if they will ever again see their loved ones, for those who have been violently disappeared.

We pray for those enacting gross injustice and careless evil, that their consciences will ache in agony until they repent, acknowledge and act on the sacred value of every human being they are harming.

We pray for ourselves, that we will not allow ourselves to be numbed to the nightmare that our country is becoming.

We offer our fast to you as prayer for your love to heal these horrors.

We offer our time, our hunger, our yearnings for all of your children to live unafraid, together. Lead us through this day of fasting and prayer for the sake of your love for everyone. Amen

Litany

Loving God, you feed us with yourself,
*Strengthen us as we offer ourselves through this
fast.*

Thank you that we have the freedom to choose
to fast from our treasured comforts.

Thank you for the privilege of feeling pain, anger, anguish
that keeps us from closing our eyes to evil.

Thank you for the privilege of prayer,
enhanced and strengthened by this fast we offer.

Thank you for the grace of humility,
*that will help us turn to you when tempted to take
back what we have chosen to offer.*

May the prayer we offer bring deeper wisdom,
as we seek an end to injustice, to violence, to deliberate cruelty.

May the prayer we offer show us how best to act,
*as we join ourselves to others standing for love,
kindness, compassionate justice.*

May we learn to pray honestly for those who authorize and commit acts of evil:
for they, too, are your children.

May we release to you our judgment against those who think differently than we do,
whose actions horrify us:
for we, too, need compassion, mercy, prayer.

Leader

God who is love, help us to know your presence with us as we offer this fast and prayer to
you, on behalf of those in deepest need. Amen.

Litany to End a Fast

Loving God, thank you for the privilege of intercession. Thank you for the luxury of plenty: plenty to eat, plentiful comforts, plentiful choices. Thank you for the ability to offer sacrifice and for being with us throughout the day. Thank you that you receive and make use of even our feeblest offerings in ways we cannot imagine.

And so we pray:

O God, Creator, source of life, love, and hope,
O Jesus Christ, revealing the way of costly compassion,
O Holy Spirit, empowering and guiding us to act,
O Holy Trinity, One God, revealing our call to be love together,

Guide us.

We hold before you the struggles and needs of your children.

To those who make policies which harm others,
To those who let their greed, pride, and hunger for power destroy
their empathy and humanity,
To those who carry out inhumane policies with careless cruelty,
To those insatiably destroying our planet for profit,
To us as we benefit from evil done on our behalf,

Give conscience
and compassion.

In your holy justice,
Receive our prayers

On those imprisoned without cause,
On those dying of starvation,
On those trafficked for slavery and sexual exploitation,
On those living in terror as bombs and rockets explode and
destroy their homes and hopes,
On those suffering due to their religion, their race, or place of origin,

Give hope and
endurance.

In your grace and mercy,
Receive our prayers

To those working for justice,
To those struggling to get humanitarian aid to those most in need,
To those who risk their lives and livelihoods working against
inhumane policies,
To those ordered to act against their consciences,
To those speaking truth to power ,

Give courage
and strength.

In the hope you give us,
Receive our prayers.

To those working to keep our planet livable for all your creatures,
To those protecting animals in danger of extinction,
To those giving themselves to the restoration of habitat,
To those cleaning trash from the oceans,
To those seeking answers in science and in prayer,

Give wisdom
and knowledge.

In your wisdom,
Receive our prayers.

To those speaking out on behalf of others,
To those seeking ways to help as they are able,
To those who show up at protests in support of justice,
To those who give what they can,
To those who grieve and pray from their hearts,

Give insight
and guidance.

In your tender compassion,
Receive our prayers.

In your love for all your children,
Protect your prophets; all who are working for good.

For your loving kindness, mercy, and costly forgiveness,
We thank you.

On behalf of all who do not know their need we pray:
Our Father in Heaven and deliver us from evil.

Indeed, our hearts rejoice in you;
for in your holy Name we put our trust.
Let your loving-kindness O God, be upon us;
as we have put our trust in you. Amen.

Notes and Other Resources

