

GLORY TO THE FATHER

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning,
is now,
and will be for ever. Amen.

GLORIA AL PADRE

Gloria al Padre,
y al Hijo,
y al Espíritu Santo.
Como era en el principio,
ahora y siempre,
por los siglos de los siglos. Amén.

MORNING CANTICLE (Zechariah—*Benedictus*)

Luke 1:68-79

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed
them.

He has raised up a mighty savior for us
in the house of his servant David,
as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from
of old,
that we would be saved from our enemies and from
the hand of all who hate us.

Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,
to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our
enemies,

might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness
before him all our days.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.

By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of
death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.

EVENING CANTICLE (Mary—*Magnificat*)

Luke 1:47-55

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;
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.

He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.

NIGHT CANTICLE (Simeon—*Nunc Dimittis*)

Luke 2:29-32

Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

PADRE NUESTRO

Padre nuestro, que estás en el cielo,
santificado sea tu nombre;
venga a nosotros tu reino;
hágase tu voluntad en la tierra como en el cielo.
Danos hoy nuestro pan de cada día;
perdona nuestras ofensas,
como también nosotros perdonamos
a los que nos ofenden;
no nos dejes caer en la tentación, y líbranos del mal.
Amén.

JUST PRAYER

JUST PRAYER

A BOOK OF HOURS FOR PEACEMAKERS
AND JUSTICE SEEKERS

Alison M. Benders



LITURGICAL PRESS
Collegeville, Minnesota

www.litpress.org

Cover design by Ann Blattner.

The English translation of Invitatories from *The Liturgy of the Hours* © 1973, 1974, 1975, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation (ICEL); the English translation of Glory to God from *The Roman Missal* © 2010, ICEL. All rights reserved.

English translations of *Magnificat* and *Benedictus* © 1988 English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC). www.englishtexts.org. Used by permission.

Padre Nuestro, Derechos © reservados:
Obra Nacional de la Buena Prensa, A.C.
www.buenaprensa.com
Ciudad de México, México

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible* © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

© 2015 by Order of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, by print, microfilm, microfiche, mechanical recording, photocopying, translation, or by any other means, known or yet unknown, for any purpose except brief quotations in reviews, without the previous written permission of Liturgical Press, Saint John's Abbey, PO Box 7500, Collegeville, Minnesota 56321-7500. Printed in the United States of America.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Benders, Alison M.

Just prayer : a book of hours for peacemakers and justice seekers /

Alison M. Benders.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-8146-4966-4 — ISBN 978-0-8146-4991-6 (ebook)

1. Prayer—Catholic Church—Study and teaching.
 2. Prayers.
 3. Christianity and justice—Catholic Church.
 4. Bible—Quotations.
- I. Title.

BV214.B47 2015

261.8—dc23

2014041394

To my parents, Pat and Ted Mearns,
who dedicated their lives to the service of justice,
and
To my husband, Larry, for standing by me.

CONTENTS

Introduction xv

Week 1 JUSTICE ORDAINED

Recognizing God's Command to Live Justly 1

Week 2 INJUSTICE LAMENTED

Standing with Those Who Suffer Injustice 47

Week 3 JUSTICE PRACTICED

Claiming Our Responsibility to Establish Justice 93

Week 4 JUSTICE CELEBRATED

Celebrating God's Justice and the Promise of Peace 139

Choosing Justice 184

Selected Bibliography 187

INTRODUCTION

*Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them . . .
Take away from me the noise of your songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.
But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.* (Amos 5:22-24)

Justice anchors our faith. It reaches back to the Torah and resonates through the Christian Scriptures. Justice grounds Western civilization. It provides the foundation for all communities and societies across our planet. Justice expresses the deepest longing of the human heart. Justice reveals the eternal nature of God.

The covenant between God and the Hebrew people marked a fundamental shift in religious practice, known as the axial age. The development marked a breathtaking moment for human consciousness. In the Abrahamic traditions, believers shifted from worshiping God to appease him to acting justly as a form of worship. In the verses above from the prophet Amos, we hear God rejecting piety and, in its stead, establishing justice as the measure of faithfulness. God demands that people act as God acts—with mercy, compassion, and love to create a world of peaceful human flourishing.

We hear God's clear command to the Israelites: "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue" (Deut 16:20). Likewise, Jesus' admonishment to his disciples recapitulates the whole of the Torah: "Love God and love your neighbor as yourself." Love and justice

are inseparable because love, when it comes alive in our actions, is justice.

Justice

Often we hear the word “justice” and think of it as fairness. Fairness means following rules impartially, giving each person what is due. Yet justice is more than fairness. To understand justice, we have to move beyond autonomous individualism—away from the mentality of “what’s in it for me?” This quid-pro-quo orientation is completely foreign to the Judeo-Christian meaning of justice. Justice is best understood as right relationship among people who live together.

In the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, justice anchors human beings within their communities. Justice describes a communal life where each person flourishes, where each person is able to express his or her own human dignity. Justice has several dimensions when we actually practice it in our daily lives. *Commutative justice* seeks fairness as between individuals. People who are similarly situated should be treated similarly. *Distributive justice* allocates goods and burdens, rights and responsibilities, among community members. It recognizes that human beings are entitled to share in the bounty of creation. It also assures that those who reap benefits bear the costs, and those who build up society through their labor reap their share of the benefits. Finally, *contributive justice* concerns people’s rights and duties to contribute to society. Contributive justice ensures that people can participate meaningfully to the structures and laws that govern their lives. Think here about the right to vote or the right to education, both of which are essential for self-determination. Thus, justice encompasses all the dimensions of human society. In our

individually oriented culture, we can misunderstand justice to mean the protection of individual liberties. We need to begin thinking in terms of systems and institutions. Justice focuses on how we treat people, how we share benefits and responsibilities, and how we assure that everyone sits at the table.

Justice, then, is about community life. Individuals and the community are complementary. Our human community is an economic reality, certainly. Yet it is even more a spiritual, psychological, political, and physical reality. Every day we depend on other human beings to live. We do nothing and have nothing in isolation from those who grow our food, make our clothes, share our cities, and breathe the air with us. Not just in theory—but really and truly—we are one human family bound together in creation with a shared destiny. In seeking justice, we must remember that just relationships promote the well-being of the individual person within the community. It is true that “all boats rise together.” The moral challenge to each of us is to create a new identity where we know ourselves as bound to others in relationship with them, rather than in competition against them. When our good is linked with that of other people and with the whole community, we will choose more just solutions for the common good.

So how can we tell if our actions are truly leading toward justice? How can we tell if we are having an impact? Measuring justice in a community means examining the lives of the poorest and most marginalized from their perspective. Clearly, we understand the unjust conditions that permeate our communities when we have experienced them, either as victims or in service to those who suffer directly. Direct experience gives us a powerful understanding of painful suffering. We can also listen to people who entreat us for justice. We can look with them into their lives to

understand whether justice is retreating or advancing. What are the prospects for women, for immigrants, for those who have no money or no power? Are opportunities for education, jobs, and health care really organized to support better lives for people, or do these services alleviate suffering only temporarily? In the final accounting, the lives of all people taken together are the measure of justice, especially the *anawim*, the least among us.

Prayer

In our troubled times, the sight of suffering moves our hearts. And so it should. We owe compassion to refugees, the impoverished, orphans, and all who suffer exclusion and oppression. More than that, we owe our fellow human beings just communities and peaceful places to live. Yet changing our habits and beliefs requires more than a sympathetic feeling. Change means more than charity and occasional service. Two strands of practice must intersect in us to establish justice for permanent change. First and obviously, we have to create relationships, institutions, and communities ruled by just practices. Second, and perhaps equally obvious, we need to change ourselves.

For meaningful personal change, we have to link our experiences of human suffering with God's revealed justice. Prayer—moved by God's own Spirit of Peace—is the link. *Just Prayer* seeks to offer a path to connect action and transformation through devotions focused on justice—just prayer. Prayer is more than petition. Prayer is relationship with God. Praying draws us into the love of God. It sustains our work and our growth to become more like God in our thoughts and actions. Through reflection, repetition, practice, and, of course, grace, we conform our minds and hearts to the justice that expresses God's promise of peace.

We also pray because prayer brings us into God's heart just as it did for Jesus. From the moment of Jesus' conception, with Mary's prayerful yes to God's will, to his last words commending his spirit to the Father, Jesus prayed. Jesus retreated in quiet prayer every morning to draw strength from God for the day's work ahead. He prayed the ancient blessing at meals, recognizing that our lives are a gift: "Blessed are you, God of all creation." Jesus prayed over the few fishes and the small loaves before he fed the thousands who listened to his teaching. He prayed before calling Lazarus out of the tomb. With the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught his disciples to pray to God daily for all their needs. Most importantly, he instructed them, "Pray always." Thus, we pray because Jesus told us to do so, confident that prayer transforms us.

Just Prayer conforms to the most traditional rhythms of Judeo-Christian worship. It is carefully patterned on the Christian community's ageless Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office. The Christian practices, in their turn, draw upon the ancient practice among Jews to pray the psalms. The individual Offices, from dawn through night, are consecrated with psalms, canticles, and readings from Scriptures. Customarily, the Divine Office will include Scripture passages and petitions relevant to the liturgical year. Communities of monks generally recited the Offices together, but the Hours can also be prayed silently or aloud as an individual spiritual practice.

In this revered tradition, *Just Prayer* presents a four-week cycle of morning and evening prayer reflecting on themes of justice, or its absence. The morning and evening Offices select compelling Scripture passages that call us into the life of God. Individual days focus on pressing problems around the globe, such as poverty, violence, or environmental degradation. The Offices present Scripture readings, reflections, and prayers that complement active service

in the world. While the intercessions offer traditional petitions for God's direct blessing on those in need, they more often focus our attention on personal transformation and systemic change. Whatever our level of service, these morning and evening devotions draw our experiences and emotions together into prayerful reflection. By complementing our works of service in the community, *Just Prayer* can help us conform our hearts and our lives to the Christian vision of justice. Over a series of days or weeks, the cycle of carefully selected texts allows us to experience, understand, desire, practice, and celebrate justice. As the Divine Office has always done, *Just Prayer* can help us to respond more fully to the vision of a just community that God has set before us.

Just Prayer

Just Prayer expresses four biblical themes related to justice and injustice, as we experience them in our lives. The cycle weaves together feelings and images that lead us from resisting justice to celebrating its promised triumph.

1. *Justice Ordained*: The first week's readings and prayers proclaim that God has established justice as the fundamental relationship among people. The readings also recognize that people resist living justly; they call out the suffering this can cause.
2. *Injustice Lamented*: The second week's prayers invite us to grieve with the misery of others. The readings allow us to lament with suffering victims, acknowledging their weariness and hopelessness. Lamentation echoes the weeping of the people of Israel in exile from their land. It voices the plight of marginalized people around the globe.

3. *Justice Practiced*: The third week's focus on practicing justice begins the journey toward reducing and eliminating injustice. Its images focus on forgiveness, reconciliation, and transformation. This week encourages us to recognize how we have failed to live in community and how we might build more just relationships among people in our world.
4. *Justice Celebrated*: The theme for the fourth and final week celebrates justice. In our current society, justice is more aspirational than achieved; it is a hope, not yet a fact. Still, the readings thrill with the image of a new community, the reign of God, where God's promised justice will be the heart of our human lives together.

The four weeks of morning and evening Offices promote intentional change. In praying through these themes, we move from knowing God's command to live justly, through sharing the misery of injustice to reconciliation and a renewed commitment to justice, to celebrating finally God's promise of a new order. Through emotional engagement, complemented by daily reflection on our experiences and current events, we can become more deeply and personally committed to justice. The Offices in *Just Prayer* presuppose that people praying this cycle are actively engaged in service or ministry, although anyone living attentively in the world cannot fail to see the injustices around us. Both practical experience and thoughtful reflection give human faces to the consequences of our sin. However, the cycle does not end with shame or what we have failed to do. Rather, the final weeks bring us through recommitment and renewal to joy and thanksgiving. We are grateful for God's grace, which redeems us through Christ. In the hope and promise of justice, we pray together for our human communities now and for the generations to come.

Using *Just Prayer*

Very practically, using *Just Prayer* means two things. We can think first about the quality of the prayer. The power of the Liturgy of the Hours lies in the ancient rhythms of give and take, call and response, and above all in repetition. Like a song whose notes must ring according to the measure and beat of the lyrics, the words of the psalms flow in poetic meter. The pacing during the Office should be reflective and measured. Groups praying the Offices out loud should resist the urge to rush to the end. Instead, the morning and evening prayer should be allowed to seep slowly into our hearts and shape our lives. The repeated verses and rituals give us words and images to shape our lives even after the cycle is finished. People praying these Offices may choose to stick with the basic cycle because repetition often brings deeper insight and lasting impact, or may choose their own readings to highlight particular perspectives.

More specifically, there are four seven-day cycles of morning and evening Offices, one cycle in each chapter. Each chapter begins and ends with a brief reflection on the weekly theme. These essays explain the theme, underline a few of the key ideas in the readings, and provide questions for deeper reflection. Customarily, the Office is prayed with the assistance of a leader and two alternating groups or choirs. Much of the advice below presumes a group setting. However, the Offices can always be prayed alone, with our hearts joined to people around the globe who are also praying the Divine Office.

- *Opening greeting:* The leader calls the group to attention and opens the prayer. To begin the Office, groups might develop their own opening gesture, such as signing the cross, ringing a bell, or sitting still for several calming breaths.

- *Invitatory couplets*: All the Offices begin by inviting the presence of the Spirit. Here, each starts with the couplet, “Lord, teach us justice. / And we shall live in your peace.” At the start of the Office, the couplet opens our hearts to God’s grace and offers our work for the good of all. The justice/peace couplet replaces the traditional morning verse, “Lord, open my lips. / And my mouth will proclaim your praise,” and evening verse, “God, come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me.” These verses might be substituted to remain faithful to the traditional Office. Repeating the couplet morning, evening, and throughout the day as an act of prayer refocuses our hearts and actions.
- *Psalm*: The morning and evening devotions open with a single psalm voicing the emotions and concerns of the weekly theme. At the beginning of the psalm, the response (designated by **R**) summarizes the intention for the week; the verse remains the same for the whole week. The psalm should be recited together by groups and even out loud when we are alone. Large groups can be split into two choirs to alternate reading aloud. They can recite the psalm response after each psalm paragraph or wait until the end, using the response to summarize the meaning of the psalm. After the last verse of the psalm, the group recites the doxology (prayer of praise), “Glory to the Father.” The text of this prayer is set forth in both English and Spanish at the front and back of this book.
- *Reading*: One person can be appointed to read the Scripture passage, from the Hebrew Scriptures in the morning and the Gospels in the evening. The readings highlight Judeo-Christian teachings on justice and show how justice can be

practiced. The readings can be customized by substituting alternative Scripture passages from Christianity or any other religious tradition. Groups might also consider essays, reflections, homilies, or poems that suit their work, concerns, or culture.

- *Silent reflection*: The evening prayer cycle establishes a moment of silent reflection after the gospel. While the traditional format for the Liturgy of the Hours does not include a homily or sermon, depending upon the size and purpose of the gathering, someone might offer a brief reflection on the readings of the day.
- *Optional canticles*: The traditional morning Office includes the Cantic of Zechariah and the evening Office has the Cantic of Mary, also known as the *Magnificat*. These have been omitted from the daily Offices in *Just Prayer*, but the texts of these canticles are reprinted at the front and back of this book for people who desire to pray them regularly. These canticles are usually prayed after the Scripture passages and before the intercessions. The Cantic of Simeon, customarily recited as part of the night Office just before retiring, is also included to complete the cycle of the Hours, as an optional private devotion.
- *Intercessions*: Intercessions follow immediately after the readings in the morning and after the reflection in the evening. Groups may pray the suggested petitions or personalize them according to their experiences during the day. The petitions allow a moment to add individual names and needs offered to God's special care. After each individual petition, the group responds with the verses provided or with "Lord, hear our prayer."

- *The Lord's Prayer*: The Lord's Prayer (Our Father) signals the closing sequence as participants place themselves in the presence of God and acknowledge God's will. The text of the Lord's Prayer in English and Spanish is printed at the front and back of this prayer book.
- *Sharing of Peace*: All of the devotions end with the sharing of peace. Like many elements of the Liturgy of the Hours and the Christian Mass, the sharing of peace finds its roots in the Hebrew greeting "shalom." The leader might initiate the sharing of peace with an invitation such as, "Let us offer a gesture of peace, of God's shalom, to one another." Groups ought to share the peace of God with each other according to their own community customs. When we pray the Offices alone, we can offer peace to others from the silence of our hearts.
- *Closing Prayer*: After sharing peace, the leader or another participant will offer the closing prayer, or final blessing, to send people to work or to their nightly rest. The closing prayers in each section collect the ideas from the week and the daily theme into a petition for special attention.

According to the Christian custom, every weekly cycle begins with Sunday morning. The full cycle imitates the rhythms of a workweek and the moods of morning and evening as it builds toward fuller meaning with the approach of Saturday evening. Thus, whether groups are on retreat for only a weekend or for a week or more, the prayer cycle moves emotionally and prayerfully to culminate in the weekend Offices. Friday remains a day of repentance in every thematic cycle, honoring Christ's death on Good Friday. There are many choices to customize the Offices:

One week retreat:

- Select the most relevant theme and pray the days as scheduled.
- Pray Sunday morning and evening for weeks 1, 2, and 3, then pray morning and evening on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday for week 4.

One long weekend retreat:

- Use morning and evening Offices from the Sunday of each of the four weeks.

One day retreat:

- Select the most relevant theme and then use Friday, Saturday, or Sunday prayer.

Lent:

- Ash Wednesday through the fourth week of Lent, use weeks 1–4 of *Just Prayer*.
- Fifth week of Lent, use either week 1 (*Justice Ordained*) or week 2 (*Injustice Lamented*).
- Holy Week
 - Monday through Good Friday, use the corresponding days of week 3 (*Justice Practiced*).
 - Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday, use the corresponding days of week 4 (*Justice Celebrated*).

Thematically—to focus on a particular area of need, select a day from each week, as follows:

- Sundays—poverty and want of any sort
- Mondays—war and violence

- Tuesdays—immigration and refugees
- Wednesdays—environment and climate health
- Thursdays—human health and well-being
- Fridays—justice for women and children
- Saturdays—inequality between social, economic, racial, religious, ethnic, and gender classes

Any Office can be customized with additional readings on social issues, with hymns or music, and with litanies that the participants write. The bibliography offers resources for prayers and additional reading on social justice. Repetition and variety both have their places in prayer. What matters most is persistence if we are to open ourselves fully to God's grace.

Hope for Justice and Peace

Isaiah's words still call us today: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, / and their spears into pruning hooks; / nation shall not lift up sword against nation, / neither shall they learn war any more" (2:4). Certainly we must strive for justice, whether that is in our home communities or in areas of desolation and strife. We must beat our swords into plowshares, our spears into pruning hooks. So, above all, we—we ourselves—must practice the ways of justice and peace. Yet the great struggle is the internal one . . . the struggle to become perfect justice as our God is perfect justice. *Just Prayer* will support the transforming work of justice and peace.

WEEK 1

JUSTICE ORDAINED

RECOGNIZING GOD'S COMMAND TO LIVE JUSTLY

All human societies have longed for justice as the foundation of a peaceful life. Justice means that people are fed and secure in their homes. It means that they are free to seek a good life, and are able to love and long for God. God ordains justice. As Isaiah declares, “Is [the Lord’s command] not to share your bread with the hungry, / and bring the homeless poor into your house; / when you see the naked, to cover them, / and not to hide yourself from your own kin?” (58:7). God commands us to be just as the most authentic way to live together. This command is not foreign or strange. We find justice commanded both in Scripture and in our hearts as our deepest longing. Just action expresses the very nature of God that we share as God’s children.

God’s just command is as old as civilization, yet we must hear it over and over again until we become transformed into just people. The readings for this week help us cultivate justice in our hearts and actions. Overall, they highlight God’s command to live justly, which is drawn from the psalms and other Hebrew texts. We hear the voices of the great prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, who call the people to amend their ways and live righteously. We hear how sweet God’s law is; the covenant celebrated in the book of Deuteronomy expresses both God’s nature and our desire for a world that makes sense. The readings also give us examples

2 *Week 1*

of justice in the Christian gospels. We hear Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, using the kingdom of God as the image for the just human community. We also listen to his followers debate the question of justice with him. Many of the readings link just action with God's favor and reward. This reward is not for ourselves only, but is shared with our neighbors and community because justice yields peace.

The psalm response for this week, "People who practice justice, walk in the light of God," hearkens back to Isaiah and the great prophets. It reminds us that God ordains justice, while also intimating that the consequence of justice is peace. Repeated daily, the verse provides us with a ready adage to focus our thoughts and prayers on God's fundamental command. It also recapitulates the witness of Christ's life, as the one who lived God's justice perfectly. The intercessions invite us to recognize that justice is both God's command and the path to a flourishing community. As we pray throughout the week, we can reflect on how we hear and respond to God's command to live with justice.

SUNDAY MORNING



Lord, teach us justice.
And we shall live in your peace.

PSALM 50:1-2, 4-8, 14-15

R⁷ People who practice justice, walk in the light of God.

The mighty one, God the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.
Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth. . . .

He calls to the heavens above
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:
“Gather to me my faithful ones,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!”
The heavens declare his righteousness,
for God himself is judge.

“Hear, O my people, and I will speak,
O Israel, I will testify against you.
I am God, your God.
Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you;
your burnt offerings are continually before me. . . .

4 *Week 1*

“Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,
and pay your vows to the Most High.
Call on me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE Isaiah 58:7-10

Is [the Lord's command] not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.
If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

The Word of the Lord.

INTERCESSIONS

Spirit of Hope, your creation offers sustenance to satisfy all our needs and you command us to care for all people as our neighbors. Yet so many people in the world live in poverty. So we pray

today for people who suffer from scarcity and need: *Lord, open our hearts to the poor among us.*

- Rouse us to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, and protect those sickened through deprivation. We pray to the Lord.
- Bless those who work for the elimination of economic injustice and let their work prosper. We pray to the Lord.
- Transform our hearts today to become more compassionate and generous to children, women, and men who are living in need. We pray to the Lord.
- For what else shall we pray this morning? [Pause for participants to add their own intentions.] We pray to the Lord.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With these petitions in our hearts, we pray as the Lord taught us:
Our Father . . .

SHARING OF PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

May the God of Abundance bless the work of our hands today. May God bring justice and plenty into the lives of people near and far. We ask this in Christ's name. AMEN.

SUNDAY EVENING



Lord, teach us justice.
And we shall live in your peace.

PSALM 81:8-14, 16

℟ People who practice justice, walk in the light of God.

“Hear, O my people, while I admonish you;
O Israel, if you would but listen to me!
There shall be no strange god among you;
you shall not bow down to a foreign god.

I am the LORD your God,
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.
Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.

“But my people did not listen to my voice;
Israel would not submit to me.
So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,
to follow their own counsels.
O that my people would listen to me,
that Israel would walk in my ways!
Then I would quickly subdue their enemies,
and turn my hand against their foes. . . .

I would feed you with the finest of the wheat,
and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

‘Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Gospel of the Lord.

SILENT REFLECTION

INTERCESSIONS

Spirit of Hope, we witness the tragedy poverty visits upon your people. Pour your compassion into our hearts so we will use our plenty to eliminate poverty and its miseries from the lives of others. And so we pray: *Lord, open our hearts to the poor among us.*

8 *Week 1*

- Move us to share your abundant blessings more justly among all nations and all people. We pray to the Lord.
- Inspire leaders in every community to recognize the plight of the poor and respond with solutions that are just, dignified, and permanent. We pray to the Lord.
- For people whose lives are narrowed by the struggle for daily needs, especially for [pause for participants to add individual names or needs]. We pray to the Lord.
- For what else shall we pray because of our experiences today? [Pause for participants to add their own intentions.] We pray to the Lord.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With these petitions in our hearts, we pray as the Lord taught us:

Our Father . . .

SHARING OF PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

May the God of Abundance grant us the wisdom of Christ to practice justice and the grace of the Holy Spirit to persist until we succeed. AMEN.

MONDAY MORNING



Lord, teach us justice.
And we shall live in your peace.

PSALM 37:1-6, 8, 18-19, 23-24

℞ People who practice justice, walk in the light of God.

Do not fret because of the wicked;
do not be envious of wrongdoers,
for they will soon fade like the grass,
and wither like the green herb.

Trust in the LORD, and do good;
so you will live in the land, and enjoy security.
Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him, and he will act.
He will make your vindication shine like the light,
and the justice of your cause like the noonday. . . .
Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath.
Do not fret—it leads only to evil. . . .

The LORD knows the days of the blameless,
and their heritage will abide forever;

they are not put to shame in evil times,
in the days of famine they have abundance. . . .

Our steps are made firm by the LORD,
when he delights in our way;
though we stumble, we shall not fall headlong,
for the LORD holds us by the hand.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE Sirach 15:14-20

It was [the Lord] who created humankind in the beginning,
and he left them in the power of their own free choice.

If you choose, you can keep the commandments,
and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice.

He has placed before you fire and water;
stretch out your hand for whichever you choose.

Before each person are life and death,
and whichever one chooses will be given.

For great is the wisdom of the Lord;
he is mighty in power and sees everything;

his eyes are on those who fear him,
and he knows every human action.

He has not commanded anyone to be wicked,
and he has not given anyone permission to sin.

The Word of the Lord.

INTERCESSIONS

God of Mercy, your son Jesus Christ taught us the way of peace and compassion, which you ordained from the foundation of the world. Still, the daily conflicts and the unending wars in our world expose our failure to follow his example. And so we pray today for peace in our hearts and in our world: *Lord, may peace reign in our hearts and in our lives.*

- Heal the bodies and spirits of victims of war, aggression, and violence of any kind. We pray to the Lord.
- Bless and multiply the efforts of peacekeepers, mediators, intercessors, and healers to end violence and restore security. We pray to the Lord.
- Teach all people of goodwill to resolve their differences peacefully. We pray to the Lord.
- For what else shall we pray this morning? [Pause for participants to add their own intentions.] We pray to the Lord.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With these petitions in our hearts, we pray as the Lord taught us:
Our Father . . .

SHARING OF PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

May the God of Peace bless the work of our hands today and through our actions bring greater tranquility and security into the world. We ask this in Christ's name. AMEN.

MONDAY EVENING



Lord, teach us justice.
And we shall live in your peace.

PSALM 26:1-8

℟ People who practice justice, walk in the light of God.

Vindicate me, O LORD,
for I have walked in my integrity,
and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.
Prove me, O LORD, and try me;
test my heart and mind.
For your steadfast love is before my eyes,
and I walk in faithfulness to you.

I do not sit with the worthless,
nor do I consort with hypocrites;
I hate the company of evildoers,
and will not sit with the wicked.

I wash my hands in innocence,
and go around your altar, O LORD,
singing aloud a song of thanksgiving,
and telling all your wondrous deeds.

O LORD, I love the house in which you dwell,
and the place where your glory abides.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE Mark 12:28-34

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that [Jesus] answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; and ‘to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself,—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask him any question.

The Gospel of the Lord.

SILENT REFLECTION

INTERCESSIONS

Spirit of Mercy, we have witnessed how violence of all kinds diminishes and distorts human lives. Only gentleness, humility, and mercy will repair our stricken world. And so we pray: *Lord, may peace reign in our hearts and in our lives.*

- Console families who have lost children, parents, friends, and loved ones to violence. We pray to the Lord.

14 *Week 1*

- Grant us the courage to examine our lives and repair the violence we have inflicted on others. We pray to the Lord.
- Restore security to all communities in our world that are not safe and protect the lives of the residents, especially [pause for participants to add individual names or needs]. We pray to the Lord.
- For what else shall we pray because of our experiences today? [Pause for participants to add their own intentions.] We pray to the Lord.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With these petitions in our hearts, we pray as the Lord taught us:
Our Father . . .

SHARING OF PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

May the God of Peace enable us to stand by those who suffer violence and to work for a new order based on justice and goodwill. We ask in Christ's name. AMEN.

TUESDAY MORNING



Lord, teach us justice.
And we shall live in your peace.

PSALM 112:1-9

℞ People who practice justice, walk in the light of God.

Praise the LORD!

Happy are those who fear the LORD,
who greatly delight in his commandments.
Their descendants will be mighty in the land;
the generation of the upright will be blessed.
Wealth and riches are in their houses,
and their righteousness endures forever.
They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright;
they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.
It is well with those who deal generously and lend,
who conduct their affairs with justice.
For the righteous will never be moved;
they will be remembered forever.
They are not afraid of evil tidings;
their hearts are firm, secure in the LORD.
Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid . . .

They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever;
their horn is exalted in honor.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE Deuteronomy 24:14-15, 17, 19

You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt. . . .

You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge. . . .

When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings.

The Word of the Lord.

INTERCESSIONS

God for Others, your prophets throughout the ages have exhorted us to welcome strangers and travelers into our communities. Immigrants and refugees need welcome more than ever in our global society. So we pray today for the unity of all humanity: *Lord, teach us to welcome each person who comes to us in need.*

- Bless immigrants and refugees with welcoming and safe neighbors. We pray to the Lord.
- Assist people fleeing violence in their communities to find the resources they need to restore and rebuild their lives. We pray to the Lord.
- Inspire communities of safety and plenty to share their resources generously with people seeking asylum. We pray to the Lord.
- For what else shall we pray this morning? [Pause for participants to add their own intentions.] We pray to the Lord.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With these petitions in our hearts, we pray as the Lord taught us:
Our Father . . .

SHARING OF PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

May the God of Welcome bless the work of our hands today and, through our actions, create communities of goodness and hospitality. We ask this in Christ's name. AMEN.

TUESDAY EVENING



Lord, teach us justice.
And we shall live in your peace.

PSALM 15

R/ People who practice justice, walk in the light of God.

O LORD, who may abide in your tent?
Who may dwell on your holy hill?

Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right,
and speak the truth from their heart;
who do not slander with their tongue,
and do no evil to their friends,
nor take up a reproach against their neighbors;
in whose eyes the wicked are despised,
but who honor those who fear the LORD;
who stand by their oath even to their hurt;
who do not lend money at interest,
and do not take a bribe against the innocent.

Those who do these things shall never be moved.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE Luke 11:33-36

[Jesus spoke to them:] “No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar, but on the lampstand so that those who enter may see the light. Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy,

your whole body is full of light; but if it is not healthy, your body is full of darkness. Therefore consider whether the light in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, with no part of it in darkness, it will be as full of light as when a lamp gives you light with its rays.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

SILENT REFLECTION

INTERCESSIONS

Holy Spirit, we know the heartache of people displaced because of human and natural disasters. Show us how we can offer light and hope to ease their misery. And so we pray: *Lord, teach us to welcome each person who comes to us in need.*

- Give us courage to examine our assumptions about strangers and teach us to recognize them as sisters and brothers of goodwill. We pray to the Lord.
- Rouse leaders of every nation to protect migrant workers and secure for them just wages and fair treatment. We pray to the Lord.
- Reunite immigrants and travelers with their children, parents, friends, and loved ones who have been left behind, especially [pause for participants to add individual names or needs]. We pray to the Lord.
- For what else shall we pray because of our experiences today? [Pause for participants to add their own intentions.] We pray to the Lord.

20 *Week 1*

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With these petitions in our hearts, we pray as the Lord taught us:

Our Father . . .

SHARING OF PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

May the God of Welcome fill our hearts with the hospitality, warmth, and tenderness that is necessary to sustain one human family worldwide. We ask in Christ's name. AMEN.

WEDNESDAY MORNING



Lord, teach us justice.
And we shall live in your peace.

PSALM 19:7-11, 14

℞ People who practice justice, walk in the light of God.

The law of the LORD is perfect,
 reviving the soul;
the decrees of the LORD are sure,
 making wise the simple;
the precepts of the LORD are right,
 rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is clear,
 enlightening the eyes;
the fear of the LORD is pure,
 enduring forever;
the ordinances of the LORD are true
 and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold,
 even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey,
 and drippings of the honeycomb.

Moreover by them is your servant warned;
 in keeping them there is great reward. . . .

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE Jeremiah 7:2-7

Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah, you that enter these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD."

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.

The Word of the Lord.

INTERCESSIONS

God of Creation, you have blessed our earth with life and commended it to our care. So we pray today for the wisdom to safeguard the earth for all creatures who call it home: *Wellspring of Life, make us just stewards of the earth and its blessings.*

- Teach us to appreciate the natural world and give us wisdom to protect our planet for future generations. We pray to the Lord.
- Rouse us to urgent action to protect the earth from the impact of our economic activities. We pray to the Lord.
- Make us always grateful for the sun in the day and the moon and stars at night. We pray to the Lord.
- For what else shall we pray this morning? [Pause for participants to add their own intentions.] We pray to the Lord.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With these petitions in our hearts, we pray as the Lord taught us:
Our Father . . .

SHARING OF PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

May the God of Day and Night dwell with us today and, through our actions, bring forth the earth's bounty for all to share. We ask this in Christ's name. AMEN.

WEDNESDAY EVENING



Lord, teach us justice.
And we shall live in your peace.

PSALM 1

℞ People who practice justice, walk in the light of God.

Happy are those

 who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
 or sit in the seat of scoffers;

but their delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and on his law they meditate day and night.

They are like trees

 planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
 and their leaves do not wither.

In all that they do, they prosper.

The wicked are not so,

 but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
 nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
 but the way of the wicked will perish.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE Mark 9:33-37

[Jesus and his disciples] came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” Then [Jesus] took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

SILENT REFLECTION

INTERCESSIONS

Spirit of Creation, you fashioned our world and showered it with beauty beyond telling. Every woman, man, and child depends upon the health and bounty of this planet we call our home. And so we pray: *Wellspring of Life, make us just stewards of the earth and its blessings.*

- Make us grateful for pure water, clean air, and safe soils that give us life. We pray to the Lord.
- Teach us to protect all plants and animals that live on earth and to recognize our human responsibilities as caretakers of creation. We pray to the Lord.
- Safeguard the poor who disproportionately suffer from natural disasters and human pollution, especially [pause for participants to add individual names or needs]. We pray to the Lord.

- For what else shall we pray because of our experiences today?
[Pause for participants to add their own intentions.] We pray to the Lord.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With these petitions in our hearts, we pray as the Lord taught us:

Our Father . . .

SHARING OF PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

May the God of Day and Night heal our world, bestow abundance on our lands, and plant justice in our hearts. We ask in Christ's name. AMEN.

THURSDAY MORNING



Lord, teach us justice.
And we shall live in your peace.

PSALM 78:1-7

℞ People who practice justice, walk in the light of God.

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings from of old,
things that we have heard and known,
that our ancestors have told us.
We will not hide them from their children;
we will tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might,
and the wonders that he has done.

He established a decree in Jacob,
and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our ancestors
to teach to their children;
that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,

and rise up and tell them to their children,
so that they should set their hope in God,
and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE Wisdom 6:12-20

Wisdom is radiant and unfading,
and she is easily discerned by those who love her,
and is found by those who seek her.
She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her.
One who rises early to seek her will have no difficulty,
for she will be found sitting at the gate.
To fix one's thought on her is perfect understanding,
and one who is vigilant on her account will soon be free from
care,
because she goes about seeking those worthy of her,
and she graciously appears to them in their paths,
and meets them in every thought.
The beginning of wisdom is the most sincere desire for instruction,
and concern for instruction is love of her,
and love of her is the keeping of her laws,
and giving heed to her laws is assurance of immortality,
and immortality brings one near to God;
so the desire for wisdom leads to a kingdom.

The Word of the Lord.

INTERCESSIONS

Wellspring of Life, you made us in your image to savor life and health. So we pray today for well-being, strength, and wisdom to pursue your justice in the world: *Just Lord, heal our troubled world and grant us peace.*

- Heal people who suffer from diseases and injuries of mind, body, and spirit. We pray to the Lord.
- Welcome into the joy of your eternal life those who will die today. We pray to the Lord.
- Bless those who minister to the sick and comfort the dying; grant them overflowing patience and compassion. We pray to the Lord.
- For what else shall we pray this morning? [Pause for participants to add their own intentions.] We pray to the Lord.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With these petitions in our hearts, we pray as the Lord taught us:
Our Father . . .

SHARING OF PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

May God who is Ever-New bless the work of our hands and through our actions bestow well-being upon those we meet today. We ask this in Christ's name. AMEN.

THURSDAY EVENING



Lord, teach us justice.
And we shall live in your peace.

PSALM 119:89-91, 102-105, 111-112

℞ People who practice justice, walk in the light of God.

The LORD exists forever;
 your word is firmly fixed in heaven.
Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
 you have established the earth, and it stands fast.
By your appointment they stand today,
 for all things are your servants. . . .

I do not turn away from your ordinances,
 for you have taught me.
How sweet are your words to my taste,
 sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through your precepts I receive understanding;
 therefore I hate every false way.
Your word is a lamp to my feet
 and a light to my path. . . .

Your decrees are my heritage forever;
 they are the joy of my heart.
I incline my heart to perform your statutes
 forever, to the end.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE John 21:15-17

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

SILENT REFLECTION

INTERCESSIONS

Life-giving Spirit, we are one people, yet divided by discord, illness, and fear, which sicken our lives together. And so we pray for health and well-being: *Just Lord, heal our troubled world and grant us peace.*

- Inspire leaders to secure the fundamental right of all human beings to good health. We pray to the Lord.
- Forgive us for neglecting those who are ailing; grant us healing hands to serve others. We pray to the Lord.
- Alleviate the suffering of those with illnesses of mind, body, or spirit, especially [pause for participants to add individual names or needs]. We pray to the Lord.

- For what else shall we pray because of our experiences today? [Pause for participants to add their own intentions.] We pray to the Lord.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With these petitions in our hearts, we pray as the Lord taught us:

Our Father . . .

SHARING OF PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

May God who is Ever-New lead us into eternal life where all suffering will be wiped away. We ask this in Christ's name. AMEN.

FRIDAY MORNING



Lord, teach us justice.
And we shall live in your peace.

PSALM 119:5-14

R People who practice justice, walk in the light of God.

O that my ways may be steadfast
in keeping your statutes!
Then I shall not be put to shame,
having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.
I will praise you with an upright heart,
when I learn your righteous ordinances.
I will observe your statutes;
do not utterly forsake me.

How can young people keep their way pure?
By guarding it according to your word.
With my whole heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your commandments.
I treasure your word in my heart,
so that I may not sin against you.
Blessed are you, O LORD;
teach me your statutes.
With my lips I declare
all the ordinances of your mouth.

I delight in the way of your decrees
as much as in all riches.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE Sirach 14:20-26; 15:1-4
Happy is the person who meditates on wisdom
and reasons intelligently,
who reflects in his heart on her ways
and ponders her secrets,
pursuing her like a hunter,
and lying in wait on her paths;
who peers through her windows
and listens at her doors;
who camps near her house
and fastens his tent peg to her walls;
who pitches his tent near her,
and so occupies an excellent lodging place;
who places his children under her shelter,
and lodges under her boughs. . . .

[W]hoever holds to the law will obtain wisdom.
She will come to meet him like a mother,
and like a young bride she will welcome him.
She will feed him with the bread of learning,
and give him the water of wisdom to drink.
He will lean on her and not fall,
and he will rely on her and not be put to shame.

The Word of the Lord.

INTERCESSIONS

God of Compassion, Scripture reveals your tender love for us, like a mother who plays with a baby on her knee. Yet our societies often exploit people who have no one to protect them. So we pray today for them, your *anawim*: *Show us your mercy, O Lord.*

- Secure equal rights, responsibilities, and privileges for all women and girls throughout the world. We pray to the Lord.
- Protect the health and well-being of mothers, infants both born and unborn, and all children until their lives become a universal priority for every nation. We pray to the Lord.
- Teach women and men to respect each other as images of God, and to support each other in building just communities. We pray to the Lord.
- For what else shall we pray this morning? [Pause for participants to add their own intentions.] We pray to the Lord.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With these petitions in our hearts, we pray as the Lord taught us:
Our Father . . .

SHARING OF PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

May God our Mother bless the work of our hands today and through our actions bring hope to the marginalized, especially the women and children we meet today. We ask this in Christ's name. AMEN.

FRIDAY EVENING



Lord, teach us justice.
And we shall live in your peace.

PSALM 11

R^v People who practice justice, walk in the light of God.

In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to me,

“Flee like a bird to the mountains;

for look, the wicked bend the bow,

they have fitted their arrow to the string,

to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart.

If the foundations are destroyed,

what can the righteous do?”

The LORD is in his holy temple;

the LORD’s throne is in heaven.

His eyes behold, his gaze examines humankind.

The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked,

and his soul hates the lover of violence.

On the wicked he will rain coals of fire and sulfur;

a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.

For the LORD is righteous;

he loves righteous deeds;

the upright shall behold his face.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE John 4:7-10, 13-15

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." . . . [Then he] said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

The Gospel of the Lord.

SILENT REFLECTION

INTERCESSIONS

Spirit of Care, you hold us tenderly in your love. You alone can satisfy our thirst for justice and peace. And so we pray: *Show us your mercy, O Lord.*

- Grant leaders the wisdom to provide universal education, especially for women and girls, as a sure path to peace. We pray to the Lord.
- Forgive us for our contribution to systems that unjustly exclude women from full participation in society. We pray to the Lord.

- Protect women, children, and all others who live on the margins of life and community, especially [pause for participants to add individual names or needs]. We pray to the Lord.
- For what else shall we pray because of our experiences today? [Pause for participants to add their own intentions.] We pray to the Lord.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With these petitions in our hearts, we pray as the Lord taught us:

Our Father . . .

SHARING OF PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

May God our Mother protect the vulnerable, awaken the privileged, and unite all women, children, and men into one community of peace. We ask this in Christ's name. AMEN.

SATURDAY MORNING



Lord, teach us justice.
And we shall live in your peace.

PSALM 25:1-2, 4-6, 8-9, 12-13

℞ People who practice justice, walk in the light of God.

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
O my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me. . . .

Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.

Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old. . . .

Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way. . . .

Who are they that fear the LORD?

He will teach them the way that they should choose.

They will abide in prosperity,

and their children shall possess the land.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8

So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the LORD your God with which I am charging you. . . .

You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!" For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

The Word of the Lord.

INTERCESSIONS

God of Wisdom, we know that living with justice will bring us peace. So we pray today for wisdom to strive for a more equal distribution of property among nations and peoples in the world:
Lord, teach us to live justly.

- Inspire leaders and lawmakers to provide education, employment, and dignified opportunities to satisfy the basic needs of all residents. We pray to the Lord.
- Restore the hope and dignity of people who experience exclusion due to race, social class, religion, ethnicity, or culture. We pray to the Lord.
- Teach us to follow the example of your Son, Jesus, so that we become more loving and compassionate to others. We pray to the Lord.
- For what else shall we pray this morning? [Pause for participants to add their own intentions.] We pray to the Lord.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With these petitions in our hearts, we pray as the Lord taught us:
Our Father . . .

SHARING OF PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

May the God of Peace establish us in justice and, through our actions today, bring greater justice and peace to the people we encounter. We ask this in Christ's name. AMEN.

SATURDAY EVENING



Lord, teach us justice.
And we shall live in your peace.

PSALM 103:6-8, 11-14

℞ People who practice justice, walk in the light of God.

The LORD works vindication
and justice for all who are oppressed.
He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.
The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. . . .

For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far he removes our transgressions from us.
As a father has compassion for his children,
so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.
For he knows how we were made;
he remembers that we are dust.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE John 6:3-13

Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. . . . When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming

toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.

The Gospel of the Lord.

SILENT REFLECTION

INTERCESSIONS

Spirit of Wisdom, you are the source of life, goodness, and plenty. Yet we fail to trust in your care and bounty. And so we pray for hearts filled with the trust that leads to justice: *Lord, teach us to live justly.*

- Grant all human beings greater appreciation for the connection between just communities and peaceful lives. We pray to the Lord.

- Renew the hope of people who thirst for justice so that they do not abandon the path that leads to peace. We pray to the Lord.
- Comfort and protect all people who suffer injustices at the hands of other human beings, especially [pause for participants to add individual names or needs]. We pray to the Lord.
- For what else shall we pray because of our experiences today? [Pause for participants to add their own intentions.] We pray to the Lord.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With these petitions in our hearts, we pray as the Lord taught us:

Our Father . . .

SHARING OF PEACE

CLOSING PRAYER

May the God of Peace inspire us to practice justice and live in faithful service to the Gospel, until justice and peace are secured for all people. We ask this in Christ's name. AMEN.

Final Thoughts on the Command to Live Justly

This week's devotions invite us to reflect on the wisdom of justice. The readings emphasize that we ought to be just, as our God is just. We can reread the Scripture passages from this week, savor them, and make them our own. We might memorize a verse or imagine that we are present when Jesus teaches his disciples and feeds hungry crowds. As we recall our interactions this week, we can probe them by asking, Where do I find God's justice in my world? When I am just, what happens to me or to others who are involved?

Equally important, we are urged to make the connection between just communities and peace among people living there. Justice leads to peace because it safeguards the dignity of all people, including them fully in human society. Civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." His words testify to God's creation as a moral universe, where justice is the essence of God's command. King's words also remind us to stay faithful to the practice of justice, to have patience. Justice will bring peace; this is God's truth.

Still, when justice fails, the costs are heavy. Injustice hurts and we hear this in the cries of the poor. As we continue in the prayers of justice, we must share the lamentations of those who suffer when human beings refuse to live according to the justice God has ordained.

