

Prayers during a Time of Civil Unrest

Prayers for Peace

January 2021

This collection of psalms, other Scripture texts, and prayers is compiled for those searching for a way to pray our grief, our horror, our outrage, and our hope following the insurrection of the storming of the United States Capitol building on 6 January 2021.



Holy Spirit Church

The church sees in the psalms prayers expressing the full range of human emotions, experiences, as well as our hope and faith. Jesus prayed with the psalms; therefore, so do we.

Psalm 88

This psalm is said to be the only one of 150 that does not end with an expression of hope, but darkness. Christians have long associated it with Jesus' experience of imprisonment the night before he died.

Antiphon: *Day and night I cry to you, my God.*

Lord my God, I call for help by day
I cry at night before you.
Let my prayer come into your presence.
O turn your ear to my cry.

For my soul is filled with evils;
my life is on the brink of the grave.
I am reckoned as one in the tomb:
I have reached the end of my strength,

like one alone among the dead;
like those slain lying in their graves;
like those you remember no more,
cut off, as they are, from your hand.

You have laid me in the depths of the tomb,
in places that are dark, in the depths.
Your anger weighs down upon me:
I am drowned beneath your waves.

You have taken away my friends
and made me hateful in their sight.
Imprisoned, I cannot escape;
my eyes are sunken with grief.

I call to you, Lord, all the day long;
to you I stretch out my hands.
Will you work your wonders for the dead?
Will the shades stand and praise you?

Will your love be told in the grave
or your faithfulness among the dead?

Will your wonders be known in the dark
or your justice in the land of oblivion?

As for me, Lord, I call to you for help:
in the morning my prayer comes before you.
Lord, why do you reject me?
Why do you hide your face?

Wretched, close to death from my youth,
I have borne your trials; I am numb.
Your fury has swept down upon me;
your terrors have utterly destroyed me.

They surround me all the day like a flood,
they assail me all together.
Friend and neighbor you have taken away:
my one companion is darkness.

Antiphon: Day and night I cry to you, my God.

Psalm 10

Antiphon: The Lord is just; he will defend the poor.

Lord, why do you stand afar off
And hide yourself in times of distress?
The poor man is devoured by the pride of the wicked:
he is caught in the schemes that others have made.

For the wicked man boasts of his heart's desires;
the covetous blasphemes and spurns the Lord.
In his pride the wicked says: "He will not punish.
There is no God." Such are his thoughts.

His path is ever untroubled;
your judgment is far from his mind.
His enemies he regards with contempt.
He thinks: "Never shall I falter:
misfortune shall never be my lot."

His mouth is full of cursing, guile, oppression,
mischief and deceit under his tongue.
He lies in wait among the reeds;
the innocent he murders in secret.

His eyes are on the watch for the helpless man.
He lurks in hiding like a lion in his lair;
he lurks in hiding to seize the poor;
he seizes the poor man and drags him away.

He crouches, preparing to spring,
and the helpless fall beneath his strength.
He thinks in his heart: "God forgets,
he hides his face, he does not see."

Arise then, Lord, lift up your hand!
O God, do not forget the poor!
Why should the wicked spurn the Lord
and think in his heart: "He will not punish"?

But you have seen the trouble and sorrow,
you note it, you take it in hand.
The helpless trusts himself to you;
for you are the helper of the orphan.

Break the power of the wicked and the sinner!
Punish his wickedness till nothing remains!
The Lord is kind for ever and ever.
The heathen shall perish from the land he rules.

Lord, you hear the prayer of the poor;
you strengthen their hearts; you turn your ear
to protect the rights of the orphan and oppressed
so that mortal man may strike terror no more.

Antiphon: *The Lord is just; he will defend the poor.*

Psalm 12

Antiphon: *The words of the Lord are true, like silver from the furnace.*

Help, O Lord, for good men have vanished:
truth has gone from the sons of men.
Falsehood they speak one to another,
with lying lips, with a false heart.

May the Lord destroy all lying lips,
the tongue that speaks high-sounding words,
those who say: "Our tongue is our strength;
our lips are our own, who is our master?"

“For the poor who are oppressed and the needy who groan
I myself will arise,” says the Lord.
“I will grant them the salvation for which they thirst.”

The words of the Lord are words without alloy,
silver from the furnace, seven times refined.

It is you, O Lord, who will take us in your care
and protect us for ever from this generation.
See how the wicked prowl on every side,
while the worthless are prized highly by the sons of men.

Antiphon: *The words of the Lord are true, like silver from the furnace.*

Psalm 91

Antiphon: *Night holds no terrors for me sleeping under God’s wings.*

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High,
and abides in the shade of the Almighty
says to the Lord, “My refuge,
my stronghold, my God in whom I trust!”

It is he who will free you from the snare
of the fowler who seeks to destroy you,
he will conceal you with his pinions
and under his wings you will find refuge.

You will not fear the terror of the night
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the plague that prowls in the darkness
nor the scourge that lays waste at noon.

A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand fall at your right,
you, it will never approach;
his faithfulness is buckler and shield.

Your eyes have only to look
to see how the wicked are repaid,
you who have said: “Lord, my refuge!”
and have made the Most High your dwelling.

Upon you no evil shall fall,
no plague approach where you dwell,

For you has he commanded his angels,
to keep you in all your ways.

They shall bear you upon their hands
lest you strike your foot against a stone.
On the lion and the viper you will tread
and trample the young lion and the dragon.

Since he clings to me in love, I will free him;
protect him for he knows my name.
When he calls I shall answer: "I am with you."
I will save him in distress and give him glory.

With length of life I will content him;
I shall let him see my saving power.

Antiphon: Night holds no terrors for me sleeping under God's wings.

Further suggested praying:

Sirach 11: 12 - 28

This passage is a call to place our trust in God alone.

Another goes his way a weakling and a failure,
with little strength and great misery —
Yet the eyes of the Lord look favorably upon him;
he raises him free of the vile dust,
Lifts up his head and exalts him
to the amazement of the many.

Good and evil, life and death,
poverty and riches, are from the Lord.
Wisdom and understanding and knowledge of affairs,
love and virtuous paths are from the Lord.
Error and darkness were formed with sinners from their birth,
and evil grows old with evildoers.
The Lord's gift remains with the just;
his favor brings continued success.
A man may become rich through a miser's life,
and this is his allotted reward:
When he says: "I have found rest,
now I will feast on my possessions,
He does not know how long it will be
till he dies and leaves them to others.

My son, hold fast to your duty, busy yourself with it,
grow old while doing your task,
Admire not how sinners live,
but trust in the Lord and wait for his light;
For it is easy with the Lord
suddenly, in an instant, to make a poor man rich.

God's blessing is the lot of the just man,
and in due time his hopes bear fruit.
Say not: "I am independent.
What harm can come to me now?"

The day of prosperity makes one forget adversity;
the day of adversity makes one forget prosperity.
For it is easy with the Lord on the day of death
to repay man according to his deeds.
A moment's affliction brings forgetfulness of past delights;
when a man dies, his life is revealed.
Call no man happy before his death,
for by how he ends, a man is known.

Romans 8: 26 - 28

And as well as this, the Spirit too comes to help us in our weakness, for, when we do not know how to pray properly, then the Spirit personally makes our petitions for us in groans that cannot be put into words; and he who can see into all hearts knows what the Spirit means because the prayers that the Spirit makes for God's holy people are always in accordance with the mind of God.

Luke 24: 2 - 6

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb; but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were puzzling over this, behold, two men in dazzling garments appeared to them. They were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground. They said to them, "Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised. Remember what he said to you while he was still in Galilee"

Romans 5: 1 - 5

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us.

from the Votive Mass for the Preservation of Peace and Justice

O God, you show a father's care for all.
Grant, in your mercy,
that the members of the human race,
to whom you have given a single origin,
may form in peace a single family
and always be united by a fraternal spirit. Amen.

O God of peace, you are peace itself
whom a spirit of discord cannot grasp,
nor a violent mind receive.
Grant that those who are one in heart
may persevere in what is good
and that those in conflict
may forget evil and so be healed. Amen.

from the Votive Mass in Time of War or Civil Disturbance

O God, you are the author and lover of peace.
To know you is to live; to serve you is to reign;
Defend against every attack those who cry to you
so that we, who trust in your protection,
may not fear any foe. Amen.

Be mindful, Lord, that your Son,
who himself is peace,
has destroyed our hatreds by his blood.
Look in mercy on our evil deeds
and grant that to those whom you love
our sacrifice may restore peace and tranquility. Amen.

Grant to us, O Lord,
that, nourished with the delights of the one Bread and one Chalice
which fortifies the human heart,
we may successfully overcome fury
and resolutely keep your law of love and justice. Amen.