

Prayer Service for 9/11 Anniversary

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For the St. Eulalia VOTF Affiliate, Winchester MA

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Solidarity in Suffering and Compassion

[The service begins with the presider(s) lighting the paschal candle, which is in a prominent place off to one side of the presider.]

Presider: Let us settle into the presence of God by singing together ...

BE NOT AFRAID (# 596)

You shall cross the barren desert, but you shall not die of thirst.
You shall wander far in safety though you do not know the way.
You shall speak your words in foreign lands and all will understand.
You shall see the face of God and live.

Be not afraid. I go before you always.
Come follow me, and I will give you rest.

If you pass through raging waters in the sea you shall not drown.
If you walk amid the burning flames, you shall not be harmed.
If you stand before the pow'r of hell and death is at your side.
Know that I am with you through it all.

Be not afraid. I go before you always.
Come follow me, and I will give you rest.

Blessed are you poor, for the kingdom shall be theirs.
Blest are you that weep and mourn, for one day you shall laugh.
And if the wicked tongues insult you and hate you all because of me.
Blessed, blessed are you.

Be not afraid. I go before you always.
Come follow me, and I will give you rest.

Introduction of Theme

Presider: We are afraid and we will never be quite the same since 9/11. But that doesn't mean we, as Christians, have to be ruled by our fear. Let us join tonight in solidarity of suffering and compassion, remembering the people and events of 9/11 and what has transpired since, and, by sitting with our fears, may we find God. Let us pray by responding together to the invocations with *We Remember Them*.

[For the prayer, different people from around the church should call out the phrase, and the entire congregation then responds with "We remember them."]

[From The Rabbi's Manual:]

Speaker: In the rising of the sun and in its going down,

Congregation: WE REMEMBER THEM

Speaker: When we are weary and in need of strength,

Congregation: WE REMEMBER THEM

Speaker: When we are lost and sick of heart,

Congregation: WE REMEMBER THEM

Speaker: When we have joys we yearn to share,

Congregation: WE REMEMBER THEM

Speaker: So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are now a part of us, as

Congregation: WE REMEMBER THEM

Speaker: In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,

Congregation: WE REMEMBER THEM

Speaker: In the opening of buds and in the birth of spring,

Congregation: WE REMEMBER THEM

Speaker: In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer,

Congregation: WE REMEMBER THEM

Speaker: In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn,

Congregation: WE REMEMBER THEM

Speaker: In the beginning of the year and when it ends,

Congregation: WE REMEMBER THEM

[Pause for Meditation]

SHEPHERD ME, O GOD (#23)

[Everyone sings this refrain following each reading.]

“Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.”

Psalm 23

Reader: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his names sake.

Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Reader: You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Prayer

Presider: Let us pray to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the source of all holiness, and ask to be led in holiness of life.

Response: May we be holy as you are holy.

Presider: Gracious and generous God, you call us to be your daughters and sons. Grant that we proclaim your Good News during difficult times.

Response: May we be holy as you are holy.

Presider: Holy Spirit, lead us to wisdom in these chaotic times. We are disheartened and unsure. Help us to discern the Father’s will.

Response: May we be holy as you are holy.

Presider: We yearn to be a light of Jesus' healing for one another and for the whole world. Help us to help one another, let us be there for one another in order to dispel the darkness and dismay and to comfort one another.

YOU ARE MINE (# 627)

I will come to you in the silence, I will lift you from all your fear.
You will hear my voice, I claim you as my choice,
Be still and know I am here.

I am hope for all who are hopeless, I am eyes for all who long to see.
In the shadows of the night, I will be your light,
Come and rest in me.

Chorus:

**Do not be afraid, I am with you. I have called you each by name.
Come and follow me, I will bring you home:
I love you and you are mine.**

I am strength for all the despairing, healing for the ones who dwell in shame
All the blind will see, the lame will all run free,
And all will know my name.

Chorus

I am the Word that leads all to freedom, I am the peace the world cannot give.
I will call your name, embracing all your pain,
Stand up, now walk, and live!

Chorus

Readings

Presider introduces the readings:

This evening we are going to share some readings on suffering, compassion, and our lives as Christians and followers of Jesus. So let us listen as the writer Joyce Rupp describes for us the shock of any sudden bad news or event. (Taken from *Your Sorrow Is My Sorrow* by Joyce Rupp: "Feeling Shock at the News")

Reader:

Faithful Shelter,
My life has suddenly changed.
I feel numb and unbelieving,
Stunned and alarmed.
It does not seem possible that my life
Could be so quickly turned upside down.

Comfort me, Abiding Companion.
Wait with me while I try to grasp the truth.
Slowly reveal to me what I need to accept.
As the layers of the days ahead unfold

Keep me safe in the shelter of your love.
Abide with me, abide with me.

Reader:

St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians – Col 3:12-15

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgives you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Reader:

A reading from Loving Kindness by Sharon Salzberg: "Developing the Compassionate Heart"

Sometimes we think that to develop an open heart, to be truly loving and compassionate, means that we need to be passive, to allow others to abuse us, to smile and let anyone do what they want with us. Yet this is not what is meant by compassion. Quite the contrary. Compassion is not at all weak. It is the strength that arises out of seeing the true nature of suffering in the world. Compassion allows us to bear witness to that suffering, whether it is in ourselves or others, without fear; it allows us to name injustice without hesitation, and to act strongly, with all the skill at our disposal. To develop this mind state of compassion is to learn to live with sympathy for all living beings, without exception.

[Pause for Silent Reflection]

THIS IS MY SONG (# 875)

This is my song, O God of all the nations,
A song of peace for lands afar and mine.
This is my home, the country where my heart is;
Here my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine;
But other hearts in other lands are beating
With hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.

My country's skies are bluer than the ocean,
And sunlight beams on clover leaf and pine;
But other lands have sunlight too, and clover,
And skies are everywhere as blue as mine.
O hear my song, thou God of all nations,
A song of peace for their land and for mine.

Speaker

[Available slot for someone who was personally involved in 9/11 or who lost friends or family there to speak. Otherwise omit this section.]

[Pause for Silent Reflection]

Readings

COURAGE by Bernard Dozier

It takes unspeakable courage –
To be born, to crawl, and
To be young and inexperienced.

It takes enormous courage –
To grow up, to dream, to work, and
To risk making mistakes.

It takes steadfast courage –
To be disciplined, to take responsibility,
And to keep trying after disappointments.

It takes gallant courage –
To be rich, to be poor, and
To always give unstintingly of self.

It takes dauntless courage –
To balance successes
With defeats and
To still relish life's sweetness.

It takes invincible courage –
To grow older, to not speak aged counsel,
And to peruse mortality with a calm eye.

It takes noble courage –
To be a gentle soul,
To seek one's God, and
Christlike mettle to live like God.

COURAGE!

GATHER US IN (# 743):

Here in this place new light is streaming, now is the darkness vanished away
See in this space our fears and our dreamings, brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in – the lost and forsaken, Gather us in – the blind and the lame;
Call to us now, and we shall awaken, we shall arise at the sound of our name.

We are the young – our lives are a mystery, we are the old – who yearn for your face.
We have been sung throughout all of history, called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in – the rich and the haughty, Gather us in – the proud and the strong;
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly, give us the courage to enter the song.

Reading

St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians: Phil 4:6-9

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy –

think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Reflections on 9/11

SONG

“When You Walk Through a Storm”

Reflection and Response

Presider: As St. Paul admonished the Colossians, so I pray for you: “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Let us join in prayer with the words: **Lord, bring us peace.**

For the thousands who died because of the September 11th terror.
Take them quickly into the fullness of joy, we pray to the Lord....

Response: Lord, bring us peace

For the families and friends of those who died, especially The Mathais,
May they know your loving kindness and be healed of their grief, we pray to the Lord..

Response: Lord, bring us peace

For all the people of the United States who have suffered physically,
emotionally, economically, mentally, or spiritually because of these acts of terror, bring
them consolation, we pray to the Lord..

Response: Lord, bring us peace

For all people throughout the world who suffer because of terrorism and injustice, poverty and war. Give us compassion to care for them and the strength to work for their liberation, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, bring us peace

We welcome anyone with us tonight to share his or her prayers at this time: (pause)

For all those shared intentions and for all the prayers of our hearts for which we struggle to find the words, we pray to the Lord..

Response: Lord, bring us peace

Prayer

A Prayer for the World by Rabbi Harold S. Kushner

Let the rain come and wash away the ancient grudges, the bitter hatred held and nurtured over the generations.

Let the rain wash away the memory of the hurt, the neglect.

Then let the sun come out and fill the sky with rainbows.

Let the warmth of the sun heal us wherever we are broken.

Let it burn away the fog so that we can see each other clearly.

So that we can see beyond labels, beyond accents, gender or skin color.

Let the warmth and brightness of the sun melt our selfishness.

So that we can share the joys and feel the sorrows of our neighbors.

And let the light of the sun be so strong that we will see all as our neighbors.

Let the earth, nourished by rain, bring forth flowers to surround us with beauty.

And let the mountains teach our hearts to reach upward to heaven. AMEN

CONCLUSION

Presider: Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He told us to act with courage and compassion and to work for peace. We can begin now – by offering some sign of peace to those around us here. But it cannot end there. As followers of Christ, we must take this sign of peace to those in our families, neighborhoods, and workplaces. We must take it to the world. But big projects must begin small, so we start by offering a sign of peace to those here present...

(Everyone shares sign of peace)

[After everyone has shared a sign of peace, the presider goes to the Paschal candle, lights his/her candle and begins the process of everyone lighting one another's candles while they are singing the following prayer.]

LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH (#723)

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.
With God as our Father, brothers all are we;
Let me walk with my brother in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me, let this be my moment now.
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow:
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

Our Father

Presider leads everyone in saying together the Our Father.

CONCLUDING SONG

GOD BLESS AMERICA

PRESIDER: Please extinguish your candles and go in peace.