

JPIC

Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Commission
Comisaun ba Justisa, Paz no Integridade ba Criausaun



The Carmelites
Australia and Timor-Leste
community • prayer • action

Health in the Lord and the Blessing of the Holy Spirit..[Rule of Saint Albert]

JPIC 94-FEBRUARY 2020

Saudavel iha Maromak no grasa Spiritu Santo Nian .. [Regula Sto Alberto]

Prayer - a Social Justice Activity

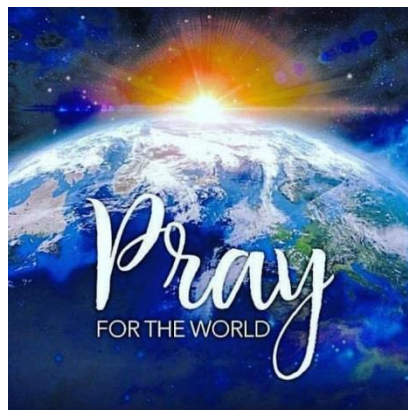
A reflection by Peter Thomas JPIC Team



These days many people say those who trust in prayer are putting their faith in magic and superstition. In a secular society it's respectable to hold such views without feeling any fear or guilt. Even among religious people prayer is perceived not so much as asking and listening to God but more as an innate desire; the desire for hope, a future, a possibility, liberation, redemption. Most of us can live with that explanation but alongside it in our Catholic tradition we hold to the possibility of Divine intervention even though intellectually it makes little sense and there is scant evidence that God defies natural laws.

The plea to God to feed the world, to set the refugees free, to douse the bushfires, to create a more equitable society may hold out the possibility of God's intervention but only with our intervention as we lobby governments and help overseas aid organisations and human rights groups. God's intrusion might well be that the act of prayer helps us face the truth and therefore prevents us from entering a place of hopelessness.

With truth comes a release from the fear of the unknown and therefore courage to face challenges, even those that seem insurmountable. With prayer, devoid of superstitious practice hope can and does reside in truth and faith is not compromised as it is defined in terms of reality.



With a certainty that God is within and God is all in all, we gain a natural courage to advance causes, to live adventurously and to take prudent risks oblivious to the consequences of our own ego. Prayer melds our mind and body with the spirit or soul in a unified way that gives us the inner strength to triumph over the injustice we see around us. We can face the clarity of injustice with maturity and sincerity and a belief that prayer gives us a centre to our being and courage to be ourselves. Great saints were and are women and men of courage steeped in the conviction that life is lived in each moment and each moment holds out the possibility for each us to build a better world.

When we pray we love ourselves by connecting with our centre and express love to others through compassionate awareness that realizes action in good works. Prayer is never a means to status or power and must never be used for the purpose of manipulation, adulation or to induce guilt, anxiety, superstition or false hope. Prayer should touch the 'virginal' in all of us, those qualities that are pure and untainted and bring them to the surface in an act of celebration that moves us to engage justly. Prayer has the inherent risks of a relationship but commitment to its practice will ultimately satisfy our inner and outer worlds.

In all honesty I think most of us struggle with prayer after all it is a subversive activity and like any battle we can easily become battle fatigued. There are

those of us that at times have cursed and argued with God, bathed in the rapturous awe of an ineffable mystery and pleaded agnostically with little or no conviction or belief. In this age of disbelief, where secularism in the guise of political expediency, consumerism and unfettered power have replaced conventional religion, prayer as many of us have known and experienced it has become counter-cultural. To this extent it deserves to be labeled subversive.

Prayer is at once painful and consoling, ordinary and extraordinary. It can feel like a mediated activity or a state of sublime unity in which the subject and object of prayer become one.

When we feel despondent in our efforts to change a wrong into a right God seems contained beyond the horizon and remains there unseen and untouchable. This can be the case for days, weeks, months and even years! Maybe God is closer to us at these times than we think.

Prayer can be passive and active, even inter-active. It is made up of contradictions. These abstract ramblings are no substitute for practice, because prayer is ultimately experiential, otherwise it is nothing.

On this journey through life we struggle with life's ordinariness. We know we must self-empty in order to maintain some truth in the midst of illusionary happiness and worldly success. We must be seduced by God rather than be seduced by power, status and wealth. We seek to unite the

world to discover God at the centre so that we can be brave enough to see God everywhere.

When we externalize our prayer in action we evoke the Mystery of God, not define it. Our deeds when enfolded in prayer whether they are to do our bit towards climate change or shame



the government into maintaining the Medivac provisions for detainees on Manus and Nauru are a communication of faith; no longer a transmission of doctrine, but a communication of spiritual encounter.

Prayer engrosses us in the story of salvation, a story so potent that we become part of the narrative. The daily rub of life with its splendor and its mess is our roadmap for a journey that both reflects and affects life, our life and the lives of others, particularly the suffering multitudes for whom each of us has a responsibility. The narrative of daily living with its spiraling emotional compass that one day points and brings delight and the next day points and ushers in disaster is the perfect underpinning for prayer that thrusts us into action.

There is nothing magic, new or fresh about prayerful-accomplishment; it's the nub and the rub of the gospel.

LET US PRAY:



<https://www.thecarmelitecatholic.org.au/>

We hold the Earth.

We hold brothers and sisters who suffer from storms and droughts, raging bushfires, intensified by climate change.

We hold all species that suffer.

We hold world leaders delegated to make decisions for life.

We pray that the web of life may be mended through courageous actions to limit carbon emissions.

We pray for right actions for adaptation and mitigation to help our already suffering earth community.

We pray that love and wisdom might inspire my actions and our actions as communities, so that we may with integrity look into the eyes of brothers and sisters and all beings and truthfully say, we are doing our part to care for them and the future of the children.

(Interfaith Power & Light; Catholic Climate Covenant)

**A SUMMER OF DESTRUCTION ... GRIEVING WHAT HAS BEEN LOST AND REJOICING
IN WHAT HAS BEEN SAVED (Extract from 'The Conversation')**

“This grandmother tree connects me to Country. I cried when I saw her burned” ... Vanessa Cavanagh,

Indigenous woman living on Darkinjung Country. Assoc. Lecturer, School of Geography & Sustainable Communities, University of Wollongong

She was one of the sentinel trees which stood strong on the property where I grew up in Colo Heights, northwest of Sydney.



To begin to understand this connection, you might start by thinking about how every native tree on this property grows in its perfect place. Thousands of generations of evolution caused for it to grow right there. Each plant belongs to that very soil, and under that particular sky. Each plant is connected to the next, also growing in its own perfect way. Just like this grandmother tree, the plants are all families to each other. A community that is woven together with every element of nature participating.

But for this grandmother tree, the combination of ongoing drought and persistent flames ended her reign at the far edge of the yard. The sight of this old tree with her crown removed brought warm, stinging tears to my eyes. It was a deep hurt of losing someone far older and wiser than me. Losing someone who was respected and adored. Someone with knowledge I cannot fathom or comprehend.

Yet we know too, that Country is powerful and will recover. These trees return to the earth, and their legacy will regenerate, we each have our cycles.

The blackened ground is blanketed with a thick layer of dead leaves, dropped by the grandmother trees and her kin. Walking sounds like stepping on thousands of brittle eggshells. I hope if it rains, the leaf litter slows the erosion. This Country is wounded, it's sandy and fragile.



Glossy black cockatoo populations on Kangaroo Island have been decimated. But a few precious survivors remain.

Focus on survivors... The nation's silent, apocalyptic firescapes have left many conservation biologists grieving – for the animals, the species, their optimism, and for some, lifetimes of diligent work.

Take the subspecies of glossy black cockatoos endemic to Kangaroo Island. Up to 80% of the area the cockatoos occupy has been burnt – but some survivors have been sighted.

Decades of work by researchers, conservation managers and the community had reportedly brought the cockatoos' numbers from about 150 to 400. Without this extraordinary effort, there would have been no cockatoos to worry about during these fires, no knowledge of how to help survivors and no community of cockatoo lovers to pick up the work again.



Carmelite NGO – invites you to view their new webpage:

<http://carmelitengo.org/en/>

"To hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (Laudato Si' 49)

THE CARMELITE NGO actively participates in creating a more peaceful, just and loving world by advocating and caring for the spiritual and human needs of the human family and the environment. **The NGO** also focuses on areas related with human trafficking, freedom of belief, poverty, hunger, and poverty. It provides the Carmelite perspective on every area before the United Nations and provides a **NETWORK** for Carmelites who are involved in specific issues of **Justice, Peace and Care for Creation**, fostering the integral human development in an **Integral Ecology** perspective.