

Light a Candle Virtual Prayer Vigil
Thursday, March 19, 2020

I. Welcome each and every one of you.

There's a longing in our hearts, even a need, to be together in this isolating and overwhelming time. The desire that led you here, to join this vigil tonight, is a pure and good desire that comes from God. A pure and good desire that seeks the good of your fellow human family.

During this vigil, we will pray through four movements:

- Lighting the candle
- Asking God to dispel the darkness
- Praying for the "light-bearers"
- Looking for signs of hope

II. **First movement: Lighting of the candle**

- A. Let's begin with a minute or two of silence before you light your candle.
1. Consider who it is or what it is that you particularly want to lift-up to God
 2. Once you have named this person, or this need/desire, light the wick.
- B. Now consider the flame:
1. See how it burns bright?
 2. That's how bright the love of God burns within you!
 3. The God who spoke *light into existence*, saying, "Let light shine from the darkness," is the very One who sets our hearts ablaze to shed light on the knowledge of God's glory *revealed* in the face of Jesus, the Anointed One.
II Corinthians 4:6

III. **Second movement: Asking God to dispel the darkness**

- A. In the words of Luke: Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace. Luke 1:78-79
- B. In this second movement of our vigil, we will ask God to clear the darkness from our lives and world.
1. We will share several specific requests, pause and allow you time to recall specific people and speak their names out loud, and then after each one pause, please join us and respond with this declaration:
 2. **Christ, our morning light, expel the darkness and guide us to peace.**

- For those who have been made ill from this virus and are fighting for their lives
- For those who are carriers of this virus and don't yet know it
- For all who suffer from anxiety and despair in these uncertain times
- For those who don't have or won't have enough money for their basic needs
- For those who can't see a way forward because of some insurmountable need
- For those homebound with young children and overwhelmed by their care
- For those bored, frustrated and angry and don't know where to turn
- For those who are truly alone, isolated, and without loving family or friends
- For those who live far from God, who have no reason to hope
- Pray now for any other forms of darkness that come to your mind.

IV. Third Movement: Praying for the "light-bearers"

A. Jesus declared, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life. John 8:12

B. In this third movement, let's pray for those who carry the light of Christ, whether they know it or not, into places of darkness, disease, stress, and insecurity.

1. We will share several specific requests and after each one will pause and let you recall a specific person and speak their name out loud; then please respond with this declaration:
2. **Christ, the light of the world, bless and keep your servants as they follow you into the darkness, looking for the life-giving way.**

C. Petitions

- For all doctors, nurses, and medical staff in hospitals
- For chaplains, rabbis, pastors and priests who are comforting the anxious and bereaved
- For scientists around the world who are trying to understand this virus and search for its antidote
- For our president and congress as they work together to devise the best plan to respond to this crisis
- For international cooperation and sharing of effective strategies between countries and health agencies
- For teachers and administrators of schools, colleges and universities as they continue to make difficult decisions
- For mayors and governors as they make difficult decisions and seek to help their populations deal physically, emotionally, spiritually and financially with this crisis
- For all people everywhere to humbly seek God and pray; and to consider how to love their neighbors as themselves
- Pray now for anyone else that comes to your mind who wasn't named.

V. **Fourth movement: Looking for Signs of Hope**

A. The benevolent goodness of God is always present to us, offering us what we need and sustaining us, no matter what is happening.

1. Have you wondered, "Where is God? What might God be up to during this difficult and dark time?"
2. Last week, I came across this prayer by an Irish priest named Brother Richard Hendrick. Listen for the word of hope that God wants to speak to you:

Lockdown

Yes there is fear.

Yes there is isolation.

Yes there is panic buying.

Yes there is sickness.

Yes there is even death.

But,

They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise

You can hear the birds again.

They say that after just a few weeks of quiet

The sky is no longer thick with fumes

But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi

People are singing to each other

across the empty squares,

keeping their windows open

so that those who are alone

may hear the sounds of family around them.

*They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland
Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.*

*Today a young woman I know
is busy spreading fliers with her number
through the neighbourhood*

So that the elders may have someone to call on.

*Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples
are preparing to welcome*

and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary

All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting

All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way

All over the world people are waking up to a new reality

To how big we really are.

To how little control we really have.

To what really matters.

To Love.

So we pray and we remember that

Yes there is fear.

But there does not have to be hate.

Yes there is isolation.

But there does not have to be loneliness.

Yes there is panic buying.

But there does not have to be meanness.

Yes there is sickness.

But there does not have to be disease of the soul

*Yes there is even death.
But there can always be a rebirth of love.
Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.
Today, breathe.
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic
The birds are singing again
The sky is clearing,
Spring is coming,
And we are always encompassed by Love.
Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able
to touch across the empty square,
Sing*

VI. **Closing:**

Now it's time to extinguish your candle, but before you do, look at the flame. Lift-up the candle and watch how it expands what it lights. May each of us share our light with one another. And may it extend to the far corners of our world. Amen.