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From the Clergy Associate for Family Ministries

June Message

Whenever I prepare to preach, I begin with prayer. Sometimes it is as simple as “Speak Lord, your servant is listening...” As I sat down to prepare for preaching on Pentecost, I opened a collection of prayers I have shared with you before: *Prayers, Ancient and Modern*, selected by Mary W. Tileston. Turning to the page appointed for May 24 (Pentecost Sunday this year), I found the following:

O God, who makest cheerfulness the companion of strength, but apt to take wings in time of sorrow, we humbly beseech Thee that if, in Thy sovereign wisdom, Thou sendest weakness, yet for Thy mercy’s sake deny us not the comfort of patience; and, since the fretfulness of our spirits is more hurtful than the heaviness of our burden, grant us that heavenly calmness which comes of owning Thy hand in all things, and patience in the trust that Thou doest all things well – Amen.¹

What resonated with me in these words was this line: “since the fretfulness of our spirits is more hurtful than the heaviness of our burden” – isn’t that true! Worry, fretfulness in spirit do not bring the best out of us. It can demand all of our best efforts to trust that in the midst of sorrow that God can bring forth great good; this is especially challenging when all we can see is wreckage...and yet that is the miracle of the empty tomb and Jesus’ resurrection.

St. Paul’s words from his letter to the Romans resonate: “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us... But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words...”²

Sometimes the easiest thing to do is to open a prayer book and wrestle with what presents itself to us. Sometimes simply sitting in the moment and letting the words of the Lord’s Prayer tumble from our lips. Other times waiting in silence for the intercession of sighs too deep for words. God will work in us if we allow the work to happen.

¹ Rowland Williams, p. 145 of *Prayers, Ancient and Modern*

² Romans 8:18, 25-26

And, I admit, the patient waiting thing gets me, in the midst of trying to manage a household and keep everyone on an even keel. And yet when I find myself thinking this way, I know it is time to pause and take stock. I know from experience that there is nothing more important in that endeavor than beginning and ending every activity grounded in the presence of God, and trusting in the Spirit that intercedes on our behalf. We are not alone, and we are not expected to “do life” on our own. Thanks be to God!

This summer I invite you to join me in taking note of the ways the Spirit intercedes in your life. And if you like, let’s talk about it.

Faithfully,

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