The Gifts of the Present Moment

December 16, 2021
Make use of what we offer...

...if not members of religious bodies we sometimes select and memorize a few sets of prayers which emphasize the principles we have been discussing. There are many helpful books also. Suggestions about these may be obtained from one's priest, minster, or rabbi. Be quick to see where religious people are right. Make use of what they offer.

—Alcoholics Anonymous Pg. 87

To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe, to all.

—Alcoholics Anonymous Pg. 46

12 Steps for All

1. We admitted that our lives had become unmanageable and uncontrollable.

2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood that.

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood that, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.
12 Steps@Trinity

12-Step Spirituality is not a defined body of wisdom or particular collection of books and sayings. Indeed, the steps are rooted in a tradition much older and extending back millennia through the Judeo-Christian-Islamic religions. The Steps are now used by hundreds of different kinds of recovery groups and millions of people throughout the world. We could even say that 12-Step Spirituality is the combined knowledge and experience of all those who have used spiritual surrender and 12 Steps as a passage to recovery, and the things they have learned along the way. We are fortunate to include in our community many who have journeyed toward liberation with the 12 Steps and so we look to share what we have learned, as well as celebrate the presence of God in our midst.

A Centering Prayer

Let us pray together:

Gracious and eternal God,
so draw our hearts to you,
so guide our minds,
so fill our imaginations,
so control our wills,
that we may be wholly yours,
utterly dedicated to you;
and then use us, we pray,
as you will, and always to your glory
and the welfare of your people;
through Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

First Reading

One hundred years ago, Henry Adams foretold a modern predicament, one we all must live with. Science has indeed given us the power to destroy ourselves. How, in such a hazardous world, are we to find serenity?

Peace begins within. Each one of us knows what conflict is, and so each of us possesses the power of reconciliation. The glory of the human spirit lies in our ability to choose, to let go of despair, to turn our energies to creative uses. Peace begins with resolution of our inner wars.

The whole history of our species on the planet has prepared us for the noble choice of peace; it is the fulfillment of our humanity. Each of us must listen to the truth within our hearts: there lies the wisdom we need, and there lies our capacity for love and creativity.

Hear the Spirit as it speaks to us.
Amen.

Musical Interlude
Second Reading

Every day is a series of experiences; some we will greet with relief, laughter, or anger. However, all experiences, even those most dreaded, encompass the very lessons we are ready to undertake. And the people in our lives are here to serve as our mentors.

The pinch of any experience lives on in the mind. We sometimes savor the wound, letting it feed our self-pity or foster our resentment. Likewise, we often hang on to a fond memory, replaying the action over and over again in our minds. *Whether it is a good or a bad memory, we neglect the present if our minds are locked in the past.*

Our freedom to let go of an experience, to laugh at ourselves, to accentuate the positive in our lives, exhilarates us. It also heightens our anticipation for every moment a day promises.

Hear the Spirit as it speaks to us.

Amen.

First Prayer

*Let us pray together.*

O God of beginnings,
as your Spirit moved
over the face of the deep
on the first day of creation,
move with me now
in my time of beginnings,
when the air is rain-washed,
the bloom is on the bush,
and the world seems fresh
and full of possibilities,
and I feel ready and full.

I tremble on the edge of a maybe,
a first time,
a new thing,
a tentative start,
and the wonder of it lays its finger on my lips.

In silence, Lord,
I share now my eagerness
and my uneasiness
about this something different
I would be or do;
and I listen for your leading
to help me separate the light
from the darkness
in the change I seek to shape
and which is shaping me.

Amen.

—I Ted Loder

The Promise of a New Day

*I am personally in charge of all responses to all experiences today. I can feel however I choose every minute of the day.*

The Promise of a New Day
Third Reading

We are at peace when we cherish the gifts of the present moment. And gratitude for the moment enhances the value of what is to come next. When we take our focus off the present, longing only for another time or place or experience, we will never reap the rewards that offer themselves to us moment by moment. The longing heart guarantees little peace, infrequent moments of joy, and stunted growth. The soul’s nourishment is here, now, with these people who surround us and within these activities inviting our involvement.

So few people understand the benefits of celebrating life as it is received. Finding pleasure in the ordinary occurrences heightens our awarenesses that indeed, no occurrence is truly ordinary. I can say yes to today and all it offers and be at peace.

Hear the Spirit as it speaks to us.
Amen.

Second Prayer

Let us pray.

May I release my ego’s need to defend myself.
May I have the courage to live in alignment—
walking in the integrity of my own unique path.
May I forgive the parts of myself that become reactive
when I’m misunderstood.
May I continue to show up over and over again
as I learn to trust
that everything is happening to serve my evolution
and the greater good of the collective.

Amen.

Musical Interlude

Reflection

The reflection seeks to be evocative not prescriptive, so there is no expectation that you will agree with the homilist. Instead, allow the reflection to lead you into your own contemplation and feel free to follow your own inner voice rather than remaining focused on what the homilist is saying. Sometimes our journeys converge and sometimes they diverge. Enjoy!
Meditation

The meditation will be a brief period of quiet to allow us to center and quiet the mind. Please feel free to participate with whatever method you prefer.

Reconciliation, Release, and Reclamations

A Thursday@7 tradition, you are invited to come forward and symbolically offer your prayer for the reconciliation of a fractured relationship, the release of a resentment, or the reclamation of lost hopes and dreams.

Shared Reflections

The Serenity Prayer

Let us pray together.

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference;
living one day at a time;
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;
taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it;
trusting that you will make all things right
if I surrender to your will;
that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with you in the next. Amen.

The Peace

The earliest Christians shared a kiss or embrace as a sign of solidarity and reconciliation among those in spiritual community with one another. We continue that tradition with a common greeting:

The Peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

Only by letting go of life do I most profoundly enhance it.
The Promise of a New Day
The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
    thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
    as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
    but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
    for ever and ever. Amen.

Financial Support

Your financial support is not only a practical necessity. It can also be a very meaningful symbolic gesture, expressing your gratitude for all the blessings in your life and your hope for health in the world.

You can place cash or a check in the big blue urn at the head of the aisle or you can donate online here, text TRINITYBUFFALO to 73256, or send a check to:

Trinity Episcopal Church
371 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14202

Thank you for your participation and contribution. Peace.

Click here to find the readings and request the Zoom password.

Christmas Eve Festival Worship with an Upside-Down Pageant!

December 24 @3pm, in person or online, the same way we do Sunday morning these days. It will be complete with favorite Christmas hymns, Holy Communion and singing Silent Night by candlelight. This worship service will be available to watch later on both Facebook and YouTube if you can't come to church or watch online live at 3.

Note - This will be Trinity's only Christmas service this year.
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