

Stef Grossano:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Stef Grossano:

And welcome to Morning Prayers. Our speaker this morning will be Dr. Michael VanRooyen, who is the Director of the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative.

Our service today will begin with a reading of Psalm 4 in your black Appleton psalter book, please rise in body or spirit, as we read Psalm 4 responsively by whole verse.

Answer me when I call, O God of my right. You gave me room when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.

Congregation:

How long, you people, shall my honor suffer shame? How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies?

Stef Grossano:

But know that the Lord has set apart the faithful for himself; the Lord hears when I call him.

Congregation:

When you are disturbed, do not sin; ponder it on your beds, and be silent.

Stef Grossano:

Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord.

Congregation:

There are many who say, "O that we might see some good! Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord!"

Stef Grossano:

You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound.

Congregation:

I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety.

(singing)

Michael VanRooyen:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Michael VanRooyen:

The peace prayer of Saint Francis Assisi is well known to many of you. It's generated in the 11 hundreds, but it really became popularized when the Vatican printed it in 1916 during the horrors of World War I, where the world is really trying to contemplate what was happening. The prayer is simple, and I'll read it.

Lord make me an instrument of your peace. Where there's hatred, let me sow love. Where there's injury, pardon. Where there's doubt, faith. Where there's despair, hope. Where there's darkness, light. Where there's sadness, joy. Oh, Divine Master, grant that I might not seek so much to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.

When I was a boy in Catholic Church when I was eight, there wasn't a whole lot of inspiration to be had in the Catholic Church when you were a boy of eight. It was mainly nuns and the Romney politics. It was pretty difficult, and it was a difficult time for the world. The Vietnam War was raging. Racial politics in the US were raw, and it was a confusing time. My mom was dying of cancer, so as a young boy, there wasn't a lot of inspiration to be had around the world. But this prayer, actually, I remember exactly what pew I was sitting in in church like yesterday when I heard it for the first time. And the prayer gave me this kind of weird, clear sense of direction and clarity, in a way that you wouldn't sort of expect in a young kid. And it became a prayer for my life.

And I've really been benefited by having a career of humanitarian medicine. I just returned from Ukraine a few days ago, where I was working with frontline workers that were in trauma training. And in that time, in that really horrible place where people are struggling against a great evil, I found great inspiration as well. And I've been really honored to be in the field, where I have not only witnessed human suffering, but really witnessed great human hope.

And we live in a dark era, again, with the war in Gaza, with the war in Ukraine, with wars all around the world, that create new levels of human suffering, and a domestic political system that is fractured, and broken, and really difficult, and progress towards racial equity are slow, excruciatingly slow, as we see by the politically motivated ouster of our own president. And so, in all of this, it seems to be dark, but I think it's good to remember that the arc of history is longer than this. It's bigger than a movement. It's bigger than a war. It's bigger than a particular social sort of climax that we see. And it's important to understand, at least for me, to see if I'm on the right side of history. What can I do to ensure that I'm on the right side of history? And so, the prayer of St. Francis gives us a few questions to ask ourselves. Am I bringing peace? Am I fighting for equity? Am I caring for my neighbor? Am I standing publicly for what is right?

So landing on the right side of history is actually not that difficult if we ask ourselves those simple questions, and really try in earnest to answer them personally and honestly. So I'd like to offer a prayer, if you would bow your head and pray with me.

Lord Creator, let us have the courage to join those who strive for peace, ache for justice, fight for equity, and to dedicate ourselves to the service of others. All we really ask for is the strength to stand up for what is right. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Stef Grossano:

And together let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Congregation:

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, forever and ever. Amen.

Stef Grossano:

Let us sing together, hymn number 319, found in your Crimson Harvard hymnal.

(singing)

On this day, may you act justly, may you love mercy, may you walk humbly with God. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.