

Laurie Sedgwick:

Good morning and welcome to morning prayers. Today's service will begin with a responsive reading from the black Appleton psalter book, psalm number 86, found on page 43. Please stand as you're able to read responsibly by whole verse.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Bow down thine ear, oh Lord, hear me for I am poor and needy.

Congregation:

Preserve my soul, for I am holy. Oh thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Be merciful unto me, oh Lord, for I cry unto thee daily.

Congregation:

Rejoice the soul of thy servant, for unto thee, oh Lord, do I lift up my soul.

Laurie Sedgwick:

For thou Lord art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

Congregation:

Give ear, oh Lord, unto my prayer, and attend to the voice of my supplications.

Laurie Sedgwick:

In the day of my travel, I will call upon thee, for thou wilt answer me.

Congregation:

Among the gods there is none like unto thee, oh Lord, neither are there any works like unto thy works.

Laurie Sedgwick:

All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, oh Lord, and shall glorify thy name.

Congregation:

For thou art great, and does wondrous things, thou art God alone.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Teach me the way, oh Lord, I will walk in thy truth. Unite my heart to fear thy name.

Congregation:

I will praise thee, oh Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify thy name for evermore.

Choir:

(singing)

Laurie Sedgwick:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Our speaker this morning, Laura Tuach, is unable to join us, so I'll be reading remarks from Brother David Steindl-Rast on Thomas Merton and prayer. Before leaving for the East and his death on December 10th, 1968 in Bangkok, Thomas Merton attended a meeting of Our Lady of the Redwoods Abbey in Whitethorn, California. The following notes by Brother David were made there.

When I remember my last visit with Thomas Merton, I see him standing in the forest, listening to the rain. Much later, when he began to talk, he was not breaking the silence, he was letting it come to word. And he continued to listen. "Talking is not the principal thing" he said. A handful of men and women searching for ways of renewal in religious life, we had gone to meet him in California as he was leaving for the East, and we had asked him to speak to us on prayer. But he insisted that "Nothing that anyone says will be that important. The great thing is prayer. Prayer itself. If you want a life of prayer, the way to get to it is by praying."

To start where you are, and to become aware of the connections, that was Thomas Merton's approach to prayer. "We are indoctrinated so much into means and ends," he said, "that we don't realize that there is a different dimension in the life of prayer. In prayer, we discover what we already have. You start where you are and you deepen what you already have, and you realize that you are already there. We already have everything, but we don't know it and we don't experience it. Everything has been given to us in Christ. All we need is to experience what we already possess. The trouble is we aren't taking time to do so."

The idea of taking time to experience, to savor, to let life fully come to us and to come to us was a key idea in Thomas Merton's reflections on prayer. "One of the best things for me," he said, "when I went to the Hermitage, was being attentive to the times of the day, when the birds began to sing and the deer came out of the morning fog and the sun came up. The reason why we don't take time is a feeling that we have to keep moving. We must approach the whole idea of time in a new way. The whole thing boils down to giving ourselves in prayer a chance to realize that we have what we seek. It is there all the time, and if we give it time, it will make itself known to us."

The real contemplative standard is to just be yourself. That's what God is asking of us, to be ourselves. When I saw him for the first time at the Abbey of Gethsemani, he was wearing his overalls and I thought he was the milk delivery man. Two other faces came to mind whenever I looked at his features. Dorothy Day and Picasso. When the chapel was getting dark and he bent down to hear confessions, there was more of Dorothy Day. When he read poetry, his own reluctantly, but friends' poems with relish, there was more of Picasso.

And again and again, I was amazed to find him at once so totally uninhibited and so perfectly disciplined. Self-acceptance, sober and realistic was basic in Thomas Merton's view. I believe that what we want to do is to pray. After all, why did any of us become religious if we didn't want to pray? This is the whole doctrine of prayer in the Rule of Saint Benedict. It's all summed up in one phrase. "If a man wants to pray, let him go and pray." That is all Saint Benedict feels it is necessary to say about the subject. What matters is that you become yourself and that helps you live a life of prayer.

And I'll end with a quote on prayer by Merton. "Prayer does not blind us to the world, but it transforms our vision of the world and makes us see it, all beings and all the history of mankind in the light of God." Would you please stand with me and let us pray.

All powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey toward your infinite light. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Laurie Sedgwick:

And let us now recite the prayer that Jesus taught us, saying:

Congregation:

Our Father who are 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.

Laurie Sedgwick:

Let us sing the hymn I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say, number 320, found in your crimson Harvard hymnal.

Congregation:

(singing)

Laurie Sedgwick:

Thank you for joining us this morning. And as we go forth into this beautiful day, may we stay inspired in our work and in our education, and have the wisdom to overcome difficulties and find solutions. And may we discover new ways to reveal God's love in our encounters with others. Amen.

Congregation:

This transcript was exported on Nov 23, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

Amen.