

Thought for the day: 7 – 13 June 2021

by Maria Henriksson-Bell

Monday 7th

I have places I go to ask for prayer and pray for others, to lay down my burdens and to lend my hope to people who have lost theirs, until they find it again. They are my shelters and havens.

Saying, "Pray with me," and hearing, "You are held," is like reaching the warm house after being lost in a storm. You come in hungry and aching and there is warmth. It is like safely reaching harbour and knowing there are others, even if you have no choice but to sail again into rough seas.

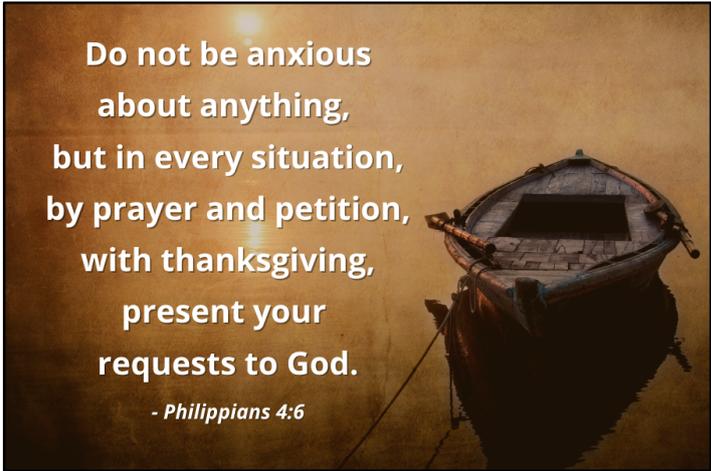
Where ever you need sail, may your passage be safe. What hostile lands you are asked to traverse may you walk with confidence. May the rain ease and the sun break through.

Until then: trust. For there are pockets of integrity. There are harbours and havens and shelters. Courage.

"Pray with me!"

"You are held."

'Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.'
(Philippians 4:6)



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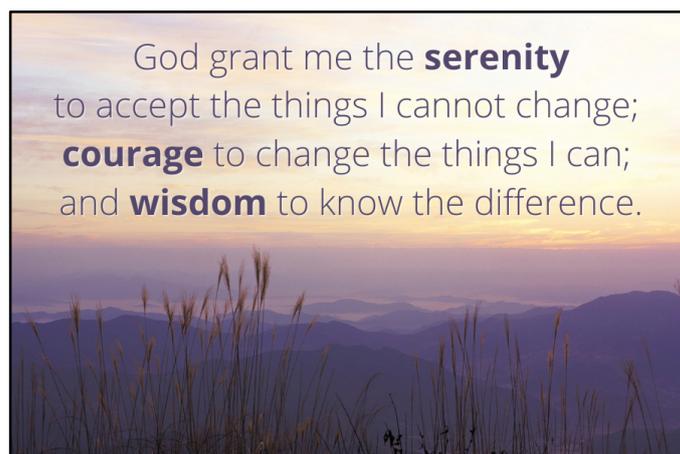
Tuesday 8th

There are times when the magnitude of injustice, inequality and destruction in the world feels overwhelming. You have signed the petitions, sent off the letters of protest, attended the marches and raised all the awareness you can and yet, not much seems to have changed.

This is the time to, regardless of religion, draw your strength from faith; faith in the possibility of change, some day, some way. Some of us pray continuously as we write the letters and attend the protests. For you, prayer may be the last resort. Regardless, I remain convinced that in terms of efficacy, prayer has the power to move mountains.

In prayer we can rail against what is wrong, find the words, identify the feelings and grow more eloquent. In prayer we can centre ourselves around what is good, fruitful and just, and in prayer we can rest, handing over what we cannot change to someone we trust will, somehow, some time, bring healing and wholeness.

*God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.*



Wednesday 9th

St Andrew's is a funny place - it is an Anglican church but we're a mix of stray Catholics, Evangelicals and people of no previous affiliation. We also welcome quite a few Quakers, Baptists and Methodists.

One of my fondest and most peculiar memories involved a lady who, without knowing at all where I was at, in life or spirit, had the urge to press her rosary into my hands along with a card on how to pray it and a card with a novena to St Anthony. I was feeling very low and something tangible, something to hold and something prescriptive to do, was literally a Mercy and Godsend of kindness.

She did not know that at all. She just had the urge to give these things to me. I am not one to pray TO a Saint, nor do I see prayer as a wish list to rattle off, but I feel greatly drawn to the idea of there being a Communion of Saints who pray with us, so I had nothing to lose by trying the novena.

Halfway through the St Anthony novena, my wish was granted.



Thursday 10th

It is said that who sings, prays twice. This hymn sprang to mind. If you are not familiar with the melody, maybe you can make up your own or ask for it to be sung at an upcoming service (hymn requests can be emailed to Rev. Alan at h.alanstewart1@gmail.com).

Brother, sister let me serve you.
Let me be as Christ to you.
Pray that I might have the grace
To let you be my servant, too.

We are pilgrims on a journey.
We are brothers on the road.
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
In the night time of your fear.
I will hold my hand out to you;
Speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping.
When you laugh, I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow
Till we've seen this journey
through.

When we sing to God in heaven,
We shall find such harmony
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony.



Brother, sister let me serve you.
Let me be as Christ to you.
Pray that I might have the grace
To let you be my servant, too.

(Richard Gillard © 1977 Scripture in Song, a division of Integrity Music/Sovereign Music UK; CCLI Licence #121524)

Friday 11th

As I was looking harassed, getting dinner ready, someone helpfully followed me around quoting an article about stress levels dropping when we're around trees. Someone else quoted an article about what duration and numbers of hugs make a measurable clinical difference. Can't remember the numbers but being hugged, and more importantly feeling held, is A Good Thing.



There is an online forum I frequent with the loveliest, kindest people. You won't find it lest you need it. Somebody there was falling apart and, as always, we swooped in; comforting, sharing perspective, reminding them that things will get better. "You are not weak, you are fragile at the moment and how do we handle fragile things? With care..." someone wrote. Others chimed in with affirmations of a better day tomorrow, an easier time soon or of grief eventually fading into memories.

These are my thin spaces, where fragile souls are held, where lost hope is returned, where kindness and goodness across space and time work their miracle. Thin, thin spaces where you don't need to listen hard to hear the angel wings.

May we reach out, may we be at peace and may we be held.

Saturday 12th

The St Andrew's and St Mary's Choirs sing every Sunday and in non-pandemic times the congregation enjoys a lusty sing, too. If you've never set foot in a church, there are words and melodies you may never have come across, but I highly recommend you come along to experience it.

If singing is your thing, you will be at home, not just at St Andrew's or St Mary's but in countless churches, chapels and cathedrals which not only carry on the rich musical legacy of the past but also innovate and write new music.



Some suggest to do one thing that scares you every day. This is, of course, to be taken with a hefty pinch of salt. But if on a Sunday morning you feel daunted by the idea of attending a service or maybe by singing*, perhaps that can be the one scary thing you do?

If you are not familiar with the below, what melody would you put to it?

*She sits like a bird, brooding on the waters,
Hovering on the chaos of the world's first day;
She sighs and she sings, mothering creation,
Waiting to give birth to all the Word will say.*

*She wings over earth, resting where she wishes,
Lighting close at hand or soaring through the skies;
She nests in the womb, welcoming each wonder,
Nourishing potential hidden to our eyes.*

*She dances in fire, startling her spectators,
Waking tongues of ecstasy where dumbness reigned;
She weans and inspires all whose hearts are open,
Nor can she be captured, silenced or restrained.*

*For she is the Spirit, one with God in essence,
Gifted by the Saviour in eternal love;
She is the key opening the scriptures,
Enemy of apathy and heavenly dove.*

*(John L Bell – b.1949; Graham Maule – b.1958; ©1988 WGWW,
Iona Community; CCLI Licence #121524)*

*COVID safety precautions such as hand sanitiser, mask wearing and social distancing are in place. Congregational singing takes place outside only for the last hymn on Sunday mornings. For more information, see our website:

<http://www.hertfordstandrews.co.uk/>

Sunday 13th

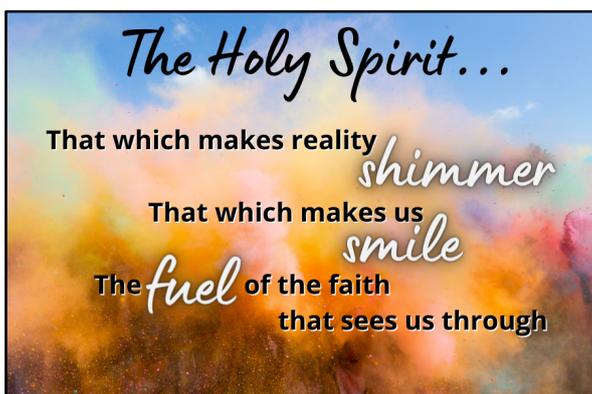
In the Church, we call that which makes reality shimmer, that which makes us smile and the fuel of the faith that sees us through, the Holy Spirit.

This year, Whitsun/Pentecost fell on 23 May. This is when the church remembers the day, 50 days after Easter, when large groups of people, from all over the Roman world, experienced a vivid sense of divine presence (the Holy Spirit), with some reporting supernatural phenomena and many people coming to faith in Christ as a result.

This coincided with the Jewish festival Shavuot, which many had travelled to Jerusalem to celebrate. Regardless of what actually took place, it is plausible that some sort of mass event occurred that led to the spread of the faith to new parts of the Roman world.

We don't know what happened but my gut instinct is that it was something beyond human ken. If mere localised mass hysteria could start a worldwide faith movement, we'd all be worshipping the Beatles by now.

Whatever fuels your faith, may it carry you and may it be vivid to you today and all days to come.



Read more about Pentecost in Acts 2, in the New Testament part of the Bible. If it throws up questions, whether it makes your heart sing or infuriates you, you are warmly invited to get in touch. The

Church provides a completely free space to ask questions and explore what faith means to you.

Our priest, Alan, can be reached by emailing h.alanstewart1@gmail.com or calling 01992 582726.

Alternatively, you could pop into a service at your local church and ask to speak to a Reader.