

Standing Together: Faith Sharing on the Pandemic

The group leader, or someone the leader invites, reads the opening prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,
we pray for your healing touch during this pandemic.
We ask you to accompany those in our small groups,
our parishes, our communities, our nation, and
throughout the world who are impacted by the virus
through infection, economic loss, or anxiety.
Renew our faith in your promise to be with us always.
Keep us mindful, Lord, that we share in this crisis
as a family and that whatever we are asked to do
to prevent the spread of infection, we do for the
good of all. May we be patient and generous
with each other, following your example,
you who live and reign with the Father and
the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Scripture: Exodus 13:17-22

Leader: A reading from the Book of Exodus

The group leader, or someone the leader invites, reads the scripture passage:

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was nearer; for God thought, "If the people face war, they may change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of the land of Egypt prepared for battle. And Moses took with him the bones of Joseph who had required a solemn oath of the Israelites, saying, "God will surely take notice of you, and then you must carry my bones with you from here." They set out from Succoth, and camped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

Leader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God.

Reflection

When God instructed Moses to lead the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt, he did not put them on a fast track to a life of peace and freedom. On the contrary, directed by God, Moses led the people on a “roundabout” journey through the wilderness. Moses could have taken the easier way out, but the longer way avoided threats that were potentially more lethal than the wilderness itself. On the one hand, the Hebrew people knew that if they endured the inconveniences and deprivations of this journey, they would eventually emerge safe and sound in a homeland where they could live normal lives. On the other hand, the people frequently grew impatient, and they often took out their frustration on Moses, complaining about the limited food supply, among other things, and sometimes turning to behavior that was not in their own best interest. We may be better situated amid the pandemic than ever before to identify with the Exodus story. Most of us find our lives disrupted in unprecedented ways, and we are being asked by our leaders to endure a period of inconvenience and deprivation that, while it will last longer than we would like, promises to take us to a place of safety and personal freedom. We can’t see the pillar of fire by night or the pillar of cloud by day, but we share with the Hebrews the assurance that God is with us through this ordeal, just as God is with us throughout our lives. When we feel our patience growing short, when we feel sad or angry or afraid, we can be still, place our feelings before God, and let his Spirit calm us and comfort us.

Sharing Question

Leader: If you wish to, share how you are experiencing this pandemic at the present moment. What feelings does it raise? What insights or learnings?

What part has your faith played during this pandemic?

Action Step

Set aside a time and place each day, alone or with members of your household, to let your silence increase your awareness that God is with you. Conclude by reading together Psalm 23 or by praying the Lord’s Prayer.

Closing Prayer

Leader: Either aloud, by writing in the chat box, or in the silence of your heart, name those affected by the pandemic for whom you wish to pray.

Leader: For the eternal peace of those who have died due to the corona virus, and for the consolation of their families and friends, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who are ill with the corona virus and for those who are caring for them, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who are experiencing anxiety or loneliness because of the changes in their daily lives, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who have lost their jobs and those whose businesses are at risk, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For doctors, nurses, hospital staffs, and first responders who risk their own health to care for others, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For public officials who are working long hours to help manage the crisis, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For the Church, that she may continue, in new ways, to be a source of comfort and encouragement to the people of God, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Now, let us pray together as Jesus taught us. Our Father

Leader: May almighty God bless us, protect us from harm, and bring us to everlasting life. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Response: Amen.

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