

Prayers 2016 07 17

Loving God...

Utterly, utterly loving God we gather to celebrate your love:

Your love that is woven into the fabric of the universe that we inhabit,
Your love that punctuates the night with meaning and the day with delight,
Your love that is known by many names and millions of unnamed knowings,
Your love that searches for us when we have wandered far down the tunnels of despair,
Your love that finds us when we are lost to ourselves ... when we don't know who we are anymore,
Your love that reaches out to us when the arms of our own love cannot embrace you or any other,
Your love that joins us when our lives are hand-cuffed to a past we long to leave behind,
Your love that holds us together from the inside without us even knowing we are held,
Your love that rejoices in our presence when we have lost all sense of our own beauty,
Your love that connects us to others who are equally in need of love, reminding us that our need is not only to be loved but also *to* love. And yet even though we have this need to love we struggle to honour it. We struggle to live it.

Utterly loving God, as we celebrate your love, we trust you to hear and hold our confession regarding our struggle to love...

We have struggled to love in more ways than we can fully fathom and others are hurt because of it. Today there are people who are hurting because of the things we have done or not done – the things we have said or not said. So they are probably in a better position than us to confess our sins because they carry the scars from them. Even so we share a sample of where we struggled to live life lovingly:

We confess that we have ignored people – sometimes purposefully and sometimes not but either way we have caused some to feel invisible – as if they don't exist – as if they shouldn't exist.

We have cut people off mid-sentence, undermining their contribution and causing them to think twice about sharing themselves with others again.

We have laughed and mocked when we needed to be serious and we have been dead-pan when we needed to be joyfully engaged.

Our facial expressions have skillfully communicated condemnation and the tiniest of condescending smirks have sent others into a self-doubting silence.

We have rushed past people. Failing to listen with openness and attentiveness. And when we have heard the words spoken we have not always felt the feelings within the words. We make quick assumptions and jump to false conclusions. We secretly think we alone are right and sometimes not so secretly. We prefer the sound of our own voice.

And when we speak we shave the edge off the truth – a little bit here and a little bit there depending on whom we are with. We do so because we fear the truth will not win us the approval we so desire. We lie – more often than not – not in what we say but in what we leave unsaid. We think it is harmless because how will anyone know...and yet it manifests within us as sadness and rage.

We live in our heads – obsessively preoccupied with our own lives unable to meaningfully engage the pain of the world around us – pain embodied by people who are considered by the dominant order to be different and dangerous.

We know these things about ourselves and yet we struggle to self-correct ourselves. Even the things about ourselves we resent we struggle to remove. And often when we try we end up tying ourselves in self-righteous knots. So, utterly, utterly loving God we gather here to bear witness to your love that is ever present within our struggle to love.

And we gather in trust that your love holds us even as we struggle to love ... and that somehow – we know not how – your loving hold on us will heal us and ultimately transform us into your loving ways. So be it...