

A Devotional for Home Use during the Pandemic

October 15, 2020, led by Cam Harder

This devotional order is designed for repeated use in your home, whether you live alone, with a partner, with children, or in a larger extended family or care facility. Once you have done it once or twice it should take about 10 minutes. The devotion is essentially a prayer for healing to the Creator who shares the suffering of all, and who brings wholeness and new life.

The devotion draws on two practices that have marked the Christian community from its beginning and which both resonate with us during this pandemic—that of the “washing” we receive in baptism, and the “anointing with oil for healing” that elders of the church brought to the sick (James 5:14).

You will need one bowl of water (larger for larger households) with a very small amount of dish detergent in it and a towel, as well as a small, open dish holding a little olive or other cooking oil. Your household should gather in a comfortable space where you can be close to each other, with these elements in the centre (for example around a kitchen table, or a coffee table in a living room). Each Monday and Wednesday this devotion will be sent out by email with a new reflection and posted on the Resurrection website. Note that you can carry out the devotion without the brief reflection if it is not available to you for some reason. Choose days/times that work for your household—perhaps a morning or afternoon break, or before bedtime, at least once or twice a week if possible. Read through the devotion beforehand and, if there is more than one in the household, decide who will take which parts.

Bible Reading by Alvin Kolach: 1 Peter 5:1-5

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. 5 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble.”

Brief Reflection by Alvin Kolach:

There are a few elections going on these days; therefore, there is a lot of debate, defamation, and deliberation taking place. Deciding who to vote for can be difficult. Some are disenchanted with politics and have become so cynical that they choose to not vote. When people become cynical, tyrants have free reign. Yes, we should exercise our franchise and vote wisely. This morning, I heard a voter describe his method of choosing a candidate. He scored his candidates on the seven deadly sins... pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth. I would also add three primary virtues...prudence, justice, and benevolence. Furthermore, I would like to apply the appeal of St. Peter who exhorted elders to be shepherds who watch over their flock, to be good examples, to be servants, and to be humble. Certainly, the standard for elders should apply to our politicians. In all the confusion over party platforms, campaign promises, and playing politics we can turn to biblical wisdom to give us clarity when we vote. You will never find the perfect party or candidate with the perfect agenda; therefore, you will have to make your assessment based on their present and past performance. Don’t be cynical. You will not find perfection. Use the ancient wisdom that has been and always will be dependable in making your decision. When making your decision on voting day, remember the attributes of the one to whom God shows favour.

Mahatma Ghandi said “A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members.”

The Washing of Hands

Listen to the following words on the audio recording or speak them aloud yourself (individually or together) as each person washes their hands. Wash slowly and thoroughly, then dry your hands with a towel, as we have been taught to do for Covid-19 protection. Repeat the words until all household members have washed their hands.

Gracious God, in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the Earth and the whole universe, calling forth life in which you took delight. In the waters of Baptism your Holy Spirit renews that life in me. Cleanse me that I may serve you, my neighbours, and this Land with the gifts you have given me.

Healing

One Person:

Our Lord Jesus healed many as a sign that God is present *everywhere*, especially in places of darkness, suffering and loneliness. In the name of Christ, the Great Physician, we (I) entrust to God all these who are in need of healing today. *All household members may name out loud individuals, communities, groups of people, or other inhabitants of the Land (plants, animals, earth, air, water) that they want to particularly remember today.*

One Person:

As we (I) were (was) anointed with oil at our (my) baptism, and as Jesus' friends anointed the sick with oil for healing, so we are (I am) anointed with oil for healing.

Each person should dip a finger in the oil and make the sign of the cross with it on the forehead of the person beside them (or on their own forehead if alone) and say the following words. If you are with others you may also lay your hands on their head after anointing them, while you say: (I) Receive this oil as a sign of the healing power of God's Spirit at work in you (me) and in all the world.

Prayer: *(spoken by one or all)*

Through the washing of hands and anointing with oil grant us (me) patience and strength during this pandemic. Heal the earth and its creatures. Comfort all who suffer now; give them courage when they are afraid, and hope when they despair. Remind the lonely that they are supported by the prayers of all your people, and embraced always in your loving arms. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Blessing: *(spoken by one or all)*

May Almighty God, before whom all powers bow, big or small, in heaven or on earth, be your (my) strong tower of protection, your (my) life and health, this day and always.

As you stand to move back into your daily life you may share the peace with each other—shaking each other's washed hands and saying something like "God's peace be with you and with our world" or (if alone) reminding yourself "God's peace is with me and with our world."