

A Prayer for the Church in the Early Days of the COVID-19 Pandemic

BY WALTER HENEGAR

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Almighty God,
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend,
You who sit enthroned over the flood—
We are staggering in the surf of breakers
bringing bad news, and worse news,
while an invisible menace laps at our doorstep.

Father of all mercies, have mercy on us.
We are anxious, exhausted, angry, and sad.
We need your peace that surpasses understanding
to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
Be our refuge and strength;
be our very present help in this time of trouble.

Even in this trouble we thank you:
for green Spring life that refuses to wait for death's shadow to pass;
for technology that unites exiles and draws the solitary near;
for your church that prevails in catacombs and quarantine;
for your own Holy Spirit who is socially present with us, always.

But Oh, forgive us, Holy Lord:
for hating our unwashed neighbors in our heart;
for opening our hearts to unfettered fear;
for closing our hearts, and our pockets, to any in need;
for loosening our grip on your precious and very great promises.

Assure us, our Gracious Redeemer:
that our sins are nailed to the cross of Jesus;
that we are clothed in the righteous white robes of Christ;
that you will never leave us nor forsake us;
that nothing – nothing – can separate us from your love.

Great Physician, we pray for those most vulnerable to this virus:
for the elderly, the weak, and those with chronic conditions;
for the poor, the hungry, and the isolated;
for those already infected.
Deliver them from this evil,
and prevent the rest of us from carrying it to them.

God of Hosts, we pray for the caregivers on the front lines:
for doctors and nurses and healthcare workers;
for police and firefighters and government officials;
for parents in the home and under-shepherds in the church:
Guard and guide them; shield and sustain them.

Rock of Ages, we pray for the newly unstable:
for those who have lost jobs, lost businesses, lost savings, lost homes;
for those facing the likelihood of losing even more—
Hide them in the cool shadow of your wings;
provide every good thing for them
that you, as a good Father, know they need.

Indwelling Spirit, empower your people to serve:
to get wisdom, and live by it, and share it freely;
to embody peace amid the strife of tongues;
to present our bodies as living sacrifices;
to suffer with Christ in patient endurance.

Give us all fresh confidence that there is:
no future where you are not present,
no sorrow where you are not near,
no tears not kept in your bottle,
no locust-eaten years you will not restore.

And so we trust you, our generous Provider:
if the curve does not flatten,
if the market does not pull up,
if the shelves go empty,
and if all our accounts drain to pennies—
Even still, let us rejoice in the Lord, our strength;
let us take joy in the God of our salvation.

In the name of Jesus, we ask, Amen.

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