

PRAYER OF APPROACH, CONFESSION, & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Eternal God,
You tell us to love one another
but not without loving each and every one of us first.
You not only teach us to love,
You are love.

Through Jesus we see welcoming and compassionate ways.
Widen our hearts to be ever more empathetic,
feeling what others feel.
Make us the hands and feet of Christ,
taking our empathy and turning it into a compassion
that reaches out to help.

Lord, we confess that forgiveness
does not always come easily to us.
Like Peter, we look to place limitations on forgiveness:
isn't forgiving someone 7 times enough?
But no, even if we reach 77 times
grace and mercy should abound.

We struggle with this.
We wrestle with wanting to teach someone a lesson
by watching them struggle,
or learn the hard way from a painful mistake.
Other times
we find it particularly difficult to forgive those whom we are closest to;
the ones we never would have expected
to betray or wound
making forgiveness a weighty challenge.

Which is why we turn to you, God.
You show us the way to forgiveness.
For you, forgiveness is more than just words spoken,
it is experienced on a cross;
it is an unending, ever-enduring love
that cannot be stamped out.

As you forgive us, help us to forgive one another.
Give us the courage, the bravery and the love
to water the seeds of forgiveness with new dreams and wild risks
until it bears unexpected fruit.
Help us to forgive from the heart
and work to build your kingdom here on earth
where forgiveness removes us from debt, from darkness, from fear
and becomes a song to sing;
I, becoming We, becoming Yours.

We pray all this in the name of Christ who showed us love and forgiveness on a cross, and
taught us to pray, saying, Our Father...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name;
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever...

May the Peace of Christ be with you all.... And also with you...