

**"Desert Spirituality: Surviving Ministry"
SOLITUDE, SILENCE, PRAYER**

PRELUDE

WELCOME/INTRO

THE INVITATION

Lord, you have put a yearning in our hearts for you. You have invited us, like the apostles, to come away with you that we may live our lives in your presence. Help us to understand and respond to your invitation, to enter into the silence of our hearts and meet you there, where the Kingdom of God is. Amen.

SOLITUDE

Reflection (from Henri Nouwen)

"Solitude is the place of the great struggle and the great encounter... This might sound rather forbidding. But once we have given all our fantasies their due and let them wander off, we will see that we are dealing here with that holy place where ministry and spirituality embrace each other. It is the place of solitude."

Scripture MARK 6:31-32

³¹ He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³² And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.

Prayer

O God, I come to you now, as a child to a Mother,
Out of the heat which stifles, into the coolness of One who cares.

**Listen to me inside,
Under my words, where the trembling is,
In the fears, which freeze my living,
In the anger, which takes my loving,
In the doubts, which chill my hoping,
In the events, which shrivel my thinking.
Open the ears of my heart
that I may hear your voice in the silence and the noise of life.
Re-awaken me that I can listen to you...**

(SILENCE)

SONG "Open Our Eyes"

TFWS 2086

SILENCE

Reflection (from Henri Nouwen)

"The Desert Fathers and Mothers praise silence as the safest way to God. 'I have often repented of having spoken,' Abba Arsenius once said, 'but never of having remained silent.' The Word of God is born out of the eternal silence of God. In order to be a minister in the Name of Jesus, our ministry must also point beyond our words to the unspeakable mystery of God. Silence gives meaning to our words.'

Scripture 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

If I speak in the tongues of humans and of angels but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all my possessions and if I hand over my body so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Prayer

**O God of life, eternity cannot hold you,
nor can our noisy words catch your magnificence.
Yet in the space of our hearts and in silence,
you find us, inform us, and redeem us...
(SILENCE)**

CHOIR

"Down to the River to Pray"

W&S 3164

PRAYER

The Great Thanksgiving

Invitation (from Henri Nouwen)

"To live a prayerful life, we cannot do without specific prayers. We need to say them in such a way that we can listen better to the Spirit praying in us."

We often forget that the entire Eucharistic prayer, the Prayer of The Great Thanksgiving for Communion, is a prayer! We are not talking to the people around us or our congregations, we are talking to God. Let us then, listen and say this prayer as though we are praying,

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

The Great Thanksgiving Prayer

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you Almighty God, for in the communion of your love Christ comes close to us and we come close to Christ.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory,
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Taking the Bread

On the night of his arrest Jesus took bread (LIFT BREAD)

And having blessed it he broke the bread, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'This is my body, given for you.'

In the same way he took the cup (LIFT CUP)

And having given thanks for it, he poured it out and gave the cup to his disciples, saying, "this cup is the new relationship with God, sealed with my blood. Take this and share it. I shall drink with you next in the Kingdom of God."

With all those near and far from us now, who yet in this mystery are close to us, we join with them as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.

Blessing the Bread

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and in other places, and on this bread and juice. May they become for us your body, offering life, healing, renewing and making us whole. And as the bread and cup which we now eat and drink are offered to us, may we be offered again to you, flesh of your flesh, loving and caring in the world.

All honor and glory are yours, almighty God, now and for ever.

Amen

Prayer of Jesus

With thanksgiving, let us pray together,

**O God of Life and Love,
may we honor and praise you;
May we work with you to bring justice peace and love;
Give us what we need for growth, enough bread to share,
And help us, through forgiving others, to accept forgiveness.
Strengthen us in times of testing, that we may resist all evil,
For all blessings and love are yours, now and forever.**

Amen.

*Bill Wallace, Aotearoa/New Zealand
from www.minnesotaumc.org*

Breaking the Bread

Many grains were gathered together to make this bread, many grapes were mixed to make this juice. We who are many are one in Christ.

The bread we break is a sharing in the bread of life (*BREAK BREAD*)

The cup we drink is a sharing in the cup of forgiveness (*LIFT THE CUP*)

Giving the Bread

all come forward who wish to share in communion

Prayer after Communion

**God of glory, we have seen with our eyes and touched with our hands, the bread of heaven.
Strengthen us in our life together, that we may grow in love for you and for each other;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

SONG “May You Run and Not Be Weary” FWS 2281

A BLESSING

God bless to you this day – the earth beneath your feet,
The path on which you tread – the work of hand and mind,
The things your heart desires.

**And when the day is over,
God bless in us a prayer, today and always.**

POSTLUDE

There are many sources for desert spirituality, prayer and retreat, start with a few:

The Way of the Heart by Henri J.M. Nouwen
Out of the Solitude by Henri J.M. Nouwen
Life of the Beloved by Henri J.M. Nouwen
Prayer by Richard J. Foster
Soul Feast by Marjorie J. Thompson