

## Prayers for the People, Sunday August 25, 2013

### John Kleinig

As we come to God in our prayers for the world, I would like to open our prayer as a short meditation on a verse from the book of Ecclesiastes. The *New International Version* translates Ecclesiastes 7:29 as follows:

"This only have I found: God created mankind upright, but they have gone in search of many schemes."

The *Jerusalem Bible* puts it in this interesting way:

"This, however, you must know: I find that God made man simple; man's complex problems are of his own devising."

Let us pray:

Holy One, you created us in your image; you saw what you had made, and it was good; you gave us the power to govern your creation.

And we have made a mess of things.

We have carelessly and greedily exploited the world you have given us; we have plundered and polluted; we have treated as ours that over which we were made stewards; we have thought of today and not of tomorrow.

We pray for those who suffer the consequences of our poor stewardship, whether through illness or the depletion or destruction of their resources; we pray for those who seek ways to minimize or repair the damage we have caused and to develop more sustainable ways of living. We pray for those who have the responsibility for drawing up and enforcing policies that impact on our planet's ecologies.

We have also made a mess of our social order. We are perpetually beset by encroachment, war, and terrorism; by selfishness, acquisitiveness, and possessiveness. We are daily assailed by stories of oppression and inhumanity from Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Tibet, and many of the African countries that are the residues of once arrogant Empires. They are far away and yet not so far away, as some of their peoples seek to remake their homes in this place. And yet, as we have done with the original inhabitants of this land, we have treated them badly as though their desire to come here has been a matter of presumption, as though we and our families were not ourselves once strangers in this place.

We pray for all these people and peoples. We do not know how to solve their complex and seemingly intractable problems. We can simply present their cries to you, along with those who have power to develop humane policies and change cruel practices. We uphold them before you in the knowledge of your redemptive power, the power that brought deliverance and resurrection from crucifixion, light from darkness, good from evil.

At this time we pray particularly for our own country – for the election it anticipates and debates. Help us to look beyond the pandering for votes to the values that we seek to reflect and advance in our nation, the human needs that must be addressed, and the responsibility we have to the wider world in which we live.

In the same spirit we also hold before you the privilege and burden we have to choose a new leader for this congregation, one who will be responsive both to our own diverse needs as well as to those of our local community.

And finally, we come to you knowing that he who called the little child to himself and feeds the sparrow also cares for those individuals in our midst – ourselves included – who are suffering, bereaved, empty, weak, confused and needy:

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those named and others in our hearts, and we offer ourselves and them, in the prayer that was commended to us:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen