

Praying for the underdog

Today I wanted to take the theme of praying for the under-dog: the people on the “losing team”, the neglected, the ignored, the abused, the exploited, the innocent, the “little man” or woman. But the more I thought about it, the more I realised that we should also pray for the “top-dog”, the world's winners and takers, the abusers, those who exploit, those who could be considered to be engaged in evil, the powerful and controlling, people who make life difficult for those who are seen as less... We should pray for them because we are all important in this world, we are all loved by God, all have equal rights to be loved and understood. Difficult though this might be, we are all in need of prayer.

So, let us pray.

Firstly, let us think about the world...the living, breathing planet on which we live. We pray for those who have power over making big changes in the way countries look after the environment. We think about the politicians trying to steer a course where we can protect our world but also still be economically sound. We pray for those who seem to work against the planet by still polluting and pillaging where they can, blind to the science and only interested in short-term profit. We think of those who already suffer due to the climate change we have initiated: those whose livelihoods are threatened, whose homes are being destroyed, who live where the earth is dramatically changing and becoming inhospitable. Lord, we pray for our brothers and sisters around the world who seem not to care and for those who carry the weight of climate change. Help us to do our parts, remembering that nothing and no one is too small to make a difference.

We think about wars and conflicts across the world. Particularly we think of those in Ukraine, Gaza and Israel. We ask for those who are suffering, to be comforted; for those who are homeless, to find shelter; for those who are hungry, to be fed and for those who have lost friends and family, to be welcomed. There is so much trauma and sorrow that we can hardly begin to imagine. We also pray for those who are in control – those who make decisions that affect thousands of others. We pray that they might find ways to peace: that they might be courageous, bold and blessed with wisdom and integrity. We are made uncomfortable by those who dish out abuse at those who express opinions in the public domain. We recoil from the anger shown to those of a Jewish faith and equally to those of a Muslim faith who have not had a hand in today's violence and atrocities. Protect those who speak for peace and for those who stand up for democracy. We remember too, that we have a part to play in keeping peace in our own lives. Help us to consider the wider effects of our actions. None of us are blameless, we all make mistakes, but Lord, help us to strive for peaceful living.

We pray for regimes that keep people from reaching their potential. There are places in this world where economies are strangled for political gain; where people are treated not as individuals who need to grow in mind, body and spirit but merely as numbers or bodies. Whole countries are not free but shackled by debt and poverty. For organisations and businesses that oppress for private gain – we pray that they might look anew at their practices. We pray for them and for those who have it within their power to break the chains of subjugation. May we support individuals and organisations who move to bring about freedom and choice for all. We think in particular of Amnesty International and Fair Trade: may their work be blessed.

We pray for those without homes and for those who have the power to create more homes. We pray for those whose health is failing and for those who lovingly care for them. We pray for families who find it hard to feed and clothe their children and we pray for those who are wasteful...may they realise that they can help not only themselves but also others by becoming more thoughtful. We remember those we personally know who need the comfort and power of your love...quietly, we name them before you now...

And where do we stand? Are we the powerful or the powerless? At times we can be either. We are stewards of God's world. Our decisions and actions, collectively and individually, have impacts: they can heighten or resolve problems and they can bring healing. Help us when we have the power to help others, to seize the opportunity. Let us use our gifts wisely. Let us share our power and our abilities and be humble, and when we feel powerless, help us to remember that “nothing in front of us [me] is greater than God behind us [me]”.

Amen