

# SAGE HILL CAMPING TRIP: FEAR NOT, GOD IS WITH US!

August 2010



## GATHERING (COLLECT)

*The ringing of a temple bell opens our time together. We will remain seated throughout this relaxed service.*

*Service Leader*      God is with us – in the city and here camping! Quiet everyone. Pay attention!

*All sit silently, perhaps with eyes closed, to listen for what sounds we hear – the birds, the wind, other campers, our own breath. May these sounds be an opening hymn of praise to our Creator God.*

*All pray together a Collect of Purity*

**Not only are you with us, God, you also know us inside and out. You know our deepest desires and our secrets. Transform us in ways we can't even imagine, so that we may love you more fully in all we say and do, not by our own effort but through the power of Christ our Lord.**

*Prayer Leader*      The Lord be with you.

*Community*      **And also with you.**

*Prayer Leader*      Let's continue talking and listening to God.

*Then the Prayer Leader offers the Collect of the Day*

*Prayer Leader*      Loving God, in you we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray that, by your Holy Spirit and like Mary mother of your incarnate being Jesus, we will follow your direction and wisdom in our lives. In all our cares and occupations, may we not forget you but remember that we are ever walking in your sight.

*Community*      **Amen.**

## PSALM (adapted from *The Message* paraphrase)

*The Service Leader invites all to read Psalm 34 responsively, the Community reading the verses in bold*

I bless God every chance I get; my lungs expand with God's praise.

**I live and breathe God; if things aren't going well, hear this and be happy:  
Join me in spreading the news; together let's get the word out.**

God met me more than halfway, God freed me from my anxious fears.  
Look at him; give him your warmest smile. Never hide your feelings from him.

**When I was desperate, I called out, and God got me out of a tight spot.  
God's angel sets up a circle of protection around us while we pray.**

Open your mouth and taste, open your eyes and see— how good God is. Blessed are you who run to him.

**Worship God if you want the best; worship opens doors to all his goodness.  
Young lions on the prowl get hungry, but God-seekers are full of God.**

Come, children, listen closely; I'll give you a lesson in God worship.  
Who out there has a desire to live? Can't wait each day to come upon beauty?

**Guard your tongue from profanity, and no more lying through your teeth.  
Turn your back on sin; do something good. Embrace peace—don't let it get away!**

God keeps an eye on his friends, his ears pick up every moan and groan.  
God won't put up with rebels; he'll cull them from the pack.

**Is anyone crying for help? God is listening, ready to rescue you.**

If your heart is broken, you'll find God right there; if you're kicked in the gut,  
he'll help you catch your breath. Disciples so often get into trouble; still, God is there every time.

**The wicked die slowly; they waste their lives hating the good.  
God pays for each slave's freedom; no one who runs to him loses out.**

*A temple bell signals a time of reflective silence. May the sounds we hear be as a song of worship.*

## THE GOSPEL (acted out following a paraphrase from *The Message*)

*Take several deep breaths to prepare for hearing the Gospel, perhaps with eyes closed.  
May these smells be as incense of thanksgiving rising up to our Creator God.*

*The Service Leader then introduces the Gospel, saying*

Now let's listen to this story from the life of Jesus – about his mother, before he was born – as remembered in the Gospel of Luke (1.39-56)

Deacon  
Community

This is Good News for us.  
**We will listen and watch, let it soak into our souls, and be changed!**

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Mary didn't waste a minute. She got up and traveled to a town in Judah in the hill country, straight to Zachariah's house, and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb leaped. [Elizabeth] was filled with the Holy Spirit, and sang out exuberantly, You're so blessed among women, and the babe in your womb, also blessed! And why am I so blessed that the mother of my Lord visits me? The moment the sound of your greeting entered my ears, The babe in my womb skipped like a lamb for sheer joy. Blessed woman, who believed what God said, believed every word would come true!

And Mary said, I'm bursting with God-news; I'm dancing the song of my Savior God. God took one good look at me, and look what happened— I'm the most fortunate woman on earth! What God has done for me will never be forgotten, the God whose very name is holy, set apart from all others. His mercy flows in wave after wave on those who are in awe before him. He bared his arm and showed his strength, scattered the bluffing braggarts. He knocked tyrants off their high horses, pulled victims out of the mud. The starving poor sat down to a banquet; the callous rich were left out in the cold. He embraced his chosen child, Israel; he remembered and piled on the mercies, piled them high. It's exactly what he promised, beginning with Abraham and right up to now.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months and then went back to her own home.

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Deacon  
Community

May you indeed experience this as a life-giving Word.  
**And may our lives be a witness of praise to Christ.**

## INTERACTIVE MEDITATION

*The Deacon will lead the Community in a time of interactive meditation on the Gospel.*

**The Risk Is Worth It, So Is the Waiting**  
*A poetic reflection on Mary Mother of Jesus  
in Mt 1.18-25 and Lk 1.26-2.40.*

am now alone.

There are rumors, yes, I  
hear them  
floating about like aimless boats, bouncing  
back and forth in hollow chambers  
into the unknown.  
But they are not true.

My beloved is not to blame,  
nor am I. Some think me  
a morally-deficit whore succumbed  
by nativity and lust. Others say,  
to equal degradation, that I  
am holy, weak, submissive to my God.

Neither am I  
but waiting.  
I  
am waiting for life to begin.

Some announcements of pregnancy are  
met with boundless joy and excitement;  
some with deep sorrow or fear.  
Shock; the exam printout reads,  
"You  
are pregnant."

But it is not planned, and I  
am a young, not widowed, single woman.  
In the crowd, I

In the family, I  
am now she.  
In life, I  
have yet to begin.

But a dear messenger, an angle, a saint of my  
God proposed a wager –  
a challenge to my  
already categorized social status.

Of course I  
was afraid –

To remain a single mother,  
a real possibility.  
To be without the love and care of a social network,

a real possibility.  
To be different, misunderstood, outcast,  
definitely.

But the promise of something more,  
to transcend the limits of my  
social class,  
the Hope for real change,  
Salvation  
was – no is – too much to pass over.

The rumors are not true. I  
boldly agreed to co-create New Life.  
*The risk is worth it,  
so is the waiting.*

Find a quiet place to sit where you feel comfortable and safe (alone or with a friend).

Reflect on the following questions, as creatively as you would like (e.g. poem, art):

1. How do you imagine that Mary, mother of Jesus, felt – when she learned that she was pregnant and later when she greeted her cousin Elizabeth?
2. When have you taken a risk, knowing that it was the *right* decision? When have you taken a risk, knowing it was the *wrong* decision? How did you feel?
3. How did your friends and family respond when they found out? Where was God when you took those risks?
4. Is there a *life-giving* risk that God might be calling you to take now?
5. How could your friends and family support/ challenge/hold you accountable in taking this life-giving risk?

Capture your reflections using the blank space below, if desired. It is for your eyes only and for you to keep. There will be an *optional* opportunity to share your reflection(s) later. *When the temple bell rings, please re-gather with the group.*

*Following the meditation, a temple bell signals a time of reflective silence. Again, may the sounds we hear be as a song of worship.*

## OUR PRAYERS

*Prayer Leader* As we gather together this morning to worship and nurture our relationship with God, I invite you now to offer to God those things with give joy to or burden your hearts:

*All are welcome to offer individual prayers, intentions and concerns, aloud or in silence.*

*When the time is right, the Prayer Leader continues, with the Community reading the refrain in bold*

Bless this community of Jesus, and use us freely as a means of drawing others into your kingdom life.  
**Prepare our tongues, O God.**

*All are invited pray one of the following petitions*

Strengthen us who follow Jesus and all working for peace, justice, reconciliation, and understanding.  
**Prepare our hands, O God.**

Heal us, and help the lonely, the betrayed, the suffering and the dying to find strength in Jesus.  
**Prepare our hearts, O God.**

Give us knowledge of your Word and growth in the Spirit, increasing in us prayer, study, daily actions and whole lives centered on Jesus.  
**Prepare our minds, O God.**

Welcome those whose memories we hold dear, and may all who have died in your friendship live with you forever.  
**Prepare our souls, O God.**

*The Prayer Leader continues, saying*

Let's now be honest about our wrongdoings against God, self, and all of creation:

*After a moment of silent reflection, all say*

**O God, who sent gifts of the Holy Spirit to those first saints, we know you continue to send gifts to us, even though we do not claim them. We confess that we have not always opened our gifts. We have often chosen to keep them packed away or buried.**

**Move us, by your Spirit, to pick up our gifts that you so freely give, to open them, and to spend them lavishly on the stewardship of your world.**

**We confess to you how often our thoughts and motives are confused, both individually and when we are together as your people, and that this confusion has often blinded us to your interest in our lives and in the world.**

**Break in on our confusion, O God, and astonish us anew.**

**Our prayer is that you will claim us again and silence within us our desire to always have the words for every occasion, that we might hear the whisper of the wings of your Spirit dove.**

*Deacon* Thank you, God, for your never-ending mercies and for showing us the best way through Jesus Christ. Strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life.

*Community* To you we offer up all these our sorrows and joys, knowing that you care, that you walk with us each day, and that you will never leave us.  
**Amen.**

## THE EUCHARIST

*Deacon* Joining with our sister and brothers at St. John's and around the world in remembering this life-giving generosity of God through Jesus Christ, we share this consecrated bread and wine:

*Community* To you, Lord, belongs the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory and majesty.  
**All that is in the heavens and the earth is yours and of your own we give to you.**

*Deacon* Blessed are you, God of all creation through your goodness we have these gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.

*Community* **Blessed be God for ever.**

*Deacon* Redeemer God, rich in mercy, infinite in goodness, we were far off until you brought us near and our hands are empty until you fill them. As we eat this bread and drink this wine, consecrated through the power of your Holy Spirit, feed us with heavenly food, renew us in your service, unite us in Christ and bring us to your everlasting kingdom.

Now let us pray the prayer our Savior Christ has taught us:

*All say The Lord's Prayer, each in her/his own language*

**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.  
And 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.**

*Deacon* So, come to this table, you who have much faith and you who would like to have more.  
You who have been to this table often,

and you who have not been for a long time or ever before.  
You who have tried to follow Jesus,  
and you who have failed. Come.  
It is Christ who invites us all to meet him here.

*The community now stands, as the Deacon invites the community to share the bread and wine with each other going around in a circle, saying*

*Bread:* The body of Christ, the bread of heaven.

*Wine:* The blood of Christ, the cup of salvation.

*All remain silent during this time, again listening to the songs that creation sings.*

*Afterward, all remain standing and pray*

**Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us into your family through Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart, through Christ our Lord. Amen**

## BLESSING, DISMISSAL & PEACE

*Deacon* May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships, so that you may live wisely in your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and the exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in the world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done to bring justice and peace to all of God's creation.

*Community* **We receive this blessing in taking risks, knowing that God is with us.**

*Deacon* As Jesus was leaving his disciples he said, "I give you peace, the kind of peace that only I can give. It isn't like the peace that this world can give. So don't be worried or afraid" (John 14.27, paraphrase from *The Message*).

*Community* Go forth to love and serve the Lord, with this peace of Christ always with you.  
**And also with you.**

*Acknowledging our reconciliation to God and one another and as a small practice of peace-making, all share Christ's peace with each other saying, "God's Peace is with you."*

This Deacon's Mass draws upon many sources – ancient and new, global and local:

Our Prayers litany is drawn from a *Holy Spirit Silver Lake* liturgy (season of Pentecost).  
The Confession is from a *St. Stephen's Hollywood* liturgy (season of Pentecost).  
The Eucharistic invitation is from the New Zealand Prayer book and *Holy Spirit* liturgy.  
The Blessing is adapted from a traditional Franciscan blessing.  
The poem, written by S. L-H, is entitled elsewhere as  
“Waiting, in accompaniment with Single Mothers.”