



‘Your Brother’s Blood Cries Out from the Ground’

INTRODUCTION

The scene from Genesis could hardly be more horrifying: out of jealousy, Cain has killed his brother Abel and tried to hide his act from God. God, who sees all, knows the terrible truth and replies, “Your brother’s blood cries out from the ground” (Genesis 4:10).

The killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Aubery and others have at last awakened us that the blood of our Black brothers

and sisters has been crying out from the centuries-old ground of racism in America.

In this special issue, the officers of The Order of Saint Luke offer spiritual guidance and liturgical resources to help our members and their congregations engaged in the difficult work of dismantling racism in both the Church and in society. These resources are offered freely with the request that when used, credit be given to the

author.

None of us will be fully liberated in Christ until all are liberated from the sin of racial prejudice and the violence it causes. We pray that we all will work toward the eradication of racism so that all are mutually respected, honored, and loved as God loves each of us.

*Sr. Cynthia B. Astle, OSL
Font Editor*

We come bearing the hope of Hagar

June 21, 2020

Genesis 21:8-21

Maybe it is a sign of my age, but if you ask me to think of a story from the Hebrew Bible, I think of Sarah laughing when the messengers told Abraham that she was about to be pregnant. It certainly seemed preposterous at her age. In fact, she and Abraham had already taken the matter of having a child into their own hands. They would use Hagar, a slave who belonged to Sarah.

Things proceeded according to Sarah’s plan, and Hagar became pregnant. But Sarah perceived Hagar as acting uppity toward her and complained to Abraham. Abraham declined to get involved and told Sarah to deal with it herself. Sarah’s solution was to treat Hagar so harshly that she ran away into the desert. The angel of God appeared to her and told her to go back home before she died of heat and hunger. She went back and gave birth to Ishmael.

Several years later, three



Abbot Elizabeth Moore, OSL, deliver a sermon based on Genesis 21:8-21 on June 21, 2020. (Vimeo Screenshot by The Font)

messengers show up at Sarah and Abraham’s tent and make their startling pronouncement. As promised, Sarah gave birth to Isaac.

Hagar and Ishmael were still living in the family compound, and Sarah saw Ishmael as a rival to her son, Isaac. She wants them gone. Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael into the desert with the meagerest of supplies - not enough to keep them alive for more than a few days. But God hears the child crying and comes to Hagar. God opens her eyes to see a well. She and the child will be able to

survive. Like Sarah and Abraham, they have God’s promise.

We are accustomed to hearing this story from the perspective of Abraham and Sarah. But I ask you today to hear the story from Hagar’s perspective. How does this story appear through Hagar’s eyes?

We don’t know how Hagar ended up being a slave in Sarah’s household, but I think it is safe to

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We come bearing the hope of Hagar

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say Hagar didn't choose this life. When it becomes clear that Sarah can't conceive, Sarah sees Hagar as a solution. In a scene eerily reminiscent of "The Handmaid's Tale" she is given to Abraham as a surrogate wife. She gets pregnant. Even though that is what Sarah wanted, her reaction is not one of happiness, but of jealousy.

Hagar is mistreated so badly that running away seems like her best option, even though she will almost certainly die in the desert. The angel sends her back, not because Sarah will change her attitude, but because it is the only way to survive. God wants her to live.

The next time Hagar goes to the desert it is not because she has run away. She has been sent away. She and the child had once been a solution to a problem. Now they are expendable. In fact, they cause a problem. Ishmael was Abraham's first-born son. He should be Abraham's heir. They have to go.

From Hagar's perspective, she has been exploited but is now being pushed away. She is a primary character in the story, and yet she is there because she is useful, not because we even know her as a person. She was slave who was a convenient way to solve a problem. We have no hint that she was consulted about what was being planned. She was useful, but then she was expendable. Seeing her was distressing to those who had used her. She was, in reality, thrown away.

I wish that story did not resonate so clearly with our situation today. There are painful parallels in our country of people who have been seen as useful solutions rather than human beings.

The early economy of this country was based on slave labor. Cotton was king. More bodies were needed to

To many Black women, Hagar's story redeems their own stories. God makes sure that Hagar survives. Her life is valued. The world may not act like that is true, but God says it is true.

work the fields. What was the solution? African slaves. They had been useful, but then they were distressing. They were expendable.

We needed a railroad built across the nation, but that required laborers. What was the solution? Bring in Chinese men. They were useful, but then they were expendable.

The great valleys of California produces food to feed the nation, but that food needs to be picked. What is the solution? Mexican migrant workers. They are useful, but then they are expendable.

Unfortunately, the indigenous people of this land never were identified as the solution to any problem, so they just went directly to being expendable.

And so we come to the end of our story about Hagar. Sent out into the desert, she cannot bear to watch Ishmael die, and so she goes a distance away from him and they both weep. All hope of survival is gone. And then the angel of God speaks.

"What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him."

Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

God opened her eyes. God helped her make a way out of no way. She had been thrown away, but she survived. Ishmael survived. They had not been overcome.

To many Black women, Hagar's story redeems their own stories. God makes sure that Hagar survives. Her life is valued. The world may not act like that is true, but God says it is true.

God is with her and God will make a way out of no way.

God does not abandon her to be treated as less than human.

God will make a way out of no way.

God gives her hope for the future.

God will make a way out of no way.

As followers of Christ, we believe that every human being is a child of God. The sight of people being beaten or shot is unbearable to us. The sight of a young Chinese woman being spit on makes us seethe with anger. No human being is merely a solution to a problem. No human being is expendable. God wants us to survive.

Whatever comes, we have hope. We have hope when we see people walking arm-in-arm against injustice. We have hope when we see elders like us and young children standing together declaring that "Black Lives Matter". We have hope because we know that God will make a way out of no way. Thanks be to God.

Find a video of this sermon at <https://vimeo.com/429811390>

LITANY OF LAMENT

Elizabeth S. Moore, OSL, June 2020

We hear your prophet crying, O God, "Let justice roll down like water..."

But it is not justice we see flowing; it is the blood of black men and women.

Peace without justice is neither peace nor justice.

It is not justice we see flowing it is the tears of a mother who quakes with fear
when her son goes out the front door.

Peace without justice is neither peace nor justice.

It is not justice we see flowing; it is clouds of tear gas rolling
down the streets where young people cry out the names of the murdered.

Peace without justice is neither peace nor justice.

It is not justice we see flowing; it is the sweat of those fighting for their lives from two deadly viruses: the pandemic and racism. Both are deadly. Only one has any hope for a vaccine.

Peace without justice is neither peace nor justice.

It is not justice we see flowing; it is a raging river that separates those of us oblivious to our

privilege from those denied their basic human dignity.

Peace without justice is neither peace nor justice.

God, we want to stop that river. We want to quell those tears. We want the violence to cease. And so we turn to you, confessing what we know to be true:

Peace without justice is neither peace nor justice.

There can be no choice between peace and justice. They must live together or die together. We cannot turn our back on hatred. Open our hearts to hear your call. Give us the strength to be instruments of peace and justice right here, right now.

For peace without justice is neither peace nor justice.

God, we come to you in pain, but also in trust. Hear the cry of our hearts.

"Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

Amen.



GOD OF GRACE AND MERCY

George R. Crisp, OSL (June 2020)

Antiphon (spoken or sung):

God of grace and mercy, hear our prayer.

We need grace to acknowledge our complicity and shame for the systemic discrimination and pervasive institutional racism we have accepted and fostered.

We need mercy to forgive and the humility to ask for forgiveness for our sinful actions and beliefs.

God of grace and mercy, hear our prayer.

We need grace to open our eyes and minds to see the steps forward we must take.

We need mercy to learn what we do not yet know.

God of grace and mercy, hear our prayer.

We need grace to move into a future

of respect, equality and partnership with each other.

We need mercy to make the changes required to live in peace together.

God of grace and mercy, hear our prayer.

We need the grace that calls us to align our actions with your vision

for relational harmony.
We need mercy to seek the wholeness of shalom.

God of grace and mercy, hear our prayer.

GOD OF GRACE AND MERCY (ANTIPHON)



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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Barbara Troxell, OSL, June, 2020

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another, as we seek God's forgiving grace.

Gracious, life-giving God, in this dreadful time of death-dealing racism and of an extreme life-threatening virus, we cry out, we grieve, we express sadness and anger and fear.

We confess our fundamental sin of not loving you with our whole heart nor our neighbor as ourselves. **God, have mercy**

We confess our blindness when we maintain negative assumptions about persons different from ourselves. **Christ, have mercy**

We confess our tendency to separate and categorize persons by race, class, national origin, gender, and sexual orientation. **Spirit, have mercy**

We confess divisive cultural biases that lead to devastating actions of damage to other people. **Kyrie, eleison**

We confess our shameful silence

in the presence of grave injustice. **Christe, eleison**

We confess our fear of risking solidarity with the marginalized, the least, and the last. **Kyrie, eleison**

With deep gratitude and repentant hearts, we come to you, seeking to be faithful, humble, courageous followers of Your Way, for we pray in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

THREE PRAYERS

Daniel Benedict, OSL (June 2020)

I.
God who sees the suffering of all
people:

When the road is long,
When the way is hard,
When the cause is just,

Come by here.

Where hate is entrenched,
Where protest puts us at risk,
Where police are tempted to use
deadly force,

Come by here.

When government is divided,
When security protects business
and sacrifices citizens,
When our song is shouted down,

Come by here.

Where policy is changing,
Where it isn't,
Where martyrs die and mourners
cry,

Come by here.

Pillar of Fire by night and Cloud
of Smoke by day,
lead and guide us in resolute
action

knowing we belong to each other
until all shall be well,
and all shall be well,
and all manner of thing shall
be well. Amen.

The last two lines are from Julian
of Norwich

Daniel Benedict, Order of Saint
Luke

II.
God of mercy and foe of
indifference,

Until every hurt is healed,
Until restoration replaces
retribution,



Photo by Jack Sharp/Unsplash

Until the beloved community
replaces white privilege,

Let your kin-dom come.

When property is protected and
people of color are not,

When criminal justice equals
institutional racism,

When COVID-19 runs rampant
in prisons,

Let your kin-dom come.

As long as police misconduct can
be erased,

As long as prisons are big
business,

As long as we forget that we
belong to each other,

Let your kin-dom come.

Into our churches,

Into our praying,

Into our caring,

Let your kin-dom come.

God of tender compassion,

you shine on those who live
in fear

and under the shadow of death:

Keep us mindful of Lazarus
at the gate

and bold to confront the powers
that keep him there,

through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

*The concluding section
adapted from "Evening
Prayer" in The Book of Offices
and Services of The Order of
Saint Luke, p. 46.*

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Publication.*

*Daniel Benedict, Order of
Saint Luke*

III.

When the door is shut in our
face,

Lord, encircle us.

When cruelty abounds,

Lord, encircle us.

Till the struggle with racism
is finished,

Lord, encircle us.

When we feel alone,

Lord, encircle us.

When we dare to think
critically,

Lord, encircle us.

When we act collectively,

Lord, encircle us.

When others scorn our cause,

Lord, encircle us.

So that we dare risk doing
justice,

Lord, encircle us.

So that we encircle you,

the still point of the turning
world,

Lord, encircle us.

(a time of silence)

*"still point of the turning
world" from T.S. Eliot.*

*Daniel Benedict, Order of
Saint Luke*

FROM THE PRIOR GENERAL By George R. Crisp, OSL

Fall 2020 Retreat to Become a Virtual Event Online

The Order of Saint Luke Retreat
October 12-15, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a concern for us all and we have been adapting to the changes it has necessitated. Your OSL Officers have made the collective decision, for the health and safety of our Order, to cancel a physical gathering for the 2020 OSL Retreat, and we have started planning for a virtual retreat October 12-15 via Zoom.

Our guest speaker, The Rev. Beth A. Richardson, is onboard to be our speaker via three 60-minute presentations on Celtic Spirituality, Pilgrimage, and Blessing.

Registration for the retreat will be \$35 per person. The Zoom meeting link information and a schedule for the week will be sent to you when you register. **This link is not to be posted on social media.** Each registration will include a copy of *A Lukan Psalter*, due for publication this summer. The book will be sent to you when you register.

In addition to our speaker's presentations, we will hold our Council meetings and the General Chapter meeting via Zoom. The week will also include several opportunities for us to worship together at various times of the day. There will be no additional charge for these gathering opportunities. We are also trying to develop several "breakout" sessions during the retreat.



The Rev. Beth A. Richardson, will bring three 90-minute presentations on Celtic Spirituality, Pilgrimage, and Blessing during The Order of Saint Luke's 2020 Retreat, to be presented online.

(Photo Courtesy of Beth A. Richardson)

As an added bonus, on Sunday, October 18, we will unite for a worship service for the Feast of Saint Luke. This time of worship is independent of the retreat, but in solidarity with the celebration of our patron saint. A separate meeting link will be established for this worship service.

More details will be made available soon. Stay tuned.

If you have made travel arrangements already, in anticipation of the retreat in

Scottsdale, Arizona, please check with your airline to see what adjustments may be made (cancellations, refunds, etc.).

We hope we will be able to meet again in person for our 75th Anniversary Retreat celebration in October 2021. We anticipate that this event will take place at St. Paul of the Cross Retreat Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

OSL Contributes to Racism Resource

Officers and members of The Order of Saint Luke have contributed prayers to a new resource, "Praying for Change: Daily Prayers for Anti-Racism" edited by Derek Weber and distributed by Discipleship

Ministries, a United Methodist agency.

[Click here to go to the "Praying for Change" page](#) for details on how to submit prayers to the Worship Team and/or subscribe to the daily email.