

Sunday@6 on 4th September 2022
Reflection and prayers by Cathy Putz

Read Gospel John Ch. 5, vv 30 to 40

What does it mean to *embody*. Christ describes here how He embodies God's loving purpose. We know the truth, he tells us. It's a *physical* truth. Not one we find in a book or learn by rote. It's a *lived truth* and our faith has to be a lived faith. An embodying of Christ's love. We can only do that a day at a time, drawing on his strength.

Read Austin Farrer's *Heart* prayer. (p. 135 *The One Genius*, Readings with Austin Farrer selected by Richard Harries)

Just as we cannot store up the sun's energy, so we turn to the Lord new every morning. The natural world can help remind us of this simple but essential truth as we begin the Church of England's Creation Season. This poem by Mary Oliver makes the connection between prayer and nature (taken from her collection "1000 mornings" and written towards the end of her life)

I don't know where prayers go,
Do cats pray while they sleep in the sun;
The sunflowers?
The old black oak growing older every year?
I know I can walk through the world on the shore or under the trees filled
with things of little importance, in full self attendance;
A condition I can't really call being alive.
Is a prayer a gift or a petition?
Or does it matter?
The sunflowers blaze: maybe that's their way.
Maybe the cats are sound asleep, maybe not.
While I was thinking this
I happened to be standing outside my door
With my notebook open, which is the way I begin every morning,
When a wren in the privet began to sing.
He was positively drenched in enthusiasm, I don't know why.
And yet – why not?
I thought of the wren's singing:

What could this be if it isn't a prayer.
So I just listened
My pen in the air.

Especially when our world is so convulsed, we need to trust the quiet work taking place deep inside, as we breathe, walk, observe, listen, interact, sleep. As the psalmist says, even at night my heart instructs me and *my body will live in hope*, for you will not abandon me to the grave; you have made known to me the paths of life. As we journey through our faith, we grow to know God at a deep physical level, beyond words, and we should take care to allow space for whatever whispered truths might emerge from that deep bodily knowledge.

Show painting & quote by artist Magda Cordell, illustrating both the strength and vulnerability of our bodies (from the Barbican's Post War Modern exhibition earlier this year).

End with reading Michael Symmons Roberts: Heart poem.
(note – cordate means heart shaped leaf)

“No rare compass, just a pump,
A balled and unballad fist,
An ache, zero-sum rhythm,
A sump of half remembered tenderness,

Some hook-up to a signal
That keeps dropping out, then flickering on,
A beacon on a distant hill,
Sputtering, then flaring strong.

The word *cordate* a promissory note,
Home to the machine's true ghost,
A word that catches in your throat,
A sign-up to be won, torn, lost....”

Let us lose our hearts again to God.

Prayers include:

“Christ be with us, Christ within us,
Christ behind us, Christ before us,

Christ beside us, Christ to win us,
Christ to comfort and restore us.
Christ beneath us, Christ above us,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love us,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.”

(A Prayer for Protection, Derby Cathedral.)

“May God help us to find, and to acknowledge, to liberate and to submit unto
his will
The fountains of sincere desire which are the life-blood of our mind.”
(Austin Farrer)