

Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana – Compline Service
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"In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge...
into your hands I commend my spirit." +
—Psalm 31

These words from Psalm 31 are not spoken from a place of ease. They come from someone who is afraid, overwhelmed, and surrounded by forces they cannot control.

This is the prayer of a person who feels exposed to danger and uncertainty, yet still dares to entrust themselves to God.

That prayer speaks deeply to where many of us are today.

We live in a time in our country when cruelty is often normalized and people are treated as less than human, a time that is not in alignment with our baptismal vow to honor and respect the dignity of every human being.

We see neighbors turned into enemies, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people and the poor made into scapegoats, and whole communities made to feel disposable.

We watch the suffering of others on our screens and in our streets, and this can leave us with mixed and strong feelings.

And scripture does not tell us to suppress those feelings.

I invite you to take a minute to be in silence and try to get in touch with the way you feel today given the situation in our country. How are you feeling?

Maybe you are feeling exhausted, angry, heartbroken, helpless, loss, or numb.

It is okay to admit that. It is okay to grieve. It is okay to feel helpless sometimes.

Psalm 31 gives us permission to cry out. It gives us permission to say, “I am afraid. I am hurting. I don’t know what to do.”

To entrust ourselves to God is not to pretend everything is fine. It is to bring our fear, our grief, and our helplessness into God’s presence.

The Apostle Paul echoes this honesty in 2 Corinthians when he writes, “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair.”

It is precisely **in this place of loss and disorientation** that the Psalmist and the Apostle Paul dare to speak words of hope—calling us people to listen again for God’s purpose for us in these times.

In times like these, God’s call may come as a gentle nudge to take one small step: to get out of bed, to call a friend, to breathe deeply, to let someone help.

God’s call may come through a word of kindness, a moment of stillness, or a sudden awareness that even now, life is still being offered to us.

Listening for God does not mean we suddenly know the whole path ahead—it means we trust God for the next faithful step.

Earlier last year, the good people of St. Luke’s here in Long Beach, California, felt moved to do something, and we did not know where to start.

We knew that the immigrant among us were at risk, and we did not know what to do.

We prayed, we educated ourselves about the realities and challenges in front of us, and eventually, we started to learn what God wanted us to do.

I had congregants that due to their age, or health conditions could not go to protest on the streets, and we invited them to use the power of prayer, to donate to causes that were supporting the immigrants with their bail, or rent, or food.

I had congregants that wanted to resist and protest publicly, and we equipped them on how to do it safely, and how to document and report the cruelty on the streets.

We had others that wanted to promote medium to long term changes, and we connected them with other community-based organizations working on public policy. Some learned how to call their representatives and request for them to stand up.

We had a group who wanted to protect the most vulnerable in our congregation, and they became monitors during our Spanish service, and our service to the unhoused.

We developed protocols for them to know what to do in the event the immigration police would show in our campus.

Our immigrant congregants have expressed to me many times how they feel safe in our campus.

Psalm 31 teaches us that even when we feel powerless or helpless, God is still at work.

We may not be able to change what has happened.

We may not be able to heal all that is broken. But we can place ourselves in God's hands and allow God to shape what comes next.

Sometimes God's call in times like this is simply to keep loving, to keep breathing, to keep hoping—slowly, gently, honestly.

So, if you are feeling angry, or frustrated, if you feel helpless and unsure, know this: you are not failing God by feeling this way.

You are being human. And God meets us in our humanity.

Into God's hands you can place your sorrow, your fear, your anger, your frustration, and your unanswered questions.

Trust that those hands are strong enough to hold them—and you—until a new way forward begins to emerge.

May God continue to lead your path. Amen.