

# Prayer of Confession

By Rev. Janessa Chastain

Creator God

Out of your Holy imagination you spun the mystery of our world into existence  
You placed within each of us Your divine flame  
You tenderly breathed your Spirit into us with the command to love one another.

**We have failed to honor your Spirit of love. Forgive us, O God.**

We heard your words to the Israelites: “You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself”  
We claim as a nation to offer welcome for those who sought it.  
We held our ideals before us like an idol.

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.  
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she\**

The Mother of Exiles now guards children torn from families.  
We talk of beloved siblings as an infestation.  
We have refused to welcome You in our midst.

**We have failed to honor the divine flame in one another.  
We have failed to honor You. Forgive us, O God.**

Call us back to the hope you breathed into us at creation  
Call us back into the spirit of radical welcome  
Call us to live into the promise offered on our shores:

*With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”\**

Remind us, O God, that we are called to comfort the suffering  
Remind us, O God, of the depth of love we sprang from  
Remind us, O God, of the flame of Your light that shines in each of us

**Forgive us, O God, and send us out with a Spirit of boldness to set right the sins formed by our blindness to your divine love in all Your children, on every side of every border we’ve created. Amen.**

# Litany of Response- Border

By Rev. Melissa Rynders, inspired by Emma Lazarus' The New Colossus

Leader: We have heard the cries of the children, we have seen the tears running down their faces. Jesus says, "Let the children come to me." We say:

**People: Give me your tired, your poor, let them come to us.**

Leader: We have heard the sorrow in the words of children calling for their parents, we have seen the pain as a child is taken away. Jesus says, "Let the children come to me." We say:

**People: Give me those yearning to breathe free, let them come to us.**

Leader: We have heard the fear in the voices of those who seek a better way to live, we have seen the uncertainty as they are torn apart. Jesus says, "Let the children come to me." We say:

**People: We are your people O God, we are the lamps lit so that others may find their way into your Kingdom. We hear you saying, "Let them come to me," and we stand, arms wide open, waiting to welcome them here, at our sea-washed, sunset gates, lamps lit, guiding them to a Kingdom of love and grace. Amen.**

# Prayer of Confession

By Rev. Hannah A. Bonner

Merciful God,

We confess that we find ourselves too often short on mercy,  
that we have forgotten you are God and not we.

We repent of our love for confessions,  
of the way that we use them as replacements for action.

Sunday after Sunday, we confess that we have not heard the cry of the needy  
while Monday after Monday, we make no attempt to listen to their plea.

We silence the voices of the ones we most need to hear,  
fearing their discomfort will disrupt our peace.

You told us that in welcoming the stranger we would welcome you,  
yet we have cast the homeless and tempest-tossed out our door.

We have built a wall within our own hearts,  
separating us from you and one another,  
causing us to separate mothers from sons,  
fathers from daughters,  
spouses from partners.

Merciful God, who split the curtain and tore down the dividing wall,  
may we recognize you in the face of the stranger once more,  
bring us back to you, we pray,  
destroy the divisions we created,  
help us to be an obedient church,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

# Litany of the Held

By Billie K. Fidlin, Director of Outreach Ministries for the Desert Southwest Conference

Leader: If I asked you for water, the sun is so hot, would you help?

**Response: God be with you**

Leader: If I asked you to help me find my mommy, I'm so afraid, would you help? I'm only three, I know no one here. Where is she? Why did she abandon me? Why am I alone? Where is my teddy bear? I am so frightened. It's such a big feeling for someone so small. Why don't you hold me? Why don't you pick me up? I don't understand, I can't understand.

**Response: God be with you**

Leader: This tent is not a home, fences are for animals, why are things this way for us? Did your lady of liberty not say, give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free? Did you change your mind?

**Response: God be with you**

Leader: If I asked you to help me find something to sleep on, the cement is so cold, would you help? Do all Americans sleep on floors or cots or blankets of stone?

**Response: God be with you**

Leader: I rock back and forth, all night, all day. Through the passing of the moon, the passing of the sun. Again and again, I beg of you, help me, help me, find my child.

**Response: God be with you**

Leader: Can you tell me, will you tell me? Are my parents gone forever, how can I find them in so big a place? When can I leave, when can I go? I need to find them. Why did he leave, why can't I? I have so many questions and no one to answer them. How is this going to work? How can I find them?

**Response: God be with you**

Leader: If I asked you for a real blanket, not a shiny, stiff matt, would you help? I have no mother, no father to calm my fears, a blanket wrapped around me tight, could make the night terrors go away.

**Response: God be with you**

Leader: My body shudders with uncontrolled tears. I cannot settle down, I cannot stop crying, I cannot understand why my papa isn't here. Can you not break the rules and just hold me? Every day is long and lonely, something is very, very, very wrong. Please, don't let me be so alone. Please. Can you not see my fear? You are the grown up. You can make this right.

**Response: God be with you**

Leader: The worst heat rose from the ground, not from the sun above. I'm grateful to rest, I'm grateful for some water and food. I look to America for our safety and hope. Yet the fences in this place are like the fences on the border. I fled the cartel, its guns and machetes. I fled the poverty, the hunger and despair. The daily fear of death was too much. I came here. I fled... to America, the land of the free.

**Response: God be with you**

Leader: Am I a person or a plague to you? I came in peace, I came in hope, I came as a friend, willing to work, willing to serve as my brothers and sisters before me. My hands grow weary of holding the wired fence, waiting for your compassion. I gaze out, waiting, for my chance at freedom. To be a part of you, to help, to contribute. Will you let me? Let us?

**Response: God be with you**

Leader: Do you, hate or love?

**Response: God be with you**

Leader: What is this "God be with you"? Is this your only response? Does this mean you're going to help me? Does this mean your faith is in action? Does this mean that together we will find a way to bring about the light of Creator to all who

tread in search of a better tomorrow? Are you leaving it only up to God to intervene? Does God not use us all to teach one another, love one another, be one another, and help, one another?

**Response: God be with you**

Leader: If today you learned that the face you now see, that my true identity is Jesus the Christ, that I have been looking to see you be my hands and feet to the stranger in your midst, would you change your mind, your heart, your helping hand? Did you fail my expectations, or did you love? Did you help My children...would you help My children?

Would you?

Would you?

Would you.