

## ReSources: Living God's Justice, reflections and prayers.

"When you need a prayer, reach for this book" – Bob Kloos

In the last issue, we reprinted Thomas Merton's prayer that begins: "My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going . . ." I am so grateful a man of Merton's stature had the humility to pen those words. Sometimes his words are the very ones I need to pray.

There are others, too, whom I reach for when I am with Confirmation candidates, sponsors, parents, or my peers in ministry. I have copies of prayers and reflections, ready for distribution, by Oscar Romero, Mother Theresa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Marianne Williamson. And I guess I am always on the lookout for more because a title recently advertised in America magazine caught my eye: Living God's Justice, reflections and prayers, from Saint Anthony Messenger Press (2006) with a forward by and dedication to Bishop Robert F. Morneau. I ordered a copy. Only when I held it in my hands and began turning the pages did I realize the treasure that was mine.

According to The Roundtable Association of Diocesan Social Action Directors who assembled the book, this is a collection of their "greatest hits," prayers they most often reach for when they are obliged to open a meeting or assembly with a prayer that both addresses the topic and lands in a good place. "This is a resource," they say, "of tried and true material from both wise women and men of centuries past and the most contemporary of authors."

As the title the contributors chose may suggest, justice, "a central fruit of the gospel," is the touchstone of the contents. "If our prayer life is strong and the works of justice are performed with courage and love, then God will be glorified." According to the table of contents in this collection, God will be glorified by prayers and reflections on human dignity, the rights of workers, solidarity, care of creation, peace, discipleship, and highlights of the liturgical year.

The first prayer I opened to was titled "A Children's Prayer." Six quick paragraphs run the reader past alternating descriptions of children, first playful and reminiscent of our own earlier

years, then graphic contrasts of vulnerable youth in far-away places, desperate and clinging to life. The back and forth is not smooth; the depictions too gripping not to be believed. All children. I may have stumbled on the harshest of the selections. I found myself praying after reading that reflection. "What else is in this book?" I asked my self, sighing "Amen."

The prayers and reflections take on various formats, some familiar, some very short. One, in particular, comes from a distant land and is short enough to include here. It is from Lila Watson, an Aboriginal Australian activist and educator. She writes, or is it prayer:

"If you have come to help me  
you are wasting your time.  
But if you have come because  
your liberation is bound up with mine  
then let us work together."

Don't be surprised to find a grace before meals from Alcuin of York (c.735-804), and a companion piece on "Making Room at the Table." Either would suit you next time you are slated for that duty. There is "A Penitential Litany" from our nation's Catholic bishops addressing our neglect of the environment and a "Sabbath Prayer" from the UN on the next page imploring the Great Spirit to help us be better caretakers.

Scripture scholar Walter

Brueggemann weighs in on several pages. Read, if you dare, his selection "We are Takers" in the section on Care of God's Creation. "Turn our taking into giving," he prays, "since we are in your giving image." "A Student's Prayer for Peace" graces the volume, as does the shortest plea from Saint Thomas More: "Lord, give me the grace to bring about the things that I pray for." That one is titled: "Prayer for Results." I've always thought that sentiment ought to be part of every "General Intercession" we write.

There is a parable from Ronald Rolheiser, and a reminder from a rabbi: "We cannot merely pray to You, O God . . ." There is a prayer at elec-

