

Opening Prayer

Very powerful, very gentle God,

When we want action from You we appeal to Your power. When we want mercy from You we appeal to Your gentleness.

Somehow we have come to see power and gentleness as so different that they cannot co-exist in our minds...

But not so with You.

You sent Yourself to us to show that there is another way...a way that weds the two to form something greater, something more staggeringly beautiful than either power or gentleness can hold on its own. Your coming to earth, the earth You created, as a vulnerable babe in the context of a Roman occupation, gave pause for thought as it redefined the very notion of power. Your miracles held power and gentleness in perfect harmony as You approached people with such reverence and care. And when You were sitting with the ability to destroy the world with one word, You said, "Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Your power, expressed in your fervent criticism of hypocrisy, oppression, vanity and injustice had at its source a heart full of love that knew it could be so, so different.

It is with great sadness that we consider what we have done with the power we hold. We weep in particular as we see how physical power has been so horrifically distorted in the widespread physical and sexual abuse of women. The more powerful we consider ourselves to be, the more we seem to distance ourselves and care less about those around us. We are quick to see this in our government leaders, in our police force and in our municipal offices. However, we are slower to see how we, too, allow our power to rid us of all gentleness as we get behind our steering wheels demanding that everyone serve our needs to get where we want to go without undue interference. All around us and within us...

We see it...

We see it...

We see it...

It is so deeply entrenched.

Yet, there are times when our eyes and hearts are opened, when grace, Your grace, shows us that different way. We marvel at how our hearts melt and we become capable of a powerful gentleness we know we could not conjure up. We long to live from this place... this grace-filled place...this place that could change the world.

May our longing become our being. May our resolve never settle for less.

Amen