Prayer Focus: January 2014

Multicultural Humanity

At the beginning of this new year, we focus in prayer on the gift God gives in endowing humanity with the capacity to create. We seek forgiveness for the ways in which we stifle and impede creativity, and we look forward to the redemption of all creation.

Culture is always cultures, plural: full of diversity, variety and history. Culture is what human beings make of the world. It always bears the stamp of our creativity, our God-given desire to make something more than we were given...[It] happens when a chef makes an omelet, when a carpenter makes a chair, when a toddler makes a snow angel.

Human beings were made in God’s image: just like the original Creator, we are creators.


I. Celebrate

God, our Creator and the giver of all good things, Scripture tells us you made human beings in your image. When we create goodness and beauty, and things that evoke wonder and deep understanding, human beings show that we bear your image. We celebrate the abundance and the variety of human culture in our world – the arts, music and dance, food, clothing, games and toys, sports, agriculture, horticulture, architecture, languages and literature – everything that enriches human life. We celebrate human creation and creators, but God we celebrate you, who makes what we do possible. We seek the indwelling of the Holy Spirit so that what we do will be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

Psalm 150

Praise the LORD.
Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.
Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre,
Praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe,
Praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.
Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD.

II. Meditate

Artists in many cultures have uniquely portrayed Jesus. The linked PowerPoint presentation contains just a few of these images, but use them to meditate on Jesus and consider his presence in your life and the world. How do you see him?

As you do this, you might like to listen to some Christian music from a culture other than your own. There are some 400 free live-streamed radio stations that identify themselves as Christian which can be
I seldom considered the blessing of being able to express myself with ease, clarity and speed. I took for granted the logical coherent set of patterns, rules and structure of a known language with skills necessary to go through the day of emails, letters, documents, writing, phone calls, casual conversations as well as board room vocabulary. All that changed the day I received orders to work in Switzerland. I speak three languages, but none that would serve me in this new cultural environment. Since arriving in Switzerland I have given much thought to the importance of ‘language’, both its challenges and opportunities.

As the key to the heart of culture, language serves the larger function of ethnic identity because it is the mark of ‘groupness’. Language signals solidarity with a particular cultural group. It creates national sentiment because of its powerful and visible symbolism. While our mother tongue gives us comfort and confidence, the lack thereof creates anxiety and minimized effectiveness.

What happens when our voice is taken away from us? Who are we then? How do we give meaning to life and how do we make sense of our environment? Not only is language functional, it is also the base for acceptance and inclusiveness. Without it we feel lost, set apart and often ignored. It is speech that allows us not only to be independent but also to be included and accepted.


Made in God’s image, we are called to praise God in new and creative ways. We are invited to live creatively in creation: naming it, tending to it, cultivating it.

But often we shut down our capacity for creativity. We reject promising, innovative and visionary perspectives, labelling them as too risky. We dismiss and denounce expressions of the gospel that reflect an ethnicity or culture not our own. We fail to honour people by not allowing them the time, resources and freedom to engage in creative endeavours.

Lord, help us recognise how you can be made manifest in our own creative expressions. Provoke us to cross the barriers we have raised in promoting our culture above others. Move us to meet the needs of others, not only that they might live but also that they might live life to the full.

IV. Participate

The great Christian hope is to be in the presence of God eternally, feasting at the heavenly banquet and enjoying God’s blessings with unnumbered others from all parts of the world and all eras of human history. Just now we pray that we will be part of God’s redemptive plan for the world.
Revelation 7:9-10 and Revelation 21:1-2, 22-26

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’

Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth’, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and the honour of the nations will be brought into it.

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Amen.

(For the Lord’s Prayer in many languages, visit http://wikisource.org/wiki/The_Lord’s_Prayer)