

Prayer for Picnic Gathering

At Pottawattomie Park

Richard A. Rhem
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Prepared text of prayer

Let us be in the spirit of prayer.

Eternal Spirit, in these moments we would be attentive –
attentive to that recognition
that there is so much more to life than meets the eye.
In this information saturated world
there is more than all the pieces of information
we pick up in a day or a week.
We value knowledge;
yet there is more than knowledge –

There is –
the intuitive sense
that life is more than a tale
told by an idiot full of sound and fury –
There is –
the wisdom of the heart
that moves us
beneath the surface of life,
beyond mere happenings and events
to the creative center of being from whence
stream Nature's prodigal profusion
of emerging structures and of life,
of consciousness and awareness,
so much more than simply the overload of data.

There is –
meaning
which we discover and create –
the Grace that affirms and frees us...
the Love that frees us from self preoccupation
and self absorption...
the Care that bonds us in community.
Let us be mindful
of the grace of life that has come to us,
for this place of natural beauty

let us be grateful...

O God, receive our thanksgiving –
for leisure time
in which to relax, to enjoy
sun and surf and sand and solitude;

for family reunions
that bring back memories of childhood and youth,
of grandparents and cousins and uncles and aunts;
for a sense of roots and rootedness,
places to revisit and times to remember;

for the interruptions
of our well-laid plans that have led
to experiences we would not have dared to dream;
and for the detours
along life's way that have led us into byways of beauty
we would never have known;

for hope
that rises in the wake of every setback
giving us courage to go on
in the confidence that there is always something more;
for that strange peace
that no storm can shake, no raging billow wash away,
a peace that passes all human understanding;
for the grace of life and all good gifts,
we are truly grateful.

Let us be mindful of our world –
Our world is smoldering;
fires burn in streets;
anger seethes in the cauldron of human hearts,
disaffected, alienated, disillusioned.
What pain drives to anarchy,
dissipating youthful idealism and hope?

Before the world's chaos, pain and anguish,
Give us the wisdom
to be silent before we speak;
to identify with and immerse ourselves
before we offer remedies
too easy, too facile, too self-serving.
Give us insight and sensitivity
to discern

that ominous thunder of the shaking of the foundations;
to recognize
the recurrent corruptions of power
that we see all around us.

Enable us to see beneath the skin of the world
its heaving passion,
its loveliness and its horror –
a world
that is a ridiculous mixture of good and evil,
of beautiful tenderness
and unspeakable brutality;
a world
where flowers bloom on manure heaps,
and deadly cancer grows on a beautiful, young body;
a world
under the dominion of death,
natural, yet often so unexpected, so violent, so absurd!

O God,
This is the real world, the only world we have
with its dreams of Eden
and its portents of Armageddon.
Renew our vision, give us courage,
restore hope, heal our world with us,
who are the highly favored,
leading the way to peace, justice and compassion,
to realize the vision of the one we follow,
Jesus, our Lord –
O Lord, hear our prayer.