

## Pastoral Prayers

By Zac Koons

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The 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

God of bread, wine and water, the familiar objects of our worship have been temporarily taken from us. We long to gather again in the church we call home. Our upholstery may be stained from a leaky roof, our ceilings may in places appear to be designed for hobbits instead of humans, and our architectural style may be now just slightly dated—but it is ours and we miss it. As we wait in this bizarre exile, give us your Church eyes to see the whole world as a theater of your glory, every atom you created as an instrument for your praise, our own homes as sanctuaries in which we may still worship you, and our own tables as altars of fellowship inscribed with your name; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Father God, you said you would not leave us orphaned, but we are experiencing an aloneness like we never have before. We understand that social isolation is a form of loving our neighbor but can we admit that it doesn't feel like it most days? Our hearts ache for those suffering long and lonely hours with no visitors in hospitals and nursing homes, for students graduating with no party into a world of economic uncertainty, for small business owners forced to make impossible choices between their own safety and their own livelihood, for communities suffering new forms of old racism robbed of even the ability to properly protest against the injustice. Inspire your world with creativity and imagination as we reconfigure how to love and grieve with physical distance. And especially while we cannot, cradle and comfort those who suffer in solitude in your arms of nurturing care, in Jesus' name. Amen.

God of every good idea, it is not easy to keep your commandments in the course of normal life much less in the context of a global pandemic. Send your Spirit into the souls of those who in lockdown have been confronted with old demons of addiction, perversion, and confusion, that they may know you not as a switch-wielding assistant principal of punishment, but as an advocate of grace, forgiveness, and healing. As we all struggle, instill in our hearts a longing for holiness, that we may know the joy that comes from living, moving, and being in you. Amen.

Grieving God, as funerals are limited, shortened, and delayed, we commend to your mercy those who have died, some known to us, including \_\_\_\_\_, and many unknown to all except medical staff. Comfort those who grieve with the knowledge that your heart breaks with theirs, and open wide your arms of grace to receive them into your heavenly kingdom. Amen.

We rejoice in the saints who have gone before us, those whose lives are evidence that your commandments are pathways to joy.