**Del Sur Interfaith Devotions on Justice**

**Native American Prayer**

“Great Spirit, Give us hearts to understand never to take from creation’s beauty more than we give, never to destroy want only for the furtherance of greed, never to deny to give our hands for the building of earth’s beauty, never to take from her what we cannot use.

Give us hearts to understand that to destroy earth’s music is to create confusion, that to wreck her appearance is to blind us to beauty, that to callously pollute her fragrance is to make a house of stench, that as we care for her she will care for us.

Give us hearts to understand we have forgotten who we are. We have sought only our own security. We have exploited simply for our own ends. We have distorted our knowledge. We have abused our power.

Great Spirit, Whose dry lands thirst, help us to find the way to refresh your lands. Great Spirit, Whose waters are choked with debris and pollution, help us to find the way to cleanse your waters. Great Spirit, Whose beautiful earth grows ugly with misuse, help us to find the way to restore beauty to your handiwork. Great Spirit, whose creatures are being destroyed, help us to find a way to replenish them. Great Spirit, whose gifts to us are being lost in selfishness and corruption, help us to find the way to restore our humanity.”

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father, which art in heaven

Hallowed be Thy Name.

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory,

Forever and ever, Amen.

**Prayer for America**

O God, Almighty Protector! O Thou Who art the confirmer of every just power and equitable empire in eternal glory, everlasting power, continuance and greatness! Strengthen with the abundance of Thy mercy every government which acts with equity towards its subjects, and every dominion under whose flag the poor and weak find protection.

We ask Thee by Thy holiness and bounty to pour out Thy blessing upon this government which has stretched its tent over citizens from every land, that its inhabitants, its industries, its territories may be penetrated by justice.

O God! Strengthen its executives, give authority and influence to its word and utterance, protect its territories and dominions, guard its reputation, make its ideals to echo throughout the world, reveal its traces and exalt its principles by Thy conquering power and wonderful might throughout the kingdoms of creation.

Thou art the confirmer of whomsoever Thou willest. Verily, Thou art the powerful and the mighty!

*-‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Star of the West, Volume 24, Number 9*

“O Son of Spirit! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving‑kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.”

 *Bahá'u'lláh: Arabic Hidden Words, no. 2*

“What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour: that is the entire Torah....”

*Judaism: Babylonian Talmud; Letter of Aristeas*

“None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.”

 *Islam: Hadith (Saying of Muhammad)*

“All shrink from suffering, and all love life; remember that thou, too, art like to them;

Make thine own self the measure of the others,

and so abstain from causing hurt to them.”

 *Buddhism: Dhammapada*

“Recognize the Lord's Light (Spirit) within all, and do not consider social class or status; there are no classes or castes in the world hereafter.” *Sikhism,* *Guru Granth Sahib Ji, 349**.*

“Whenever a person breaks a stick in the forest, let him consider what it would feel like if it were himself [broken].

As sensitive to pain as are rats’ little ones, so sensitive to pain are birds’ little ones.”

*Proverbs from a West African traditional religion (Yoruba tribe)*

“Do not to others what ye do not wish done to yourself; and wish for others, too, what ye desire and long for, for yourself. This is the whole of Dharma....”

 *Hinduism: Mahabharata*

“That which is good for all and any one, for whomsoever---that is good for me....

What I hold good for self, I should for all. Only Law Universal is true Law.” *Zoroastrianism: Zendavesta*

“If thine eyes be turned towards mercy, forsake the things that profit thee and cleave unto that which will profit mankind. And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose for thy neighbor that which thou choosest for thyself.

Lay not on any soul a load which ye would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for any one the things ye would not desire for yourselves. This is My best counsel unto you, did ye but observe it.”

 *Baha’i Faith: Tablets of Baha’u’llah, p. 64*

 *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha’u’llah, p. 128*

“And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise....Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven; give, and it shall be given unto you....For with the same measure that ye mete, withal it shall be measured to you again.”

 *Christianity: The New Testament, St. Luke 6:31, 36-38*

“...It ill beseemeth the station of man to commit tyranny; rather it behoveth him to observe equity and be attired with the raiment of justice under all conditions. Beseech ye the One true God that He may, through the power of the hand of loving kindness and spiritual education, purge and purify certain souls from the defilement of evil passions and corrupt desires,...that perchance the evidences of injustice may be blotted out and the splendour of the light of justice may shed its radiance upon the whole world.”

 *Tablets* *of* *Baha’u’llah, pp. 164, 170*

“O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear God. For God is well‑acquainted with all that ye do.

...If thou judge, judge in equity between them. For God loveth those who judge in equity.”

 *Islam: The Qur’an 5: 9, 45*

“There are two sorts of retributory punishments. One is vengeance, the other, chastisement. Man has not the right to take vengeance, but the community has the right to punish the criminal; and this punishment is intended to warn and to prevent so that no other person will dare to commit a like crime. This punishment is for the protection of man's rights, but it is not vengeance; vengeance appeases the anger of the heart by opposing one evil to another. This is not allowable, for man has not the right to take vengeance....On the contrary, he should forgive and pardon, for this is worthy of the world of man....What advantage does he gain by vengeance? The two actions are equivalent; if one action is reprehensible, both are reprehensible. The only difference is that one was committed first, the other later.

But the community has the right of defense and of self‑protection; moreover, the community has no hatred nor animosity for the murderer: it imprisons or punishes him merely for the protection and security of others. It is not for the purpose of taking vengeance upon the murderer, but for the purpose of inflicting a punishment by which the community will be protected. If the community and the inheritors of the murdered one were to forgive and return good for evil, the cruel would be continually ill‑treating others, and assassinations would continually occur. Vicious people, like wolves, would destroy the sheep of God. The community has no ill‑will and rancor in the infliction of punishment, and it does not desire to appease the anger of the heart; its purpose is by punishment to protect others so that no atrocious actions may be committed.

Thus when Christ said: "Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the left one also," it was for the purpose of teaching men not to take personal revenge. He did not mean that, if a wolf should fall upon a flock of sheep and wish to destroy it, the wolf should be encouraged to do so. No, if Christ had known that a wolf had entered the fold and was about to destroy the sheep, most certainly He would have prevented it.

As forgiveness is one of the attributes of the Merciful One, so also justice is one of the attributes of the Lord. The tent of existence is upheld upon the pillar of justice and not upon forgiveness. The continuance of mankind depends upon justice and not upon forgiveness. So if, at present, the law of pardon were practiced in all countries, in a short time the world would be disordered, and the foundations of human life would crumble....No, the words of Christ refer to the conduct of two individuals toward each other: if one person assaults another, the injured one should forgive him. But the communities must protect the rights of man....”

 *`Abdu'l‑Bahá, Some Answered Questions, pp. 268-271*

“The second attribute of perfection is justice and impartiality…It means to consider the welfare of the community as one's own.

It means…to regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporeal form, and to know of a certainty that if pain or injury afflicts any member of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest.*”*

 *Baha’i Faith: `Abdu'l‑Bahá, The Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 39*

“He is not thereby “just” because he hastily arbitrates. The wise man should investigate both right and wrong. The intelligent man...leads others not falsely but lawfully and impartially....”

 *Buddhism: The Dhammapada, XIX, v. 256*

“Justice is not limited; it is a universal quality. Its operation must be carried out in all classes, from the highest to the lowest....Each man has been placed in a post of honour, which he must not desert. A humble workman who commits an injustice is as much to blame as a renowned tyrant. Thus we all have our choice between justice and injustice.

I hope that each one of you will become just and direct your thoughts towards the unity of mankind; that you will never harm your neighbours nor speak ill of any one; that you will respect the rights of all men, and be more concerned for the interests of others than for your own. Thus will you become torches of Divine justice.....Thus shall we rejoice in the Sun of Justice, which shines from the Horizon of God.”

 *Abdu’l-Baha: Paris Talks, p. 160*

**Closing Prayer:** Unite and Bind Together The Hearts