

National Mourning and Lament Prayers

'A Voice Is Heard in Ramah': Responsive Prayers from Sojourners

“How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow has she become, she that was great among the nations!”—Lamentations 1:1

*O God, Creator of the universe, we stand before you as fragile humans, made only of earthy clay and Your breath. In all humility, we hold to you all those who are sick with the coronavirus, who are COVID positive, and all those who care for them and work intimately for their healing. We name the sick and hold them in Your healing light, O Lord. **Hear our prayer.***

“A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”—Matthew 2:18

*In all humility, we turn to our God today to honor our dead. We have had no time, no space, no moment to mourn. We made promises to love and protect our families, “til death do us part.” In their final days, we are heart-broken that we were apart from those who were dying. May they forgive us. May we forgive ourselves. We claim in faith that we are born from God, we live for God, and we return to God. We seek rest and time in you. **Hear our prayer.***

“My companions and neighbors you have put away from me, and hidden my friends out of my sight.”—Psalm 88:18

*O God, you are the Keeper of the Book of Life, and no one dies alone—but all under your loving gaze. So that their passing is not an empty data point on death’s grim graph, let us say the names of those who have died and to remember them. [Name the names of the dead you know silently.] Into your hands, O Lord, we commend their spirits. **Hear our prayer.***

“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.”—Romans 12:15

*Give us the gift of weeping, O God, for tears of love are always holy. It is not only our loved one who are lost, but our jobs, our neighborhoods, our familiarity with family, and graduations and classes. May our mourning, lamenting, remembering, and learning from these losses not disappear like water in sand, but push us to weep from time to time. Keep us tenderhearted, we pray. **Hear our prayer.***

“I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”—Ephesians 4:1-2

*As we American face together this unprecedented season, let love fill all our hearts, so that the greatness of our nation continues to break open before us. Draw every American, into the values of courage, duty, honorable action, self-sacrifice, generosity, neighborliness, responsibility, and mercy, which are the hallmarks of our country. Give us courage, O Lord. **Hear our prayer.***

“May your way may be known upon earth, your saving health among all nations.”—Psalm 67:2

*To those who have lost loved ones, we—your fellow citizens—offer you comfort, not condolence, empathy, not sympathy. As a people we have borne this pandemic’s cost in the lives of our families; as a nation we shall honor and mourn them together. Let peace and good health prevail among all the nations, O God, and may it be so in our own families, communities, states, and land on this day and each day to come. These families are your families, O Lord. **Hear our prayer.***

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”— 2 Corinthians 5:17

*Jesus knew what we numb ones must always learn again: that weeping must be real because endings are real; and that weeping permits newness. Christ’s weeping with us permits the kingdom to come. The Holy Spirit’s indwelling opens us to envision a new “normal,” to envision an America true to her dreams, true to our native land to have a new birth of freedom and justice for all. Lord, open our eyes to a new and holy vision that your people may be your people in the days to come. Make us brave, O Lord, together. **Hear our prayer. Amen.***