

Dear Saints,

Please continue to pray for all those affected by the Los Angeles fires. The amount of devastation is incredible. Even if the fires are under control by the time you read this, it will take a long time to recover. During a national tragedy, it is good to remind ourselves of a few things.

First, every natural disaster is a judgment against sin. God does not reveal to us if He is judging a particular sin or a particular group of people. We just know that because of our sin, natural disasters happen. Therefore, repentance is always a response to any natural disaster. We may have not sinned in particular to cause such a disaster, but we know our sin contributes to the brokenness of the world around us.

Repentance according to our confessions has two parts, “One part is contrition, that is, terrors striking the conscience through the knowledge of sin. The other part is faith, which is born of the Gospel [Romans 10:17] or the Absolution and believes that for Christ’s sake, sins are forgiven. It comforts the conscience and delivers it from terror.” (AC, Article XII) Let us repent with thanksgiving for the grace of our God!

Second, every natural disaster is an opportunity for prayer. James tells us that the prayer of a righteous person is powerful (James 5:16). Since you are righteous in Christ through faith, God delights to hear from you. This is always true but, I believe, especially true during a natural disaster. I will end this letter with two prayers to assist you in your private prayers.

Third, every natural disaster is an opportunity for thanksgiving for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Many may ask where God is in the midst of suffering. We always point to the cross. Our God became incarnate, joined Himself to our flesh, and joined us in this suffering world. Even more, He submitted Himself to suffering and crucifixion so that He might pay for the sin of the entire world; everyone who has ever lived or will live. (John 3:16) Our God does not sit on the sideline, but joins us.

Today, He is physically present with us in His Supper. When we doubt that God cares for us personally, we think of the Lord’s Supper. There Jesus hides Himself under bread and wine and joins Himself to us. Here we know that God is for us and not against us, no matter what danger surrounds us. Thank God for His incredible gift of presence.

Let me leave you with two prayers from the “Pastoral Care Companion” that I have found helpful. Also, Psalm 46 is a wonderful Psalm to pray as well.

Let us pray. Almighty God, merciful Father, Your thoughts are not our thoughts, and Your ways are not our ways. In Your wisdom You have permitted this disastrous fire to befall us. Keep those affected and all of us from despairing and do not let our faith fail us, but sustain and comfort us. Direct all efforts to attend the injured, console the bereaved, and protect the helpless. Deliver any who are still in danger, and bring hope and healing that we may find relief and restoration;

through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Let us pray. Merciful Father, we commend to Your keeping all who work to bring rescue and relief, especially the police and firemen. Give them courage in danger, skill in difficulty, and compassion in service. Sustain them with bodily strength and calmness of mind that they may perform their work to the well-being of those in need so that lives may be saved and communities restored; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

In Christ,
Pastor Maggard