Contemplative Service for Wednesday,

May 3, 2023



*Syria, 3rd Century, first known painting of Jesus’s miracles—*

*Jesus healing a paralyzed man.*

*May is mental health awareness month in the United Church of Christ.*

**First Reading**: Ruth 1:16-17

Do not press me to leave you,  
    to turn back from following you!  
Where you go, I will go;  
    where you lodge, I will lodge;  
your people shall be my people  
    and your God my God.  
Where you die, I will die,  
    and there will I be buried.  
May the Holy One do thus to me,  
    and more as well,  
if even death parts me from you!

**Music**: “The Longest Night,” by the Tin Hat Trio

<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=youtube%2C+tin+hat+trio#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:3aa00614,vid:t_gCwGPw7y8>

**Second Reading**: from a reflection on prayer and mental illness by Elizabeth Caudy

To be perfectly honest, I feel really nervous writing this. I may be an observant Catholic, but far be it from me to foist my opinion about spirituality on other people. I have found that praying and knowing that other people are praying for me gives me peace. No, it doesn’t make the voices go away. But it gives me peace of mind and an inner space where I can turn.  
I’ve talked to other people with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder and some of them say praying is hard for them because they feel God is punishing them through their illness. I’ve been there, too. In fact, most likely, I’ll be there again. My relationship with God—like any relationship—is complicated.

Even though I sometimes feel that way, I still find prayer helps me feel better about my illness. It makes me feel like I’m not fighting this battle alone. Of course, I’m not alone anyway. God has blessed me with a loving family, including a wonderful husband. God may have given me this illness. But God has also given me tools to cope with it. For example, I thank God every day that I live in the era of antypical antipsychotic medications. That’s not a joke.

I say a rosary daily. Saying the rosary is a Catholic form of meditation. It helps me relax. In a nutshell, I would say anything that unwinds the twisted tangles of thoughts in your head is good for your mental health. Saying the rosary, for me, is just one of those things. […] Praying to God makes me feel connected to something greater than myself and my individual suffering. Praying to God makes me feel like I’m reaching out to someone who cares about me.

It would be far too easy for me to pray to God for a cure for my schizoaffective disorder, and when that didn’t happen (because it probably wouldn’t), conclude God isn’t there or doesn’t care. I don’t believe God is a magician. I believe that God is vast, and at the same time God is the silence in my head when all the clutter back there holds still for just a second. It is in that silence where I find something like sanity.

**Music:** “Night of the Skeptic,” by Tin Hat Trio

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OExn8yMz3vA>

**Time of Silent Contemplation**

As I sat by the river,  
the eyes of my understanding began to be opened;  
not that I saw any vision,  
but I understood and learnt many things,  
both spiritual matters and matters of faith and of wisdom,  
and this with so great an enlightenment  
that everything seemed new to me.

- Ignatius of Loyola

**Communal Blessing**

Holy Eyes, refresh my recognition. I pray to see again what I have seen before, even though now I have lost my grasp on what it all means. Lift off the exhaustion and stress like ice off a stream, so that the flow--the stream’s real meaning—is obvious to me. What I’ve known so long sometimes becomes just another feature of my blindness. I ask your whole vision to open my view with light and focus. I ask for your wholeness to sparkle like light on moving water. Amen.

**Music**: “Sunrise at Independence,” by the Tin Hat Trio

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hYr4ogGJlE>

*May you find balance and coherence and faith in the workings of healing.*