



## Wednesday Prayer

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent – #Inspire Inclusion

**And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”**

**John 3:14-17**

This Friday is International Women’s Day with the theme #Inspire Inclusion. What makes you feel included? This well-loved passage from John inspired Black leader Mary MacLeod Bethune (1875-1955) who grew up in the Jim Crow South, to write,

*“With these words [John 3:16] the scales fell from my eyes and the light came flooding in. My sense of inferiority, my fear of handicaps, dropped away. “Whosoever,” it said. No Jew nor Gentile, no Catholic nor Protestant, no black nor white; just “whosoever.” It means that I, a humble Negro girl, had just as much chance as anybody in the sight and love of God. These words stored up a battery of faith and confidence and determination in my heart, which has not failed me to this day.<sup>1</sup>*

Whosoever – Whoever – Everyone. Inclusive language to embrace all people into the vastness of God’s love. It saddens and angers me that there are so many movements in our country today that work to intentionally exclude people. This is not new, but I do believe there is a resurgence that is stemming out of fear. Fear of anyone different than oneself, fear of change, fear that equity and inclusion will take something away from those of us who have always been included. This is not God’s message in sending his Son into the world.

The leadership team of LSS Metro Homeless Youth Services, of which Cherish All Children is a part, is engaging in some very intentional work to identify what makes people feel included. The youth we serve have often faced exclusion in many parts of their lives due to their identities as Black, Indigenous, People of Color, LGBTQIA+, or due to existing in systems of poverty, discrimination and generational trauma. When youth lack support systems and inclusion, their vulnerabilities to exploitation and trafficking are increased.

As you celebrate International Women’s Day, think about how you can inspire inclusion in a young person’s life. What role can you play in helping break down barriers, in empowering another to overcome obstacles, in supporting and including those who have been excluded?

**Loving God, we pray that our words and actions welcome and include all. Dispel our fears and open our hearts in our work toward inclusion and belonging for all. Amen.**

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Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.

<sup>1</sup>Quote within the [Working Preacher commentary](#) by Alicia Vargas for March 10, 2024.