

The Chartula of St. Francis of Assisi



Insights into intercession

Jim Smith

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E:jimsmithghana@yahoo.co.uk. www.serving-africa.org

(+44) 07803 617435

Freshfields, Mutton Hall Hill, Heathfield, East Sussex. U.K. TN221 8NL

Introduction

The Chartula of St Francis was written by him on Mount La Verna, after the appearance of the Seraph and the cross, and the reception of the Stigmata. He wrote it on a small parchment, and gave it to Brother Leo, one of his closest companions. (Read about this in the account of the “Life of Francis” by Thomas Selano, and also “The Road to Assisi” by Paul Sabatier)

I was first attracted to this document as I began to study the life of Francis. As an Intercessor, I wanted to see if this precious and unique text, written by a very powerful man of prayer, could give me some idea about how to intercede at a deep level.

I have taken the text, and used it as a way of exploring deeper intercession. I am deeply impressed with Francis. His life has had a big impact on mine, so I write from that position. I am not a Franciscan scholar, so I apologise in advance for any errors that such experienced scholars might see. But I am writing to help others intercede in the way that Francis might have interceded.

Translation has not been easy, because of the way the Chartula was folded, and even with modern techniques, we still struggle. The translation used here is from the Lapsanski and Kajetan Esser, although I have also referred to the original text as presented by Bartoli Langeli.

I have divided the Chartula into five sections and each section has its own teaching. The poems and reflections are all written by me, unless otherwise indicated.

The Chartula

You are the holy Lord God who does wonderful things.

You are strong. You are great. You are the most high.

You are the almighty king. You holy Father,

King of heaven and earth.

You are three in one, the Lord God of gods;

You are the good, all good, the highest good,

Lord God living and true.

You are love; charity; You are wisdom, you are humility,

You are patience, You are beauty, You are meekness,

You are security, you are rest,

You are gladness and joy, You are our hope, You are justice,

You are moderation; You are all our riches to sufficiency.

You are beauty, You are meekness,

You are the protector, You are our custodian and defender,

You are strength, You are refreshment, You are our hope,

You are our faith, You are our charity,

You are all our sweetness, You are our eternal life:

Great and wonderful Lord, Almighty God, Merciful Saviour.

*In the stillness
a whisper of love
calls
I reach out
and touch a beauty
I have never known.
Caressed by the Eternal
I cry
at the sterility of my life
and long
for more*

Part 1: Holiness and purity

Chartula

You are holy Lord God, You do wonderful things.

I was teaching at a conference once, and I asked if anyone had a good way of describing the holiness of heaven. One woman stood up and said “Heaven is holy, and there is no place for our dirty feet there. So God has provided a heavenly shower - the blood of Jesus!” Everybody laughed, but she had put her finger on something which every intercessor knows – God is holy, and being in that holy presence challenges us deeply, and demands a holiness and purity in us which is hard to contain in our spirits.

At first, some intercessors do not realise the truth about holiness. Moses didn't, and God had to teach him:-

**“Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”
(Ex.3:5)**

Moses did not understand that to come close to God would expose his own heart, and demand a humility and obedience which he did not yet have. He had to be told. The Prophet Isaiah was already aware of this truth. When he saw the Lord, he showed his awareness of holiness, and he also saw its implications:-

“Woe is me” I cried. “I am ruined. For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” (Isa.6:5)

Isaiah did understand. In the light of a holy God, he saw his own sinfulness, and realised the consequences of coming to God in an unforgiven state. The holiness of God exposed his impurity. This is a key lesson we all have to learn. We may try to hide our impurity, pretend it isn't there, or that we have dealt with it, but the holiness will shine straight through our deceptions and show the truth. *This will happen every time we come to intercede.*

The holiness of Jesus

To get the full picture of the holiness and purity of God, we have to look at Jesus. He was wholly different, wholly holy, and this is the holiness which challenges our purity. Here are the challenges he offers to every intercessor:-

* **“God made him to be sin that had no sin.”** (2 Cor.5:21)

Jesus was so holy that he could forgive, without the need for forgiveness himself.

* **“Son, your sins are forgiven.”** (Mark 2:5)

Jesus was so holy, so without sin, (2 Cor.5:21) that he could forgive sin.

* **“Jesus healed many who had various diseases.”** (Mark 1: 34)

Jesus was so holy, that he could heal (Mark 4/5) but did not need healing. (Isaiah 53:6)

* **“Be quiet” said Jesus, “Come out of him.”** (Mark 1:25)

Jesus was so holy, that he confronted and broke the power of darkness in demons, in nature, in sickness and in death. He did this while being totally pure, with no shadow of evil in himself.

* **“Look the lamb of God.”** (John1:35)

In his holiness, Jesus was willing and able to offer the perfect sacrifice, because he was perfect himself. (Matthew 5:48: Hebrews 9:11-14)

* **“By his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”** (Hebs.2:14-15)

In his holiness, he was totally powerful, breaking death (John 20) without being subject to death.

Holiness and us

When we come to intercede, this is the holiness we face, and this is the standard we will have to be judged by:-

“Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.”

After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”
(Mark 7:14-23)

When we come to intercession, this is the mirror into which we must look - into the utter purity and holiness of Jesus. It’s an enormous challenge. We cannot come unprepared like Moses. We cannot come proud like the Pharisee, (Luke 18:11) but must come like Isaiah, aware of our unworthiness. We are unworthy. We are stained with guilt, with the past, with our weaknesses, our failures, our pride, our arrogance, our man centred confidence. Isaiah had to be cleansed by the burning coals. We have to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

This is so easy to write and to say, and we say it so easily, forgetting the awful price the blood represents - the insults, the stripping, the crown, the beatings the scourging, the execution, the public agony, the filth, the shame, the blood, the agonising death, the gloating of the enemy and all the demons, feeling the pain in the Father’s heart.

Henry Suso, writing in the Fourteenth century wrote this description:-

“I was suspended on the lofty tree of the cross because of my unfathomable love to thee and all mankind. My whole frame was grievously distorted. My bright eyes were extinguished and turned in my head. My divine ears were filled with scoffing and blasphemy. My delicate nostrils were wounded with foul smells. My sweet mouth was tormented with bitter drink and my tender feelings with hard blows. My fair throat was unnaturally distended, my pure countenance polluted with spittle. My beautiful complexion faded. Lo my comely figure withered away entirely, as though I were an outcast and a leper, and had never been the fair and eternal Wisdom.” (Henry Suso: “The little book of eternal wisdom”.)

The blood which enables us to intercede was a costly sacrifice. So we must strive to let that blood purify us from our sins.

What sins? Our arrogance, our pride, our judgmental attitudes, our failure to live up to the standard, our secret thoughts and sins, our sexual immorality and impurity, our impure mouths and actions - the list is long and terrible. Some intercessors seem to think that it doesn't matter. But we are in the presence of the Holy One, the Holy One of God. The Holy One who has no sin, no need for forgiveness, no secret sins, no injustice. His eyes look at us, and if it was not for his blood, what would they see?

Francis started where we all have to start. I'm not trying to make it all gloom and doom. I just want us to be realistic, and seek with passion to be cleansed and to be pure like him, or to strive for it. We come to a pure place to intercede. Let's be sure we do not degrade it with our impurity.

Reflection

Christ of the wounds, find my heart, my inner heart, my secret place where you and I alone can enter, and enlighten me with your purity, so that I too may be pure.

Christ of the pain, burden my heart with your cross, so that I can resist sin, and by the spilt blood, stay with you for a while, and share.

Christ of the light, take me by the hand and lead me to the place where we can be together and I can pray.

Christ of the world, leave me not comfortless, but hold me in your arms, and never let me go.

Part 2: Authority

A hand touched mine

such power

and yet?

scars?

“To break the darkness

I was broken.. These are the wounds of a love beyond love,

the greater love,

A Lover's love

for the loveless lost.”

In the presence of such love

I kneel

I cry

Chartula

You are strong, You are great, You are the most high.

You are the almighty King

You Holy Father, the King of heaven and earth.

The purity of our heart is, for me, the key to entering into intercession. But once we have grasped this truth, there is another one to face - the authority and power of Jesus. Intercession depends on the authority of Jesus to be able to answer us and act for, through and with us.

What is his authority?

Authority over the demons (Luke 4: 31-37)

If the enemy intended to use this opportunity in Luke to show his strength, he failed spectacularly. For this story, at the very beginning of the ministry of Jesus, shows who has the strength in the world of the demonic. The demon confessed the truth “have you come here to destroy us?” The answer is simple – “yes.”

Authority over sickness (Luke 4: 40-41)

Jesus could and did heal every kind of sickness. Jesus ordained a certain order in our bodies - the creation order. When these bodies get out of line, he is able to heal. Sickness must bow down to him.

Authority over nature (Mark 4:35-39)

This was a very dangerous storm. Inside it were two powerful demonic forces – the spirit of fear and the spirit of death. Jesus demonstrated that he had authority. He stood up, and commanded the storm to cease. Immediately there was a great calm. The natural elements had met their master.

Authority over sin (Mark 2:1-12)

Guilt, shame, sorrow, regrets – these are experiences of the human spirit, and it is hard to live with them. Once we have damaged our soul by sin, there is no way we can ever pay the price for cleansing. But Jesus has authority over sin - “My son, your sins are forgiven.”

Authority over death (Mark 5:22-42)

“Talitha Koum!” With these words, Jesus showed his authority over death. Winning this power was a spiritual victory, as the writer to the Hebrews makes plain: - “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” (Hebrews 2:14)

Authority over hell (1 Peter 3:18-22)

The authority of Jesus reached even down to the darkest and most terrible place. Jesus preached the Gospel to those in that prison. He has authority over the enemy’s entire domain.

Why is this teaching so essential to intercessors? Why did Francis put it at this point in the Chartula?

When we intercede, we enter a spiritual world where authority is no longer an issue. Jesus has the authority. We have to absorb this truth as we pray, and it is difficult for us because in the earthly realm, although we claim his authority, it often seems that we do not have it. Greed, arrogance, suffering, immorality injustice - all seem to undermine the authority of Jesus, and we often feel powerless to overcome the strongholds set against us. As we get attacked again and again we can get weakened, and the enemy will exploit the smallest weakness in us to stop us assailing and pulling him down.

We have to enter into the heavenly authority of Jesus. We have to absorb that authority. It has to transfigure us - making us fortified pillars, bronze walls, a three cord rope, a breaker of strongholds. We must become the sword of the Lord, taking the authority of heaven and earth which is in him and draw it into ourselves. We must consume the strength of the words "It is finished!" (John 19:30)

The authority has to enter our soul - be engraved into us, burnt into us, seared into us, driven into us, branded into us.

We have to become authority. We have to breathe it into ourselves daily, hourly, minute by minute. We have to be energised by it, invigorated by it, revitalised by it, dynamited by it, driven forward by it and be overwhelming victorious by it.

Many words, but unless we are transfigured by authority, we will never intercede at depth and at power. Then, if we are asked to bear the stigmata, with all the terrible pain and bloodshed, we will fall back in horror, and be broken.

Reflection

Christ of the light, enter into my darkness and illuminate me.

Christ of the hope, break into my despair and fill me.

Christ of the power, release your power in me.

Christ of the day, rise on me like the sun in all your glory.

Christ if the night, still me with your love.

Part 3: Deeper

See my hands,

my feet

my side

my thorns

my pain

my sorrow

my heart

Can you bear all this?

No!

my hands are not strong enough

my heart is not big enough

the pain disturbs,

crushes

breaks.

Oh God help me!

Chartula

You are Three and One, Lord God of gods;

**You are good, all good, the highest good,
Lord, God, living and true.**

We have looked at the need for purity, and God alone knows how he can accept our poor attempts at being pure, and we have accepted into our bodies the authority of Jesus. Now we must enter the depths of God. Francis tells us - "you are good, all good, the highest good." Not content with "good" he is going to very limits of his humanity in trying to understand "highest good."

Good, all good, highest good - we are going down and down and down to the very foundations of the heart of God – to the depths of his character. This is where intercession takes place, but do we have the courage to go there? Here, in the deep places we find some terrifying experiences, which we have to enter into:-

* Gethsemane - the emotional deep places. Here, like the Lord, we will be pushed to the edge of our emotional experience and to struggle with obedience in the face of intense demonic opposition.

* Scourging/crucifixion. Our physical resources will be pushed to extremes we never believed possible, and we have to expect this to touch us in our earthly body.

* "My God my God." The intense personal isolation of deep intercession is almost beyond our physical and emotional endurance.

* The blood. The Lord paid a very high price. So will we.

Intercessors have to have the courage to enter the deep places, stay there and experience all the pain and emotion which is there. St Gertrude put it like this:-

Thou hast imprinted in the depth of my heart the adorable marks of thy sacred wounds. (St. Gertrude. Bk. 2. Ch.4)

Richard Rolles, the English mystic wrote:-

If we are not prepared to die in the depths of the love of God, we can never truly know him. Until we can ache and ache for more, and are at our total limit of existence when all of our body and soul is crying out for rest, if them we cannot reach for more, we can never truly know his love. (From his "Incendium Amoris.")

"Deeper" is a challenge to our lives - to going further and further, being made to expect and believe more and more, being pushed to the limits of expectation and belief. And then there is still more. We don't have to face this struggle. We must make a choice. But for the Intercessor who really longs to know the heart of God, who really wants to minister into and out of that heart - this is the price we have to pay for our calling.

The flower is crushed

until it breaks

all its glory

torn away

Can nobody help me?

Hurt aches his heart

our pain becomes

the well

at which he drinks

to share to bear

our sorrows

Into our despair

a seed falls

Flowers can grow again

Reflection

Christ of the deep places, help me.

Christ of the broken body, help me.

Christ of the broken heart, help me.

Christ of the separation, help me.

Christ of the deepest love, love me.

Section 4: In the presence of the King

I came to the palace of the King.

I expected splendour, majesty and power.

But there was nothing there.

No splendour. No buildings. No treasures.

I stood there, lost, empty, alone.

Then the King came to me.

“Lord” I asked, “where is your palace?”

“You are my palace” he replied.

“You are more beautiful than any building, any treasure.

I come to you.

Will you let me in?”

I fall into his arms.

Peace at last.

Chartula

You are love, charity.

You are wisdom; You are humility; You are patience;

You are beauty; You are meekness; You are security; you are rest.

You are gladness and joy, You are our hope;

You are justice; You are moderation, You are all our riches to sufficiency.

So far the challenges have all been aimed at us - holiness, authority, deeper. It's a tough road into intercession with St Francis! But if we are not careful, the very hardness will discourage us. So it's a joy to come to this part of the Chartula - and it's like a shop full of precious jewels all available for us to enjoy. It's so important to have places and times of joy in intercession. It cannot be all hardness, and one of the things I find so good about Francis is that he is a joyful person. The Chartula is his response to the very challenging experience of the stigmata - and he is full of joy. Let's enjoy his joy, and it will lift our hearts for the tougher climbs ahead.

Mirror ourselves in Love

The Chartula reads **“You are love.”** Love is an action word. It has to be directed towards something or someone to really make sense. But that does not apply to Jesus. Jesus said “Before Abraham was I am.” Jesus is, and there is no object involved. Jesus is the embodiment of pure unselfish untainted sinless love. In order to intercede at great depth, we cannot allow our love to be directed at anything or anyone. *We have to mirror Jesus and become love.* Almost impossible I know but this is the standard. John Ruysbrorck, a Flemish Mystic put it like this:-

“These two spirits, that is our own spirit and the spirit of God sparkle and shine one into the other, and each one shows the other its face. This makes each of the spirits yearn for the other in love. Each demands of the other all that there is. This makes the loves melt into each other. God’s touch and his gifts, and our loving craving and our giving back.

These fulfil love. This flux and reflux causes the fountain of love to brim over. Thus the touch of God and our loving craving become one simple love.” (John Ruysbrorck. 14th century Flemish mystic)

What a challenge, but what a privilege and joy, and what a wonderful way to spend our spiritual life - being absorbed more and more into his love.

*We walked out
under the stars
Just you and me.
Your hand in mine*

*We didn't speak
what was there
to say?*

*I drew you close
and moonbeams
sparkled in your eyes*

*I held you close
The night sounds
settled on us
like a mist.*

*We kissed
And in that moment
I asked
“God, can you love me
more than this?”*

*In the warmth
of your tenderness
Echoed back
the answer*

“Yes”

Absorb ourselves in wisdom

The Lord views everything within the framework of eternity. He is not only Alpha and Omega –the beginning and the end, but he is before the beginning and beyond the end. He is absolutely aware, and absolutely wise. We have to be absorbed into that infinite wisdom, and then we will know what is in his heart, and how to intercede with wisdom. This is a difficult gift to acquire,

because we are so quick to see things from our point of view. It is a difficult gift to exercise, because the Lord's wisdom exists between his profound love for his creation, and his absolute justice which cannot condone sin. This is why intercessors must lay aside earthly wisdom, and acquire, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to not just know the wisdom of God, but become that wisdom - be absorbed into it, identified totally with it.

Being absorbed into the wisdom, like absolute love, is not easy to grasp. Apostle Paul put it like this:-

“To those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” (1 Cor. 1:24)

Sister Benedicta (Edith Stein) reflected on this:-

“One can only learn a science of the cross if one feels the cross in one's own person. I was convinced of this from the very first, and have said with all my heart ‘Hail cross our only hope.’” (“The Science of the Cross.” Edith Stein)

Edith Stein, who became known as Sister Benedicta, was born a Jew, but became a Catholic Christian. She was highly intelligent, and wrote much about the Faith. In 1942 she was arrested and sent via a number of camps to Auschwitz, where she was made to strip, and along with many others went into the so called “showers” and was gassed to death.

Somehow, 1 Corinthians 1:24 worked its way out in her life. The wisdom of God drew her to love and die for and with the Jewish people, a sacrifice for them within the hell of fear, nakedness, vomit and mass execution. As a mystic and an intercessor, she had to accept this as the “wisdom” of God, as he worked his purposes out for the Jewish people.

For intercessors, we live surrounded by the glory of God in our intercession, but what we see and know we have to live out in reality. It can be extremely painful, but to this we are called.

Clothe yourself in humility

Maria d'Agreda wrote this: - "The whole heavenly history bears the stamp of humility and is a condemnation of our pride." ("The Mystical City of God.") This was the fruit of her life of prayer and intercession.

The whole of our Faith moves in the power of humility. This profound truth has always caused us so much difficulty, because it runs against the natural self. Pride pushes humility away. The Lord paid a high price to correct this error:-

We were so proud

But when the storm came

It tore away our hope

And left us wasted.

One sorrow

The Lord looked down from heaven

And saw what we had become

and his heart was filled with pain.

Two sorrows

Blood dripping

Calling

One love

When we come to intercession, and our self rises up, we must look to the Lord. King of Kings and Lord of Lords he may be, but the stamp of his character is humility. (Phil 2:5-8) We have to absorb humility. If we do not, we can never get close to the throne. We will be able to stand near him, but not close to him. If we smell of self, we will pollute the fragrance of humility. Here's a prayer from Charles de Foucauld who knew all about humility. He was murdered by the Taureg in 1916.

Father,

I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will.

Whatever you may do, I thank you:

I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures.

I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Into your hands I commend my soul;

I offer it to you

with all the love of my heart,

for I love you, Lord,

and so need to give myself,

to surrender myself into your hands,

without reserve,

and with boundless confidence,

for you are my Father.

Rest yourself in security

For the intercessor, security is difficult ground. If we do not put our security totally under the hand of Jesus, the enemy will destroy us. But resting in his security is a very tough.

Shadrach Meshach and Abednego said “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” (Dan 3: 17-18) “Our God is able” was a statement of security, but this secure trust was to be tested with their lives.

Job walked with God, but his testing stripped everything away, and drove him to the edge of his reason. (Job chapter 23)

Jeremiah trusted God to help him, but found himself in mortal danger:-

“So they took Jeremiah and put him into the cistern of Malkijah, the king’s son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern; it had no water in it, only mud and Jeremiah sank down into the mud.” (Jer.38:6)

Placing our security in God offers no protection from severe testing and pain here on earth. Here are two examples from our time. There are many others.

Jim Elliott was a missionary to Ecuador. He said this “He is no fool who give what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” His security was in the Lord. He and four others went to share the Gospel in Ecuador. On Jan 8th, 1956 his body and those of the other four were found in the Curaray River. They had been murdered.

Jean Donovan was a missionary in El Salvador, during a very dangerous time. She said “There are lots of times I feel like coming home but I really do feel strongly that God has sent me here.” She was raped and murdered along with three Religious Sisters in El Salvador by a military death squad in December 1980.

The ultimate place of security is found, inevitably on the cross. There everything was stripped and broken. There was humiliation and shame, intense pain and spiritual darkness. But the security shines though in “It is finished.”

This is the route for those who want security in Jesus.

Knowing the pain of rejection

He does not reject.

Unworthiness demands

a crown of shame

yet he only wants to love.

He wears the thorns

so that I need not.

In the presence of such love

what can I say?

I see the broken man I have become

and grieve for the waste of my life.

He touches me.

Love too deep for words.

I live again

Rest

Intercessors live in the storms! The storms are on the inside and on the outside. Inwardly we are struggling all the time to let the Lord mould our lives onto him, and as we have seen this can be very hard. Being made to look into his purity hour by hour, becoming more aware of our impurity, being made to absorb his authority, and feel the agony of his love - this is hard for us. It's like being a stick on the ocean, pushed around by endless currents. We are never still. We are caught up in the great flows of spiritual activity in the spiritual world, which translate to events and circumstances here on earth. Apostle Paul gives us perspective:-

Outwardly:- “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not abandoned; struck down but not destroyed. We always carry on our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.” (2 Cor. 4:7-10)

Inwardly:- “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” (2 Cor. 4:16-17)

In the middle of all this activity, God remains still - secure, in control, untroubled, eternal. Psalm 14 puts it well. “The fool says in his heart ‘There is no God.’” “The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men.” The world is disturbed, troubled, anxious, questioning, but above it all, in the centre of creation the Lord looks down from heaven, all seeing, all knowing and unshakeable. He is permanence in the face of the shifting sands of the world and our relationships.

Intercessors have to live in the inner and outer worlds, and can become very anxious, troubled and disturbed. This is inevitable. We cannot intercede in a heavenly bubble. Jesus came from heaven, and got involved here on earth. We must do the same. Intercession flows from the inner and outer struggles. But we also have to absorb the “rest”, the certainty of creation and the eternal plan.

We have to absorb this into our souls, so that we are absorbed into God's creation plan. Otherwise we will eventually be destroyed by all the inner and outer struggles.

Gently now

To bear the burden of the world

Is too great a pain

Gently now

To ask to share his heart

Is an easier way

Gently now

Be gathered to his heart

And let him light

The lonely path

With hope

Refresh yourself with gladness and joy

“Then the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.” (John 20:20)

Joy flows from deep wells of suffering and pain. The disciples had been crushed, humiliated and dismissed. Their Lord had been killed. They were in fear and despair. But this process released the wells of joy to them. When the Lord stood among them, the springs bubbled up, restoring, refreshing, renewing and re-igniting their faith.

Intercessors need to experience these springs of joy. They renew and refresh, giving courage for further struggles and tough experiences. But we can be greatly encouraged - those springs will come to us as we identify and come closer to the Lord in intercession. The Lord has placed these springs of joy at key points in our journey. If we endure, we will come to them, and when we do, like pilgrims in the desert, we can drink and rejoice.

We must! We are walking a hard path. Occasionally we need refreshing. So let's drink, and enjoy.

*In your garden
flowers of joy grow.
I pick one
and Love's fragrance
fills me.
I swim in
the river of delight
and sorrows fade.*

Sunset

and by its light

see your eyes

loving me

Content

Strengthen yourself with hope

“Hope” is the Greek word “Elpizo”, and it means “to wait for salvation with joy and full confidence.” Apostle Paul knew that we all need hope. Without it, we are lost: - **“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”** (1 Cor. 15:19)

Intercessors need hope in very large amounts, because we do not often see the results of our intercession. We have to believe that Jesus has, and will triumph. This passage from Revelation must be the framework for our lives, or we are lost.

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron sceptre.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

King of kings and lord of lords.

And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in mid-air, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small."

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulphur. The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh. (Rev.19:11-20)

Jesus triumphed, and this is our hope. No matter what comes against us, and even if, like Jim Elliott and Jean Donovan we suffer what looks like defeat, Jesus IS, and always will be.

I am the ark.

I am the place in which God has invested his glory.

I am the pledge of his covenant.

In me are engraved his name, his commitments.

I am the sign of his promises.

Wherever I go and

Wherever I live and breathe,

I am his signature of grace and covenant.

I am his Testimony, his Hope.

All our riches

Everything is summed up in Jesus. All our spiritual needs, wants, hopes, and desires. Everything we need, or will ever need is in him. He is our crown, our champion, our Saviour, our friend, our Lord. He is our everything.

Resting in the garden of your delights

I take your beauty into my hands

And I am full.

But when I leave,

I cannot take your beauty with me

For it is yours.

I mourn my loss.

Then the Lord spoke to me.

“Beauty of my beauty,

Why do you cry?”

Because of what I am,

And the waste of my life.

The he came and held me,

and I was whole.

Beautiful

Reflection

Christ of the broken body, heal me

Christ of the deeper love, love me

Christ of the heavenly joy, rejoice over me

Christ of the sacred three, cherish me

Christ of the lonely road, comfort me

Section 5: The breastplate of the Chartula

The Chartula is hard going for the Intercessor, but it came out of a very challenging experience, so we cannot be surprised. Let's use the last lines to move away from how it challenges us to how it might be a protection for us.

Chartula

**You are beauty, You are meekness; You are the protector, You are our
custodian and defender;**

You are strength; You are refreshment, (or refuge)

**You are our hope, You are our faith, You are our charity, You are all our
sweetness,**

**You are our eternal life: Great and wonderful Lord, God almighty, Merciful
Saviour.**

The Celtic stream of the Christian faith contains a lot of writings, called “Breastplates.” These are powerful summaries of what Jesus has done, and they challenge us to greater faith and endurance, under his protection. “St Patrick’s Breastplate” is probably the best known, but there are many others as well. I have taken the last part of the Chartula, and turned it into a breastplate. Then it becomes a weapon for us - an encouragement to believe in the Lord more, and to reach deeper into his heart. It seems an appropriate end to this incredible document, and makes it an active weapon in our struggles.

The breastplate of Intercessors

Beautiful Lord, I dwell in your glory - still my soul with balm.

Humble Lord, I touch your humility - quench the fires of my pride.

Mighty Lord, I hide in your shadow - cover me with your presence.

Powerful Lord, I exalt in your greatness - break the strongholds of my life.

Gentle Lord, I rejoice in your presence - refresh me with your love.

Eternal Lord, I stand in your hope - hold me for ever and forever.

Faithful Lord, I trust in your promise - bind me to your eternity.

Sweetest Lord, I yearn for your filling - overflow me with your spirit.

Eternal God, for ever unchanging, full loving with grace, abundant in mercy and goodness, be the light of my life, the joy of my heart, the strength of my soul.

I bind myself to you.

What next?

What material will help if we want to go deeper into intercession? I suggest looking at the material on the website: - www.serving-africa.org.

On the PRAYER OF MYSTIC INTERCESSION PAGE:-

*** Into the heart**

This material looks at the mystic side of intercessory prayer. Very challenging, and takes us very deep into the heart of Jesus

*** Priory ministry – the way of thorns.**

This is a look at the cost of intercession.

*** Priory prophetic – repentance.**

This challenges intercessors to repentance at a deep level

On the PRAYER STOTE PAGE:-

*** Into the flow.**

A look at what intercession is from the biblical perspective.

*** Calling down the power.**

A look at the many helps there are available to us as we pray.

*** St Patrick's Breastplate.**

I am sure Francis would have approved of this Celtic challenge and encouragement.

Further reading

These are the books I have used in preparing this material.

The Life of Francis by Thomas Selano.

The Road to Assisi by Paul Sabatier.

Francis of Assisi - the Saint. Early documents. New City Press.

The Eternal Book of Wisdom. Henry Suso.

The Science of the Cross. Edith Stein.

The Mystical City of God. Maria d'Agreda.

The spiritual autobiography of Charled de Fouchaud.

Jim Smith

Jim Smith has been an Anglican Minister for over 40 years. He was a vicar of two Parishes in Durham, before working for an Anglican organisation committed to evangelism and church growth. For the last 25 years he has been running the Serving Africa Mission with his wife Mary. This is a faith mission, depending totally on prayer for its support.

Jim has been exploring areas of prophecy and intercession for many years, and now spends part of his time teaching and helping Intercessors in many countries.

Mary leads the S.A.M., along with our African leader Paul.

Jim and Mary are married and have 5 children. Jim is licensed to the Diocese of Chichester. When in the U.K. they attend their local Anglican church, but their work is totally open to all denominations.