



February 3, 2025

A Prayer for the Church

This is not the first time the church has found itself in a time when the values of the Kingdom of God were at odds with much of the political rhetoric and contemporary culture around it. In fact, the church has often been a minority voice of conscience witnessing to Christ's invitation to show love to the least and the lost, the lonely and the outcast, the oppressed and unloved.

In the early 20th Century, Walter Rauschenbusch became known as the father of the "Social Gospel Movement," trying to bring the faith to bear on the social ills of his day. He was a pastor in Hell's Kitchen in New York City when it was not a popular TV foodie show, but was a cauldron of poverty and crime. His outspoken call for the church to be a prophetic voice for compassion, justice and mercy is reflected in one of his best-known prayers. It is as relevant today as it was when it was written:

*O God of all times and places,
we pray for your Church,
which is set today amid the perplexities of a changing order,
and face to face with new tasks.*

*Baptize her afresh in the life-giving spirit of Jesus.
Bestow upon her a great responsiveness to duty,
a swifter compassion with suffering,
and an utter loyalty to your will.*

*Help her to proclaim boldly the coming of your kingdom.
Put upon her lips the ancient gospel of her Lord.
Fill her with the prophets' scorn of tyranny,
and with a Christlike tenderness for the heavy-laden and downtrodden.*

*Bid her cease from seeking her own life, lest she lose it.
Make her valiant to give up her life to humanity, that, like her
crucified Lord,
she may mount by the path of the cross to a higher glory
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

~Written by Jack Harnish

(WALTER RAUSCHENBUSCH, The Book of Common Prayer, 1938)

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