

CELEBRATING SAINT PETER CLAVER

The Lord hears the cry of the poor and the oppressed.

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Born: Catalonia in Spain: 1551

Ordained Jesuit priest: 1571

Died: 1654 in Columbia

Canonized: 1888

Feast: September 9

Patron of African-Americans

A missionary in the Americas

Ministered physically and spiritually to the slaves

Worked for humane treatment on the plantations



Peter said of the slaves, "We must speak to them with our hands by giving, before we try to speak to them with our lips."

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Let us pause and remember that we continually are in the presence of our God. Glory to You, Source of All Being, Eternal Word, and Holy Spirit.

Out of past and present pain and suffering,

We come to worship God,

Who is with all those who suffer oppression.

With all that this experience evokes within us,

We come to worship God,

Whose Spirit groans within us in prayers too deep for words.

From all our journeys of time and space and spirit,

We come to worship God,

Who has led us into our present and who beckons us into our future.

To speak and hear the truth, and to commit ourselves to seek justice,

Whose truth sets us free, and who calls for justice to flow down like water.

We come to worship God.

PRAYER:

Dear Saint Peter Claver, saint for all times, you were permeated with compassion for the oppressed, with human beings sold as slaves and treated as expendable. While alleviating their natural ills, you also took away their spiritual ills, and taught them the surpassing knowledge of Christ. Inspire many of our contemporaries to become self-sacrificing missionaries like you. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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HYMN

Will you let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you;

Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.

We are all pilgrims on a journey, we are travelers on the road.

We are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you in the nighttime of your fear.

I will hold my hand out to you and speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping, when you laugh I will laugh with you.

I will share your joy and sorrow til we have seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven, we shall find such harmony.

Born of all we know together of Christ's love and agony.

— The Servant Song: Richard Gillard, 1977, Scripture in Song

PSALM 13 : 2-6

How long, LORD? Will you utterly forget me?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I carry sorrow in my soul, grief in my heart day after day?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look upon me, answer me, LORD, my God!

Give light to my eyes lest I sleep in death,

Lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed,"

lest my foes rejoice at my downfall.

I trust in your faithfulness.

Grant my heart joy in your help,

that I may sing of the LORD, "How good our God has been to me!"

ISAIAH 58: 6–8

Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? will you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?

Is it not to give your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out of the house? when you see the naked, that you cover them... Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your reward.

MATTHEW 5: 5–6

The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

And blessed are they, who shall not be offended in me.

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FROM A LETTER OF SAINT PETER CLAVER

We spoke to them (the slaves) not with words but with our hands and actions. And in fact, convinced as they were that they had been brought here to be eaten, any other language would have proved utterly useless. Then we sat or rather knelt beside them and bathed their faces and bodies. We made every effort to encourage them with friendly gestures and displayed in their presence the emotions which somehow naturally hearten the sick.

The joy in their eyes as they looked at us was truly something to see.

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INTERCESSIONS

Response: GOD OF CONSOLATION, BE WITH YOUR PEOPLE.

That all who are bound by slavery of any sort
will find hope and encouragement in the promises of Christ.

That all who work for the betterment of peoples
will be blessed by the Lord and continue their commitment to the poor.

That the rich and powerful of this world
will realize the dignity and worth of every individual
and treat them with respect and love.

That all who labor in the missions
will find support in the Lord
and not be discouraged in proclaiming the Christian message.

That the poor and downtrodden
will come to know Jesus Christ
and embrace His teachings with enthusiasm.

A PRAYER

O God,

Open our eyes that we may see the needs of others;

Open our ears that we may hear their cries;

Open our hearts that we may feel their anguish and their joy.

Let us not be afraid to defend the oppressed, the poor, the powerless,
because of the anger and might of the powerful.

Show us where love and hope and faith are needed,
and use us to bring them to those places.

Open our ears and eyes, our hearts and lives,

that we may in these coming days

be able to do some work of justice and peace for you. Amen.

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Saint Peter Claver, missionary to the hopeless,

Let all people oppressed and heavily burdened find hope in Christ.

Saint John Baptist de La Salle

and all you holy Brothers who have gone before us,

Give us a holy reverence for God's poor.

Live Jesus in our hearts. Forever!