

"To confess your sins to God is not to tell [God] anything [God] doesn't already know. Until you confess them, however, they are the abyss between you. When you confess them, they become the bridge."

Frederick Buechner

O Loving God of holiness and grace, as we center ourselves in your presence, we say to you as the psalmist said, "Search me O God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." Lord, in all honesty, this is a difficult prayer for us to pray, because it means we must be honest with ourselves and with you. It means we really do want you to show us what we have done that we shouldn't have, what we neglected to do or say, what we thought or said that brought you displeasure. It means that we actually want you to point out those areas in our lives that need change, that need cleansing, that need you to intervene. Because, we admit Lord, that we, by ourselves, are incapable of living the way we should - the way of Christ. And so we come to you, with our confessions. We come admitting that we are both saint and sinner at the same time, and yet we want to be more saint than sinner when we leave this place. And so we take this time to come now in silence, with our own personal prayers of confession, as we prepare our hearts and minds to take the body and blood of Christ, remembering his great sacrifice, and seeking to be worthy to call ourselves by his name.

Silence

Thank you O God, for your assurance of forgiveness and mercy and a new start. We pray that your breath of the Holy Spirit would fill us, that we might live boldly and faithfully for you each and every day, to all people we meet, in every way that we can. And Lord, we come also to this time to share together in prayer for those we care for. As St. James says, "The prayers of the righteous are powerful and effective." And so, as brothers and sisters in Christ, we lift up those who are on our prayer list this day, but we lift up others also. Hear us now, as people in this congregation lift aloud the names for whom we ask your blessing.

Thank you, Lord, for the peace and comfort of knowing that we have been heard. And through the rest of our time of worship, may you know our love and devotion to you, and our gratitude for you being in our lives. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.