

Pastoral Prayer
September 29, 2019

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Holy God,

What a gift yesterday's afternoon was, a still, a calm time of gentle warmth, a cashmere of an afternoon. This is a bustling time of year – a rallying time of year--when like squirrels we scurry about, some harvesting food, stacking wood, watching the sunset on sports fields, starting new programs for the fall while others think ahead to Thanksgiving. Already. But you gave us a comma in the weather yesterday, a time to catch our breath and pause. Instead of crystal days and chilly nights with threatened frost, instead of fall snapping a whip at our heels, we had stillness. And so we think that maybe we won't after all pull up the zinnias but let them bloom their hearts right out.

What can seem odd in the stillness and warmth, loudest, really if truth be known--for sound travels well in still, humid air---are the crickets, especially the one under the refrigerator. A cricket's call is crisp like fall and in the furry comma of extended summer, it seems out of place. Why do crickets come inside anyway? We spend inordinate time sneaking up on them, pouncing on them, releasing them back to the wilderness. We say we're saving them but really we are getting rid of them. They annoy us, they irritate us with their wing rustling, the constant chant we can't understand.

We're busy and haven't time to chase crickets. We are busy and haven't time for many things, for many people. We haven't time to consider what is happening in foreign lands where people speak languages we can't understand. So we try to silence them in one way or another, we find them under the frig, at border processing centers in El Paso, on the streets of large cities, in the detris of our lives heaved in landfills; we try toss them out. We confess, O God, that we are impatient with those we don't understand.

Thank you for the gift of wayward crickets, for reminding us that the poor, the sad, the lonely are always with us, calling a prayer of constancy. In

these gentle fall days, open our ears and hearts to those who need our tender touch and patience. Lead us to take the time to search them out and listen to their crying song.

Amen.