



Fall's Blessing

Lord, it is the time of year for many of us when the nature around us explodes into a patchwork of color. The leaves turn, the sky takes on different hues, and we find the sun in its winter place. It brings shorter days and a chill in the air that calls forth warmer cloths, indoor activities, or sitting around a warm fireplace. Thank you for the changing seasons! Help us to use this time to reflect and recharge. Help us to seek a refreshed understanding of your calling for us and renew our commitment to follow your leading in our lives. Help us not to lose sight of your clear example of servant leadership and concern for the welfare of those around us, especially those in need, enemies and friends. Remind us too, that time to recharge and reflect is personal time and a time to reestablish our connection to the world around us with all its needs and possibilities, as well as with our responsibilities to work with others and for the good of all. Thank you for the gift of new possibilities each day and each season brings. Thank you too for the chance to address the challenges ahead of us in a world that very much needs fall's explosion of color because it represents the love and service you give us to share.

This week, start with your prayers:

- **Those seeking asylum in the U.S.** One Day before a court ordered deadline, the current administration finally released a last batch of names of children who were separated from their parents at the U.S. border. The total now stands at more than 5,400 children taken since July 2017. Of the 1,556 taken in the first year of the Trump administration, 207 were younger than 5. At least 1,090 children have been taken from their parents since a judge ordered an end to the practice except in "limited" circumstances (threats to the child's safety or doubt that the adult with the child is a parent). The American Civil Liberties Union finds that some children have been taken for unsubstantiated reasons or minor transgressions like traffic tickets. While many of the children have been returned to their families, some are still unaccounted for because the government did not keep good records that would allow for reuniting them. The permanent damage done to the children and families is uncalculatable. This year, the government's new tactic is to make people wait in Mexico for their asylum hearing instead of waiting in the U.S. This has returned tens of thousands of people to Mexico. Since some of the courts that handle these cases are far from the border (in Cleveland for example), it is not clear how the immigrants are to keep their court dates. People from Central America are being denied any chance of asylum because they must pass through another country to reach the U.S. The government now says they must apply for asylum in that other country. Since the countries they must pass through are no safer than their countries of origin, and no better able to meet their basic needs, (housing, food, jobs, etc.) that is not a viable option for most. (<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/more-5-400-children-split-border-according-new-count-n1071791>)
- Be with **the Kurds and others suffering in the Middle East.** The ethnic and religion-based violence there continues.
- **Those facing fire and storms** in California and elsewhere in the world.
- **Those facing gun violence.** There have been 7 more shootings in which 4 or more were hurt or killed since October 22. This year 169 children 11 or younger have been killed and 408 injured by guns. 621 teens 12 to 17 have died and 1,913 have been injured by guns.



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