

The City Church, New York

The Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession – April 23, 2006

William Shakespeare was born and died on this day in 1564 and 1616.

Let us pray.

Father: Thank You for the privilege of prayer. May we more fully realize that it is our Father with whom we speak, our Father, who wants to hear from us. May we hear You, too, that we might know how to pray. Thank You for the power of praying with thanksgiving and for the promise that You respond for our good to what we ask in the name of him who invited us to cast all cares his way. May our prayers be wise enough to imitate his – prefacing and amending with the prayer: Your will be done.

Author of Life and Love: We rejoice in all You create and call good – in every good gift that ever was, is and ever will be. They're not earned. They're all bestowed by Your bounteous grace. Help us to use them for Your glory and the good of all our neighbors.

You create out of nothing, this ever-expanding universe made just right for our birth. You create out of the nothingness into which we would die, and out of our Savior's making nothing of himself, an ever-expanding re-creation just right for our new birth.

You call us to imitate You in making something more. But we can't create out of nothing. We work with all the gifts received from Your creative hands.

Thank You for language and literature – writers and words, rhymes and rhythms. And today, especially, we're reminded of the gift of our brother, William, and the gifts of his plays and poetry, eloquent reminders that grace is the very cadence of creation and sacrificial love the drama of a fallen world redeemed. So may we, with Portia, affirm that "the quality of mercy is not strained, [that it] droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath, [and] is twice blessed, [blessing] him that gives and him that takes [and that] earthly power doth ...show like God's when mercy seasons justice." And may we learn the empathy we need to learn, even from Shylock: that we all do bleed when pricked, we all laugh when tickled and we resemble each other more than we don't.

Hear our prayer again this morning. Edit it as You will – for Your eternal glory and our eternal good – as now we add the prayer Jesus taught us to pray to You, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.