

KEEPING  
VIGIL FOR A  
SUFFERING  
WORLD

The Journey School

July 25, 2024



# A SUFFERING WORLD: THE WORK PERSPECTIVE

## Four Types of Suffering (from J. G. Bennett):

- Unavoidable Suffering
- Voluntary Suffering
- Unnecessary Suffering
- Intentional Suffering

*Anwell, 6.11.48*

### **COMMENTARY ON SUFFERING**

#### **WORK-IDEAS**

Gurdjieff said:

- (1) "This Work is Esoteric Christianity."
- (2) "People imagine they have something to sacrifice. There is only one thing they have to sacrifice and that is their suffering."
- (3) "A man in this Work must eventually begin to know what Conscious Suffering is compared with Mechanical Suffering."

Maurice Nicoll, *Commentaries*, Vol. 4, p. 1239



# KEEPING VIGIL IN THE WORK

Protect us, Lord, as we stay awake;  
watch over us as we sleep,  
*that awake, we may keep watch with Christ,*  
and asleep, rest in Christ's peace.

*Vigilance, Watchfulness, Nepsis*

“When you begin your work,  
you must be in a state of active vigilance.”  
- G.I. Gurdjieff, *Excerpts from a Meeting*, 1943



William Holman Hunt, *The Light of the World*, 1854

THE PRACTICE OF *VIGIL*



A MYSTICISM OF OPEN EYES



# A COLLECTIVE CONSENT



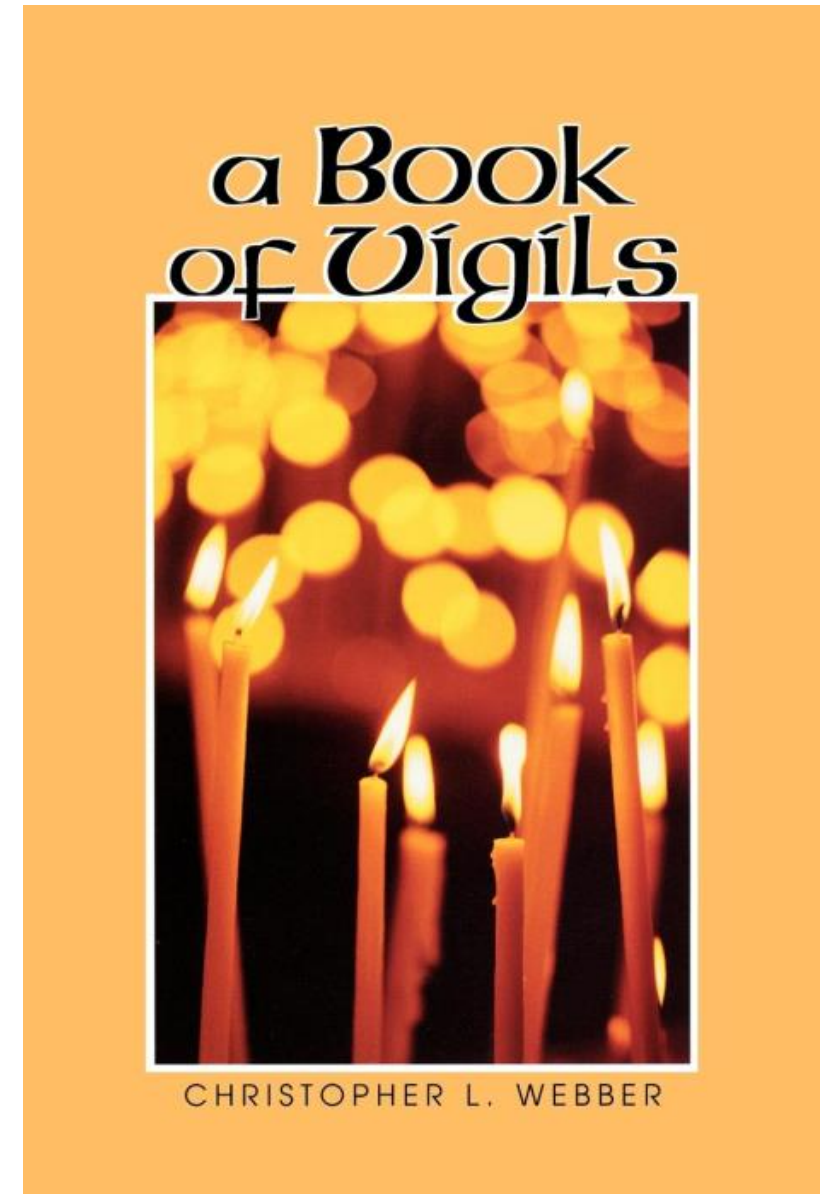
SOLIDARITY IN THE DARKNESS



A BRIEF VIGIL  
FOR  
OUR SUFFERING WORLD

*Three Remembrances*

1. Those who are suffering amidst war, violence, and injustice.
2. Those who are suffering with illness or injury.
3. The suffering of the dying and those who are grieving.



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# OPENING

God of peace,  
let us rest in your presence,  
let us keep watch in your holy place,  
let our restless thoughts be stilled,  
let your peace sink deep into our souls,  
let your presence be sufficient for us,  
as we keep watch before you.

O Israel, wait for the Lord, for with the Lord there is  
mercy;

let that mercy be with those who keep watch this  
night;

with those who seek for peace in human hearts

in places of conflict and tension;

with those who work for healing tonight

in hospitals and homes;

with those who bring your presence

to those who need your love and healing power.

Be present, Lord Christ, with those who watch this  
night;

with those who are ill;

with those who are dying;

with those who are hungry;

with those who are homeless;

with those who rejoice

in the birth of a child,

in a marriage,

in an anniversary,

in prayers answered,

in the gift of love,

in the confidence of faith;

with those who wait for the Spirit's gift;

and grant that our waiting and watching this night

may draw us closer to your love,

and make us more faithful servants of your purpose.

Amen.



## REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE SUFFERING AMIDST WAR, VIOLENCE, AND INJUSTICE

The vision of the City of God is a vision of reality, but it is a vision, not knowledge—not knowledge of that which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive.” The light that it shed on our dark earth is a somewhat fitful light. We pray, “Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” We believe that it will be done. We even believe, though it is a hard saying, that all things will work together for good to those who love God. But when we descend to the particular, and encourage ourselves by saying the cause of justice and humanity cannot be defeated because there is a heaven above us, when we use the words of the Old Testament promising victory and prosperity to the righteous, we are forgetting the lessons of history, which show us a great shadow lying right across the earth—it is the shadow of the cross. In our very deepest heart of hearts we would not have it otherwise. We are called to be under the banner of the crucified.

And so we look for another country, that is, a heavenly, and yet we know that even in the cloudy and dark day this earth of ours is no derelict outcast of God’s creation, but that part of heaven where our lot is cast, a world marred, but a world redeemed, through which we walk by faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off, and remembering the words of St. Paul, that the object for which Jesus Christ ascended up far above all heavens was not to leave us comfortless, but that He might fill all things.

—William Ralph Inge, *The Things that Remain*, Harper and Brothers, 1958, p. 16





Remember that you were once without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God. . . . Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

—Ephesians 2:12–22; 4:3

Waiting at the foot of your cross, Lord Christ,  
we pray for healing and reconciliation  
in your world and in your church;  
our sins weigh us down;  
they divide us;  
they set us in warring camps;  
they blind us so we cannot see the way of peace;  
they deafen us so we cannot hear the word of healing;  
they fill us with faithless fears,  
not only of our enemies  
but of our neighbors;  
even of ourselves;  
forgive us, have mercy on us,  
turn our hearts toward your love,  
open our hearts to your peace,  
fill our hearts with your holy and life-giving Spirit;  
grant that we may go out to serve you,  
forgiven, strengthened, and renewed;  
make us willing to sacrifice our own  
imagined interests,  
to spend and not to count the cost,  
to share your suffering without complaint,  
to seek no victories for ourselves  
but only for others  
and for your love's sake.

Give us, eternal God,  
the gift of healing and renewal;  
where there is need,  
let us share the gifts you have given us;  
where there is anger,  
let us bear witness to your patience,  
let us share your suffering;  
let us hold up the vision of your peace;  
where there is conflict,  
let us be present in your Name  
to bind up wounds,  
to offer the gift of understanding,  
and to seek your will;  
your will, not our own,  
here on this earth, now, and among all people.  
Amen.





## REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE WHO SUFFER WITH ILLNESS OR INJURY

You, Lord, have come to us,  
lived among us, and shared our human life;  
you know what it is to be weary, thirsty, and in pain;  
you also have overcome even death  
and ascended to the right hand of God  
to make intercession for us;  
we come to you therefore in confidence  
that you know our need  
and are able to respond  
in love and compassion and power.  
Hear our prayer, O Lord,  
and grant us the gift of perfect trust  
that you are doing for us and those we care for  
better things than we can either desire or pray for. Amen.

I will stand at my watch-post, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint. Then the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will exult in the God of my salvation.

- Habakkuk 2:1-3; 3:17-18





We know, good and gracious God,  
that your will for us is to heal us and make us whole;  
yet, Lord, we do not know  
what healing we need;  
and we do not always see  
how you can use our weakness  
to draw us closer to each other  
and closer to you,  
how you can use our suffering,  
as you used the suffering of your own Son,  
to redeem us, to renew us,  
and to bring good out of evil.  
Use, dear Lord, the prayers we have offered  
to accomplish in us and those we love,  
the good things you alone can give,  
both now and for all eternity. Amen.

# REMEMBRANCE OF THE DYING AND THE GRIEVING

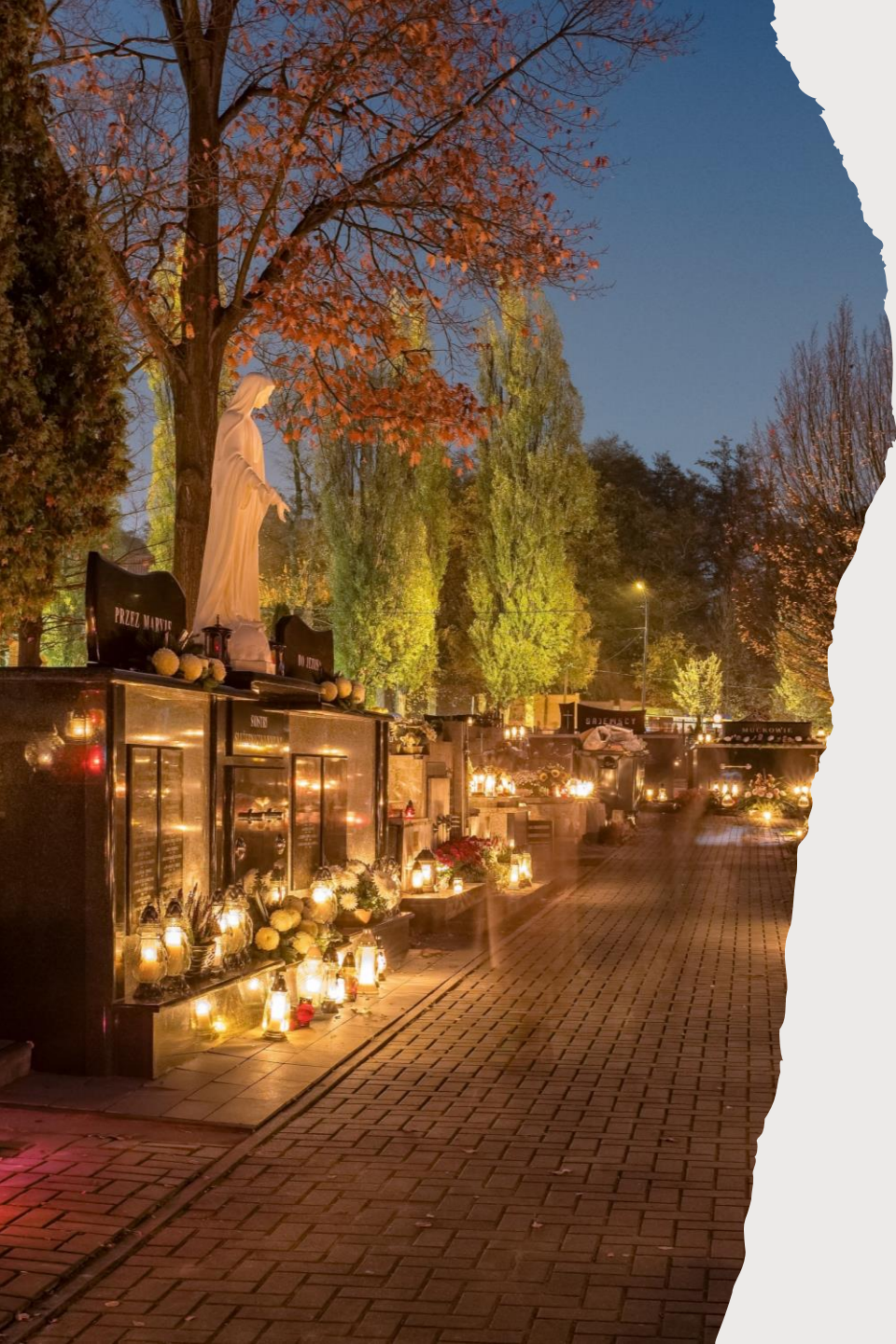


Nothing can make up for the absence of someone whom we love, and it would be wrong to try to find a substitute; we must simply hold out and see it through. That sounds very hard at first, but at the same time it is a great consolation, for the gap, as long as it remains unfilled, preserves the bonds between us. It is nonsense to say that God fills the gap; he doesn't fill it, but on the contrary, he keeps it empty and so helps us to keep alive our former communion with each other even at the cost of pain.

Secondly, the dearer and richer our memories, the more difficult the separation. But gratitude changes the pangs of memory into a tranquil joy. The beauties of the past are borne, not as a thorn in the flesh, but as a precious gift in themselves. We must take care not to wallow in our memories or hand ourselves over to them, just as we do not gaze all the time at a valuable present, but only at special times, and apart from these keep it simply as a hidden treasure that is ours for certain. In this way the past gives us lasting joy and strength.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*,  
Eberhard Bethge, ed., Macmillan Publishing Co., 1953,  
176–177





Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”

And the one who was seated on the throne said, See, I am making all things new. Also he said, Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true. Then he said to me, It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

- Revelation 21:1-6

Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening  
into the house and gate of heaven,  
to enter into that gate and dwell in that house,  
where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling,  
but one equal light;  
no noise nor silence,  
but one equal music;  
no fears nor hopes,  
but one equal possession;  
no ends nor beginnings,  
but one equal eternity;  
in the habitations of thy glory and dominion  
world without end. Amen.

—John Donne





## CLOSING

You, O Lord, are always present  
in this world,  
in those I meet,  
in human need,  
and in my heart,  
but I am often blind and deaf to you.

Open my eyes, my Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier,  
to know you in the world you have made,  
to see you in the lives of others,  
to listen to you  
in the promptings of my heart and mind  
so that I may know you, see you, hear you,  
and make you known  
and give you glory in all things.

O God of peace, you have taught us that, in returning and rest, we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength; now lift us, we pray, by the power of your Holy Spirit to your presence, where we may be still, and know that you are God. Amen.

—The Book of Common Prayer, p. 832, alt.