

To Be a Fellow-Worker with God

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CALL TO PRAYER

Leader: God calls each of us to a specific work, to give of ourselves in the service of others and our community. This year marks the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth. A pioneer of modern nursing, Nightingale felt called away from her life of elite privilege to serve as a nurse. Against the desires of her parents that she marry well and raise a family, Nightingale spent her life caring for the sick in cities and on battlefields. She worked to elevate the nursing profession, bringing rigor, discipline and respectability to the role. She viewed her calling as a partnership with God, who holds all things together.

Reader: "Unless I am, a fellow-worker with Divine Power, who is working up all our poor little puny efforts into a whole — a whole of which our efforts are only parts, and worth anything only in as much as they are parts — shall I work at all? To be a fellow-worker with God is the highest inspiration of which we can conceive humanity capable."

— *Note of Interrogation*, Florence Nightingale

Leader: In a year when nurses and health care professionals are giving more of themselves than ever before, we must step back and consider our efforts as a part of God's plan. Each time we offer our best, serve with compassion, seek justice, and love without fear, we give ourselves to the mighty work of Divine Providence. As we

hold and support others, we also let ourselves be held and supported in the love and greatness of God.

Reader: A reading from the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 34: 15-16, 25-26, 31)

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice. I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely. I will make them and the region around my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture and I am your God, says the Lord God.

Leader: Loving God, Good Shepherd, we thank you for the nurses in our midst and for all those who serve the sick. Sustain them and all of us, keeping your people healthy in mind and body. Give us the strength to serve with compassion and the humility to be led and comforted by you. Give us the grace to be present to others and the vulnerability to share our own needs. We pray that you will take our offerings in this time and use them for your glory and goodness. Amen.

