

Where We Shall Lay Our Heads

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OPENING PRAYER AND READING

God is our shelter and strength and has promised good things to us. Our source and eternal home, let us place ourselves in the presence of God and listen again to the promises made to our ancestors.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah
(Isaiah 65: 21-22)

They shall build houses and live in them,
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit;
They shall not build and others live there;
they shall not plant and others eat.

As the years of a tree, so the years of my people;
and my chosen ones shall long enjoy
the work of their hands.

REFLECTION

And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.” (Matthew 8:20) As a traveling teacher and preacher, we can guess that Jesus and his disciples spent more than a few nights sleeping outside. This puts them in close companionship with more than half a million Americans who do the same every night in this country. Given the elemental nature of home and shelter, the links between homelessness, inadequate housing and adverse health outcomes shouldn't be surprising.

In Catholic health care we are called to attend to the factors influencing the health of our patients and communities. Let us pray for eyes of compassion and look upon each person in the fullness of their story.

Pray with me for those in insufficient housing; please respond, *God be a shelter.*

INTERCESSIONS

For those who make their homes in tent camps, park benches, cars and homeless shelters. We pray, *God be a shelter.*

For those children vulnerable to lead poisoning, asthma and increased injury due to substandard housing conditions. We pray, *God be a shelter.*

For the elderly who are often threatened by extreme temperatures and failing structures. We pray, *God be a shelter.*

For all those living in overcrowded, underfunded and isolated areas. We pray, *God be a shelter.*

CLOSING PRAYER

Creator God, strength, shelter and fortress, be with those who are limited by inadequate and unsafe housing conditions.

Jesus, born in a stable because there was no room in the inn, move us to action to serve and seek out the isolated and vulnerable in our communities.

Holy Spirit, advocate and source of wisdom, stir the hearts of policymakers at federal, state and local levels that they become champions for safe and secure housing for all. Amen.

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