

**Sheltering in Place**  
**March 22, The Fourth Sunday of Lent, 2020**

**The Collect for Purity**

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may more perfectly love you and more worthily magnify your Holy Name, through Christ, our Lord, **Amen**

**Psalm 23**

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters;

He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

**Hymn 6**

Christ, whose glory fills the skies,  
Christ, the true, the only Light,  
Sun of Righteousness, arise,  
Triumph o'er the shades of night;  
Dayspring from on high, be near;  
Daystar, in my heart appear.

Dark and cheerless is the morn  
Unaccompanied by thee;

Joyless is the day's return  
Til thy mercy's beams I see;  
Til they inward light impart,  
Glad my eyes, and warm my heart.

Visit, then, this soul of mine;  
Pierce the gloom of sin and grief;  
Fill me, Radiancy divine;  
Scatter all my unbelief;  
More and more thyself display,  
Shining to the perfect day.

### **Greetings, Dearly Beloved Friends,**

These are indeed strange and disturbing times. Our worship community thrives on togetherness, so this experience of separation is frustrating and uncomfortable. I have inserted below some links to worship services in a couple of places that will be televised via the internet. Please follow one of those if you would like to watch or participate in an online service. Or perhaps you will find another one and write to tell the rest of us of your experience. Your story will appear in Tuesday's *Pebble!* But know that, whether or not you do "virtual" church, the real Church is alive and well in the hearts and prayers of us all, even when we are deprived of each other's physical company. We too are alive and faithful and connected by the original and fundamental internet, known as the Holy Spirit of God.

***If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. Romans 14:8***

Today's email is a combination of greetings, news, prayers and homily. Please write to me or call and leave a message if you'd like to have a conversation about any of this. And maybe try reading it aloud, to someone else or even alone. Once that happens (as all faithful lectors know) a different and deeper perspective on the text often flies in. *The Pebble* will continue as usual. Your faithful Junior Warden Sarah DeLong and I will check the building and gardens and the mail. Everybody's supposed to stay home, and we only live within a few blocks. **We will continue to pay our staff, so please mail in your contributions so we can remain solvent and responsible.**

And please, by all means, if you are (like most of us) in a higher risk group and you need an errand done, call Padre Sid (203) 209-2339, or email me directly: [sssymington@gmail.com](mailto:sssymington@gmail.com). I will triage and take appropriate action resulting in your reassurance and comfort! Senior Warden Lynn Enns reached most of you in

the first half of the alphabet last week; this week, she and I will swap. I look forward to talking with you. Call each other too! Our mutual connection and commitment extend beyond our buildings, and check-ins work wonders. As an extraordinary (and strange) Lenten discipline, as well as other bodily treats, we are forced to “fast” from each other’s company. Let us move through this time with grace, and maybe learn from it.

If the situation doesn’t improve by the time Holy Week arrives, perhaps we can explore some video and audio means of celebrating; but for now, we have the telephone, and with email, we can write to each other more readily than ever before, so there are plenty good ways to stay in touch and support one another day-to-day, while observing safety precautions.

Meanwhile, I urge each of you to adopt extra disciplines of readings, prayer and contemplation during the time we are apart. Read the psalms, aloud and to yourself. Try memorizing one. People who have a monastic vocation do this very thing all the time. They stand apart from society and pray for the well-being and happiness of the rest of us. The crisis of COVID-19 is making nuns and monks of all of us. It presents, along with a frightening and as-yet unmanageable virulence, an opportunity for each of us to become more intentionally aware of those whom God would have us love, and more decidedly prayerful in our approach to their care.

In Chapter 28, Matthew’s Gospel comes to a close with Jesus’ reappearance after the crucifixion, and his reassurance of support and love beyond all time and measurement. “Suddenly, Jesus met them and said, ‘Greetings!’ They came to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. ‘Do not be afraid,’ said Jesus. ‘Go, tell my friends to meet you in Galilee, and there they will see me.’ So they went to Galilee, to the mountain Jesus had designated. Jesus appeared to them and said, ‘Go, make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey all that I have commanded you. For surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ He means the Love Commandment, in every age, including this one.

The majority of us are now at home, in Galilee, as it were. We can’t go out to make disciples, but we can still see Jesus, by resting in the assurance that togetherness is as much a spiritual reality as it is physical. And we can still find ways to communicate our faithfulness to one another and the world. It is strange to see our buildings and gardens here on Shasta Avenue so quiet and empty: None of the Sunday morning bustle and music; no theater crowds; no Altar Guild. Not a game of Bridge to be had (!). Like all of you, I regret the disappointments and hardships these disruptions are causing our community. There is no replacement for the daily rituals and special events that make life at St. Peter’s by the Sea so joyous and meaningful. But we have a moral (and now, legal) obligation not only to protect ourselves from illness, but also to prevent the spread of the disease to others, especially to those who may be most vulnerable. By acting to “flatten the curve” of the rate of infection, we hope we will reduce the

risk that our hospitals will become overwhelmed and that more vulnerable individuals will become gravely ill.

It's no stretch to note that the struggle with this pestilence is being fought, not only in laboratories and amongst governmental policymakers, but in the hearts and minds of each of us. It is a spiritual battle, not just a medical one, because each of us has to choose to be as much a part of the solution as possible **for others' sake**. It is not a "China Virus" or "Kung Flu," any more than the Spanish Influenza came from Spain or Polio from the North Pole. It is a worldwide health problem, for the severity of which, only deniers, minimizers and the irresponsible are at fault. The situation demands worldwide cooperation and understanding. If COVID -19 teaches us anything, it's that we are all very much in this together.

A Rabbi friend shares this: "I wanted to share that I really believe what's happening now is connected to the divine. This week's Torah reading is about the time Moses went to the mountain to receive the tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 32) The people were impatient and didn't have faith that he would come back, so they made a golden calf and prayed to it instead of praying to God. In other words, when they were afraid, they turned to false idols: false information. The story says God gave them a lesson by means of a plague. Some died but the nation survived, and the people of Israel became stronger from the experience, regained their faith and eventually were led to the promised land."

Author Jeremy Grace shares this perspective:

"The thing about the natural world is that it doesn't care about our ideologies, our religions, our worldviews, or our wants. It is what it is.

"When I am not an expert on something (epidemiology, climate change, public health policy, whatever), which is most of the time, I have two choices: 1) I can choose to believe those who study the world following basic principles of the scientific method: gathering data, making conjectures about causality, testing those conjectures, and demonstrating causes. Or 2) I can soothe and distract myself by ignoring reality, listening to quacks and charlatans, and shouting (or whispering) about conspiracies. It's my choice.

"The problem is that my choices don't just affect me. They affect everyone around me too. There is a longstanding strain of anti-intellectualism in U.S. culture. It stems from our good tradition of believing (theoretically) in fundamental principles of equality. But we have a responsibility to recognize what we know and what we don't know. When we are not experts on something, it's our job to figure out who the experts are and listen to them carefully. It's our responsibility to revise our beliefs when the facts don't square with our preconceptions.

“It's fine to change my mind. It's fine to recognize I was wrong. The people I admire most are those who learn from their mistakes. In fact, doing so is one of the fundamental responsibilities of a rational mind. There are real issues we can disagree on. But we cannot start any conversation without recognizing the basic realities and verities of existence.”

This is the message behind the Israelites regaining their faith and finding forgiveness for their mistakes so that they may start again and find their Promised Land. Regaining faith for us means waking up and facing facts. The Promised Land for us is the world where justice and mercy and compassion prevail.

The contemporary Franciscan Richard Rohr offers this perspective on the COVID crisis:

“I'm trying to see, psychologically, spiritually, and personally, what is God trying to say here? It's not that God causes suffering to teach us good things. But we know God does use everything, and if God wanted us to experience global solidarity, perhaps there is no better way. We all are a part of this suffering; it bypasses race, gender, religion, and nation.

“So this is a highly teachable moment. There's no doubt that this period will be referred to for the rest of our lifetimes. We have a chance to go deep, and to go broad. Depth is being forced on us by great suffering, which always leads to great love.

“But for God to reach us, we have to allow suffering to wound us. Now is no time for a merely academic solidarity with the world. Real solidarity needs to be felt and suffered. That's the real meaning of the word “suffer” – to allow someone else's pain to influence us in a real way. We need to move beyond our own personal feelings and take in the whole. This is one of the gifts of television: we can turn it on and see how people in countries other than our own are hurting. What is going to happen to those living in isolated places or for those who don't have health care? Imagine the fragility of the most marginalized, of people in prisons, the homeless, or even the people performing necessary services, such as ambulance drivers, nurses, and doctors, risking their lives to keep society together?

Our feelings of urgency and devastation are not exaggeration: they are a response to a real human situation. We have to allow these feelings to move us, and count on God's presence to hold and sustain us in a time of collective prayer and lament. I hope this experience will force our attention outwards to the suffering of the most vulnerable. Love always means going beyond oneself to otherness. There has to be the lover and the beloved; it takes two. We must be stretched to an encounter with otherness, and only then do we know it's love.”

So we shelter in place. We reach out if we need to and stay in touch regardless. And we hold one another and all of humankind in prayer, because prayer works, good vibrations work. The darma is real. The other night in San Luis Obispo they shut all the bars on St. Patrick's Day. What?!?! The language is very telling:

“WHEREAS, the St. Patrick's Day holiday typically draws large crowds to bars, pubs and other establishments, encourages large concentrations and migrations of persons on the streets, and results in adverse impacts on judgment and social behaviors detrimental to mitigating the spread of COVID-19...” And it goes on.

Notice the language regarding impaired judgement. The assumption is that individual bad judgement can add up to collective bad judgement. We have a collective judgement; a collective mindset. If our attention and contemplation is focused on cooperation and mutual support towards the mediation of this thing, the results, however painful for individuals and families, will be softened for the whole. We can make a difference: with our attitude, with our activities, and with our prayers. Most of those who study such matters agree there is a collective unconscious. So physically, we take precautions, and spiritually, we pour the honey of our most heartfelt sympathy into that simmering well of compassion.

We have embarked upon at least 40 days of a global wakeup call that can impel us to remember what matters, as individuals and as humanity; to remember what is good and what is just a golden calf. Nobody sent this pestilence. No one is to blame for it, least of all the God of Love. Nature produces viruses. But the reality must be faced, and it must be faced justly. Perhaps the part of each of us that survives will be more inclined towards stronger cohesiveness, deeper faith and a wider sense of compassion. Let us pray for all of us – amidst all the challenges and anxiety – to follow such a sacred path.

## **A reading from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians**

### **Chapter 5: Verses 8-14**

“For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light— for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, ‘Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’”

These are times when seeking to walk in the light and do what is right means staying home and taking precautions. Part of that undertaking means recognizing and celebrating the love of God in Christ wherever we are. Wherever I am standing (or sitting, or sheltering in place), that is the home of God's love today. This gives a new twist to the expression "in-dwelling spirit:" the Spirit dwells wherever we do,

**When we pray:**

Our Creator, 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

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, the power and the glory,

Forever and ever, Amen.

**And when we sing:**

Lord, who throughout these forty days, for us didst fast and pray,  
teach us with thee to mourn our sins, and close by thee to stay.

As thou with Satan didst contend, and didst the victory win,  
O give us strength in thee to fight, in thee to conquer sin.

As thou didst hunger bear and thirst, so teach us, gracious Lord,  
to die to self and chiefly live, by thy most holy Word.

And through these days of penitence, and through thy Passiontide,  
yea evermore in life and death, Jesus with us abide.

Abide with us that so this life, of suffering overpast,  
an Easter of unending joy, we may attain at last!

***May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face be made to shine upon you. May the countenance of the Lord be lifted up unto you and give you peace.***

Have a safe and healthy and peaceful week. Please reach out if you are having trouble of any kind, and know that we are here for each other. A couple other readings of possible interest are below, and links to the live church services and church books. Expect *The Pebble* on Tuesday, and keep reading the psalms whenever you can. Love, Sid+

### **What do we lose when we stop touching each other?**

by Kristen Radke in *The New York Times*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/19/opinion/coronavirus-touching.html>

### **A Gratitude Exercise**

by Tara Parker-Pope in *The New York Times*

For me, my regular meditation and mindfulness practices do not seem sufficient for these times, so I have added something new to my routine — a hand-washing and gratitude exercise.

Every time I wash my hands, I focus on my feelings of gratitude. I start with the doctors, nurses, ambulance and hospital workers on the front lines of the pandemic. I think about the countless numbers of hourly workers who are restocking grocery store shelves, working at pharmacies and staffing checkout counters. These people are coming face-to-face with hundreds of people each day, putting themselves at risk so the rest of us have food and necessities. I think about sanitation workers collecting our trash. And I share my thanks in person when I check out at the grocery store.

### **Church of the Incarnation – Dallas, Texas**

(Anna and Tony Burton's church)

<https://incarnation.org/>

click on "Digital Worship"

### **All Saints Pasadena**

To participate, follow this link: <https://allsaints-pas.org/live-stream/>



**The Bible – New Revised Standard Version**

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/nrs/>

**The Book of Common Prayer**

<https://www.churchpublishing.org/siteassets/pdf/book-of-common-prayer/book-of-common-prayer-2006.pdf>

**The Hymnal 1982**

<https://hymnary.org/hymnal/EH1982?page=0>

**St. Barnabas Arroyo Grande**

Episcopal Holy Eucharist will live-stream on Sunday at 10:00am. All you need is a computer or device with an internet connection and speakers to watch; you do not need to have a Facebook account.

<https://www.facebook.com/StBarnabasAG/>

A recording will appear on the website <https://saintbarnabas-ag.org/> following the service. To follow more fully, the tap the *Weekly Bulletin* button.

***Going to find a bare-foot brother out***  
*One of our order, to associate me,*  
*Here in this city visiting the sick,*  
*And finding him, the searchers of the town,*  
*Suspecting that we both were in a house*  
*Where the infectious pestilence did reign,*  
*Seal'd up the doors, and would not let us forth;*  
*So that my speed to Mantua there was stay'd.*

Friar Laurence in Romeo and Juliet Act V Scene ii