

Sunday Missive -- May 17, 2020



The Sixth Sunday of Easter

Grace to you, and peace from God the author of all Creation and from God's incarnate self, Jesus, the means and minister of our salvation.

One of the many things that make life so delightful here at St. Peter's by the Sea is the unassuming – even scraggly – bush outside our kitchen door that, every Spring produces a handful of blossoms like the one above. And their fragrance is no less sublime. The following link (provided by Dorothy Tomilson, who also found the Collect pictured below) is to a “virtual” choir performance of **Hymn 208** (see words next page). Holy Scripture and all of human history comprise the chronicle of strife and its aftermath: people with Nature, people with other people, and people within themselves. While we are in the midst of a global struggle on all three of these battlefronts, it is not only a good idea, but a vital, life-giving practice for us to embrace and celebrate the fundamental and universal triumph over failure, emptiness and dying, that Easter has brought us in Christ.

<https://episcopalchurch.org/library/video/virtual-choir>

Hymn 208

The strife is o'er, the battle done, the victory of life is won;
the song of triumph has begun. Alleluia!

The powers of death have done their worst, but Christ their legions hath
dispersed: let shout of holy joy outburst. Alleluia!

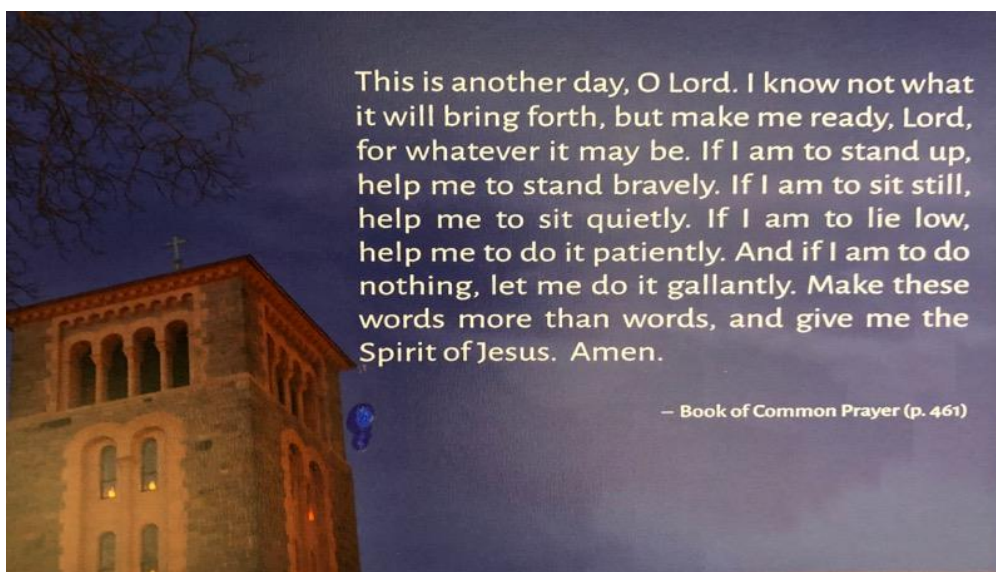
The three sad days are quickly sped, he rises glorious from the dead:
all glory to our risen Head! Alleluia!

Who closed the yawning gates of hell, the bars from heaven's high portals fell; let
hymns of praise his triumphs tell! Alleluia!

Lord! by the stripes which wounded thee, from death's dread sting thy servants
free, that we may live and sing to thee. Alleluia!

Collects for the Day

O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding: Pour into our hearts such love towards you, that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*



A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles -- Chapter 17

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how religious you are in every way. I went through the city and looked at all the objects of your worship, I found an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals, life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.' Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Psalm 66

Cry out with joy to God, all the earth; O sing glory to the name of the Lord.

Because of your strength and mercy, before you all the earth shall bow,

Come and see the works of the Lord, who turned the sea into dry land.

They passed through the water on foot. Let our joy, then, be in God

Whose eyes keep watch on the nations: let rebels not exalt themselves.

O peoples, bless our God; let the voices of praise resound,

Who gave life to our souls and kept our feet from stumbling.

To God I cried aloud, with exaltation ready on my tongue.

Had I considered evil in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

But truly God has listened, has heeded the voice of my prayer.

Blessed be God, who heard my prayer, and filled me with merciful love.

LEVAS Hymn 1

Lift every voice and sing, 'til earth and Heaven ring
Ring with the harmonies of liberty
Let our rejoicing rise, high as the listening skies
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea

Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun
Let us march on 'til victory is won

Now God of our weary years, God of our silent tears
Thou Who hast brought us thus far on our way
Thou Who hast by Thy might, led us into the light
Keep us forever in the path, we pray

Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun
Let us march on 'til victory is won!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QU8921j20e8>

or...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdqEaCoCW1c>

A Reading from the Gospel according to John, Chapter 14

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

Paul tells his listeners of the God who made the world and everything in it, who made from one ancestor all nations to inhabit the whole earth, so that they might grope for and find God. For example, the immense disparities between Western culture and those of the East tend to obscure the ways in which we are alike. Like Christ, the Buddha is understood as being beyond and outside of human history: always having been and always to be, always unattainable, immortal, invisible One only wise: at once inimitable and yet ever residing within each of those who strive to live and move and have their being likewise.

Jesus teaches us today such a similar worldview that it becomes strenuous to the point of absurdity to claim we are not one with everyone on this earth: “They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by God, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.” The God preached by Paul is one God, Creator of all. Certainly the Jews already knew this. But his sermon today is preached to a different audience: gentiles, in this case Greeks who worshipped so many gods that they included a spare one in case some deity got left out... and mad about it. Paul’s message is the good news that there is only one God, of whom Jesus is living proof. This God is the one “In whom we live and move and have our being,” as the Greek poet Epimenides observed. This is the one God in whose likeness we are made and therefore all humanity proceeds from one stock – a truth that powermongers throughout history have tried to deny.

We humans are characterized by the activity of thought: consciousness. We owe our existence as conscious beings to that untraceable moment in evolution when some upright hominid realized she had a choice between passion and compassion. We’ve been stuck with that continuous choosing ever since. We all know from experience that it brings us both blessings and curses, and on the whole we’re glad that Garden of Eden moment happened: when humankind emerged from the dusty crowd to take on the stewardship of Creation for better or for worse. On the whole, yes. Even though all too often, we would choose passion when we know compassion is the better way for all. Even though there seems to be a preponderance of people prone to self-centered passion over peace and well-being for all. Even though choosing compassion can get us hurt.

We are glad to be alive and capable of choice, and so we give thanks. God so loved humanity that she gave us the world as our responsibility, our challenge, our playground, that whosoever nurtured compassion would be fulfilled. We are given to lifting our voices in song and prayer and reenacting the drama of Christ, because the experience is the nearest thing to heaven we have seen. We miss it because it nurtures us. It is with longing that we meditate on these things – apart and yet together – but we can know that the house Jesus built is the house Jesus was and is and ever shall be, the body of Christ’s very self. Our church is ourselves.

A Prayer for Those Who Cannot Stay at Home

Today we are still here, still alive, still breathing.

We who cannot shelter at home find shelter in each other.
Open-hearted and broken-hearted,
we are aware that this work, deemed essential
has always been sacred
and comes at a cost.

We are exposed, laid bare
by something we cannot see
except in its devastating wake and anticipation.

And yet, this being here, this suiting up, this tagging-in
calls to us.

We may even be aware of a place deep down inside us,
the home of our very essence that is ready to listen,
ready to assess, ready to intervene,
ready to be a loving presence.

We have surprised ourselves before with just how clearheaded we can be;
how steady our voices and hands are,
how able we are to take care of others
in the midst of our own anxiety.

Although not one second of it is easy, we have moments of ease.
In the midst of the unknown and the uncertain,
Some part of us knows how to do this,
and this is truly a miracle.

May we notice this miracle in ourselves and our colleagues today.
May we notice how we are learning every day
how to adapt and get better at this together.

And may this noticing be enough to get us to the next minute,
the next patient, the next hour, the next shift-change, the next day.

And in every moment, especially the most fearful or weary ones,
may we know for certain that we are loved and we are not alone.

Amen. Amine. Aśe. And so it is.

Hymn 416

For the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth over and around us lies.

Christ our God, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the beauty of each hour of the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and flower, sun and moon and stars of light,

For the joy of ear and eye, for the heart and mind's delight,
for the mystic harmony linking sense to sound and sight,

For the joy of human love, brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth, and friends above, for all gentle thoughts and mild,

For the Church which evermore lifteth holy hands above,
offering up on every shore thy pure sacrifice of love,

For each perfect gift of thine, to the world so freely given,
faith and hope and love divine, peace on earth and joy in heaven.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shVMDJ7odEc>

Or the John Rutter tune, with Boy Choir!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpEbQGsPqHE>

Here is some inspiration for not giving up, adapted from the poet Ada Limón:

More than the fuchsia funnels breaking out
of the crabapple tree, more than my neighbor's
riotous display of cherry limbs shoving
their cotton candy-colored blossoms into the slate
sky of Spring rains, it's the greening of the trees
that really gets to me. When all the luscious blossomings
leave our pathways strewn with the confetti of aftermath,
the leaves come. Patient, plodding, a green skin
growing over whatever winter did to us, a return
to the strange idea of continuous living despite
the mess of us, the hurt, the empty. Fine then,
I'll take it, the tree seems to say, a new slick leaf
unfurling like a fist to an open palm, I'll take it all.

Have a peaceful, healthy and love-filled week. Stay in touch with friends and loved ones. Reach out if you need anything. Know that you are beloved. And the blessing of God, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier be with you and yours this day and always.

St. Peter's by the Sea Episcopal Church, 545 Shasta Avenue, Morro Bay, CA 93442

The Rev. Sidney Symington, Rector (203) 209-2339 sssymington@gmail.com

.....

Online Church Services

Trinity Wall Street

<https://www.trinitywallstreet.org/blogs/watching-trinity-live-streamed-worship-services>

The National Cathedral, Washington, DC

<https://cathedral.org/online/>

All Saints Church, Pasadena

<https://allsaints-pas.org/live-stream/>

Church of the Incarnation, Dallas, Texas

<https://incarnation.org/digital-worship/>

St. Barnabas, Arroyo Grande

<https://www.facebook.com/StBarnabasAG/> Sunday at 10:00

To see the worship bulletin, or recording of the service later:

<https://saintbarnabas-ag.org/>