

Sunday Missive – May 10, 2020



The Fifth Sunday of Easter

Hymn 686

Come, thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace!
Streams of mercy never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount! O fix me on it, mount of God's unchanging love.

Here I find my greatest treasure; hither by thy help, I've come;
And I hope, by thy good pleasure, safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger, interposed his precious blood.

Oh, to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee;
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Z3pjXmNq2g>

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.

Here we are, together apart for yet another Sunday. The above photo is of the Santa Barbara Botanical Garden in another Springtime. The glorious mountains and the bounteous flowers still beckon each of us, and we will answer their call when it is safe to be out and about.

Collects for the Day

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us to do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Reading from the First letter of Peter, Chapter Two

Come to Jesus, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ. For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner," and "A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Hymn 685

Rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee;
let the water and the blood from thy wounded side which flowed,
be of sin the double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Should my tears for ever flow, should my zeal no languor know,
all for sin could not atone; thou must save, and thou alone;
in my hand no price I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.

While I draw this fleeting breath, when mine eyelids close in death,
when I rise to worlds unknown and behold thee on thy throne,
Rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oTsLDkirqA>



Keyhole Arch at Pfeiffer Beach

A Reading from the Gospel according to John, Chapter Fourteen

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to God except through me. If you know me, you will know God. The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the One who dwells in me does these works. Believe me that I am in God and God is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am now going to God.”

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles Chapter 7

“Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with human hands; as the prophet says, ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?’”



Gaviota Peak

Psalm 46

God is for us a refuge and strength; an ever-present help in time of trouble.

So we shall not fear though the earth should rock, though the mountains quake to the depths of the sea;

Even though its waters rage and foam, and the mountains be shaken by its tumult.

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God.

God is within her, she cannot be shaken. God will help her at the dawning

Though the nations are in tumult and the kingdoms are shaken,

He lifts his voice and the earth melts away.

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Come and behold the works of the Lord, what wonders he has done on the earth.

He breaks the bow and shatters the spear and burns the shield with fire.

Be still and know that I am God, exalted over nations, exalted over earth!

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

We are “People of the Rock,” not only because we’re from Morro Bay, with its enormous volcanic intrusion, but also because St. Peter was the rock upon whom Jesus declared the Church would be built. In Latin, *Petra* is Rock; likewise, *Cephas* in Greek. So we can be forgiven for the feeling that biblical stories have a special resonance when they talk about stones and rocks. Jesus tells his disciples not to worry, because God has prepared a dwelling place for each of us, but it is in the letter attributed to Peter that the connection is made: those dwelling places, made by God are not just for us, they are us. We are Zion, and the cornerstone is God’s Word within us. The river whose streams make for gladness is nothing but the Spirit of goodness flowing through the souls of the faithful. The One who dwells within us does whatever works we do.

If we peer through the keyhole at Pfeiffer Beach, or the sandblown hole atop Gaviota, we can look beyond to the wider world. At Pfeiffer, a raging sea awaits us; at Gaviota a parched and unwelcoming plain. Both are forbidding sights, but we have little choice other than to move through to the other side; we cannot go back to a time or place before anything that has already happened. But we do not have to proceed unprepared, and we do not have to proceed alone. If bows are to be broken, spears shattered or shields burned, it will be because we have walked through the openings life presents with faith in our hearts and love on our minds, no matter how forbidding the way may seem. If we become part of a people who preach peace, it will be because we know peace; because we have accepted transformation. Thus, when Jesus says, “Truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these”, we take heart, breathe deeply, and embark!

A Prayer for Our Time

O God of light and mystery,
give us the faith to see you in the grey dimness of this time.

Give us the heart to hear, in the silence of the sick,
the call to care for those in pain.

Give us the courage to find you where you do not now appear to be.

Give us the trust it takes to make our way through this uncertainty,
this fear, this seemingly irredeemable sense of limitless loss
to the recognition of the relentless hope that each seasonal cycle
of life confirms in us.

You who made all things for our good and our growth, show us, too, now, the power of darkness, so that we might see newly— beyond the ephemeral—to what are really the gloriously important things in life. Amen

If you would like to talk, or are in need of any assistance, please call your Rector, The Rev. Sidney Symington, aka ‘Padre Sid’ at (203) 209-2339 and leave a voice message, write to him at 545 Shasta Avenue, Morro Bay, CA 93442, or via email: sssymington@gmail.com

Hymn 690

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim though this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty; hold me with thy powerful hand;
bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me now and evermore,
feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain, whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through;
strong deliverer, strong deliverer. be thou still my strength and shield,
be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction, land me safe on Canaan's side;
songs of praises, songs of praises, I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

(two very different versions!) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwvpTl88jwI>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3jUz6E_iPw

'I like it, actually': Why So Many Older People Thrive in Lockdown

by John Leland for the New York Times April 24, 2020

In a building for older residents of Lower Manhattan, Sterling Lord, 99, is using his lockdown time to start a new literary agency. Like agents everywhere, he said he was about to seal a “huge television deal” for one of his authors. He could not talk about it yet, he said. Further uptown, Janet Wasserman, 85, a historian, is using the time to research an article on the infamous Dutch forger Han van Meegeren, a model for Patricia Highsmith’s character Tom Ripley. “With the internet,” she said, “everything I need is all there.” Gordon Rogoff, 88, a theater professor and director, is rediscovering the joys of reading for pleasure, something he had not been able to do for a very long time. On a recent evening, he was preparing to start Jane Austen’s “Mansfield Park.” “It’s a guilty pleasure, but I don’t mind taking it, especially now,” he said.

The coronavirus, which has afflicted people of all ages, has been especially punishing for older people, isolating them in their homes or killing them at a disproportionate rate. People age 70 and up account for two-thirds of all coronavirus deaths in New York, though they make up less than 10 percent of the population. Yet many New Yorkers in this age group are thriving during this catastrophe — skilled at being alone, not fearful about their career prospects, emotionally more experienced at managing the great disruption of everyday life that is affecting everyone.

Their stories are not everyone’s, of course, and it helps to have an active life of the mind. But amid the grim daily tallies of deaths in nursing homes or elders living in fear and isolation, they offer a counternarrative of resourcefulness and perseverance. “I’m fine,” Ms. Wasserman said the other day, taking a break from her research and twice-daily

walks with her dog. “I’m not complaining. In 85 years I’ve seen just about everything that can happen on this planet. “If you haven’t lived as long as I have you might think this was the worst thing that ever happened. But people who know history know the difference.”

Those who have made it past 80, beating the national life expectancy, have already demonstrated resilience that is in need right now. “The reality is that older adults as a group have a positivity bias,” or tendency to see the good side of situations, said Gary M. Kennedy, director of geriatric psychiatry at Montefiore Medical Center and professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. “Their pessimism and anxiety tend to abate with age. They’re no longer striving for material achievements, so what matters to them now is what’s emotionally satisfying. They’re more likely to say, I’ve been through this before.”

For Ms. Wasserman, organizing her life to avoid germs is nothing new. She had her spleen removed almost 50 years ago after a mysterious infection, and has lived with a severely compromised immune system ever since. For her, exposure to even commonplace bugs can be life-threatening. “This is very much standard operating procedure for me,” she said of life under lockdown. “If I got sick, that’s a different story. I seem to be healthy. I can easily contact my physicians by email. I don’t go out much, but so what? I do this all the time.”

She said she had not offered coping advice to her younger relatives, but tried to be a “living example” to them of how family support, even without physical contact, was “as important as having enough food and getting one’s medicines.” On April 11 she celebrated her 85th birthday with far-flung relatives via Skype, a tool she had used in the past but not often. Now it meant regular visual contact with her family, more than she had before the pandemic. “The only thing missing was the cake and candles,” she said. “But who wants all those candles, anyway? We’re lucky to be in this era where we can do this.”

After an illustrious career as a literary agent — he represented Jack Kerouac — Sterling Lord, now 99, looks to start a new agency. Sterling Lord started his first agency in 1952, launching the career of Jack Kerouac, and when he was asked recently whether he was still working, he said that he was — in fact, one of his authors was older than he: the poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, whose most recent book, “Little Boy,” came out near his 100th birthday last year. For Mr. Lord, who left his old agency last year, the pandemic has been an inconvenience because he cannot hire assistants to get the new agency going, he said. The building, which provides meals and some other services, sends a daily count of how many residents and employees have gotten sick or died from the coronavirus, but Mr. Lord has not paid much attention.

“I think there are five or six cases in the building,” he said, though the daily sheet said 33 infections and 8 deaths. “Am I nervous about the virus? Yes. But not that nervous. Because we’re doing everything we can to not let it happen. And so far we’ve been very successful. I have not been out of the house at all since this thing began. It’s very little change. With my work, it’s very easy for me to go the whole day without going outside.”

For Gordon Rogoff, the virus and the city's virtual lockdown were the third in a series of blows. He had spent nearly a decade in the role of caregiver for his husband, Morton Lichter, a painter, playwright and actor who had Parkinson's disease. Together they shared an Obie award for a 1976 production of Mr. Lichter's play "Old Timers' Sexual Symphony (and Other Notes)" that Mr. Rogoff directed. When Mr. Lichter died on Jan. 9 in their home, Mr. Rogoff was both liberated and alone. While he was grieving, he fell and injured his knee, immobilizing him. Finally, as he was ready to move around again, the city shut down.

"I was really quarantined two weeks before everybody else, because I couldn't walk," he said, speaking by telephone from a living room filled with Mr. Lichter's paintings. The apartment, where he has lived since 1962, is rent-controlled — reason enough never to die. "I've settled on a very strong, conscious thought — that I must not allow this to hurt me any further than it already has," he said. "I don't expect to get the virus, frankly. I'm pretty well protected here. I wash my hands a lot. But I don't feel I'm likely to be a statistic. And like Morton, I have so much more to do, so I'm working that way."

He added: "Those of us who are older are singled out for a form of house arrest. I like it, actually. I'm recovering some sense of space and time that's been lost in the hectic arrangements in which we live on a daily basis. I hadn't realized how deeply immersed in the bustle of contemporary life I have been. One musician, for example, said to me, This is the sabbatical I've longed to have. I can see the point, I really can."

He had to cancel the memorial for Mr. Lichter, which had been scheduled for St. Patrick's Day, March 17. Maybe next year, when he can also celebrate his own 90th birthday — another reason to survive. In the meantime, there was a shelf of novels calling to him, and a piano he had not played for years. "There's a lot about this timing that is not so terrible for me," he said. "I know it is for so many, and I grieve for them. But I find myself turning it upside down. And that's really very pleasing."

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/>