

The Sunday Missive – June 30, 2024
The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

A personal note from Padre Sid:

Dear Friends – Time as always is marching on, and thus a task I have been unhappily anticipating has arrived. Of course, there is no ideal moment to announce a coming change, but I have gathered from reliable sources that six months' notice is perhaps most likely to be healthy and good for the beloved family of St. Peter's by the Sea to learn of my planned retirement on December 31.

Today being June 30, the day has arrived. Planning will have to begin and the bishop will have to be informed. Of course, this happens several times in the life of a parish and many have gone through it before, but that doesn't make it free of discomfort. I pray and trust that you will find someone who will fall in love with this place and its people as completely as I have. Please know that I consider getting to know all of you and serving as your rector to be the privilege of a lifetime.

We have six months ahead of us to worship together, have each other's company, celebrate our dozen years together and plan the healthy and happy future of St. Peter's by the Sea; let's enjoy them.

With affection and bright hope,
Sid

Hymn 718 God of our fathers

God of our fathers, whose almighty hand
leads forth in beauty all the starry band
of shining worlds in splendor through the skies,
our grateful songs before thy throne arise.

Refresh thy people on their toilsome way,
lead us from night to never-ending day;
fill all our lives with love and grace divine,
and glory, laud, and praise be ever thine.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5XGK3OHmoc>

The Collect of the Day

Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Wisdom of Solomon 1:13-15; 2:23-24

God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living. For he created all things so that they might exist; the generative forces of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them; the dominion of Hades is not on earth. For righteousness is immortal.

God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it.

Lamentations 3:21-33

This I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him.

It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for one to bear the yoke in youth, to sit alone in silence when the Lord has imposed it, to put one's mouth to the dust (there may yet be hope), to give one's cheek to the smiter, and be filled with insults. For the Lord will not reject forever. He will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone.

Psalm 30

I will exalt you, O Lord, because you have lifted me up* ***And have not let my enemies triumph over me.***

O Lord my God, I cried out to you* ***And you restored me to health.***

You brought me up, O Lord, from the dead* ***You restored my life as I was going down to the grave.***

Sing to the Lord, you servants of his* ***Give thanks for the remembrance of his holiness.***

For his wrath endures but the twinkling of an eye* ***His favor for a lifetime.***

Weeping may last through the night* ***But joy comes in the morning.***

While I felt secure, I said, "I shall never be disturbed* ***You, Lord, with your favor, made me as strong as the mountains.***"

Then you hid your face* ***And I was filled with fear.***

Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me* ***O Lord, be my helper.***"

You have turned my wailing into dancing* ***You have put off my sack-cloth and clothed me with joy.***

Therefore my heart sings to you without ceasing* ***O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever.***

2 Corinthians 8:7-15

As you excel in everything-- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you-- so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something-- now finish doing it, so

that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has-- not according to what one does not have. I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written, "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little."

Hymn 707 Take my life and let it be

Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee;
Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of thy love;
Take my heart, it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my voice, and let me sing always, only, for my King;
Take my intellect, and use every power as thou shalt choose.
Take my will, and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine.
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhzN9GxpdRU>

Mark 5:21-43

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." Immediately her hemorrhage

stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Healing Power Proper 8B

Back and forth across the Sea of Galilee Jesus is going in these stories that Mark tells us about God's healing power. Time and again we see Jesus arriving in a community and dispelling the forces of pain, confusion and disease. He does this by his presence, by making the suffering people there aware of the possibility of healing. The moment they say yes, they are well.

Evelyn Underhill once wrote, "There are no colds in paradise." When Jesus appears, paradise is visible and present and sure enough, the sickness goes away. It's a sweet, sweet spirit story coming down to us 2000 years along its way.

But hey, when we get a cough, or our allergies act up, does it occur to us to ask Jesus to take the problem away? Honestly, I don't think our symptoms would instantly disappear if we did. Nevertheless, we do get

better. This experience tells us two things: 1. Despite the stunning beauty of these summer days, the birds and trees and everything, this isn't paradise – at least by Evelyn Underhill's definition -- because we do get colds, etc. once in awhile. And 2. Maybe the power of these stories about Jesus is not as literal or explicit as we might think. It's a clear wellspring, but deep.

Now there are times when this corner of the world does seem like paradise. But there are also lots of times, when it seems like another someplace else entirely; so one could get confused. Likewise, there are times when life is glorious and perfect; the kids are thriving, the checkbook balances, the gifts we give bring joy. But what about the confusion that arrives with tragedy, impoverishment and brokenness? Doesn't seem so swell then, no matter how many kinds of wildflowers we can count out in the Healing Meadow. What then?

What then? Well then is when we can bring ourselves back to the stories of Jesus. We can become more aware of God's presence, open our hearts to the healing of Christ's love, allow that sweet spirit to infuse our consciousness with the possibility of healing.

As a bridge over a raging river can connect worlds that seemed utterly inaccessible to each other, so a life lived in the awareness and employment of the healing grace of God's love allows us to glimpse paradise through all the mortality and confusion the world has to offer.

"If I could just touch the hem of His garment," goes the old Sam Cooke song, "I know I'll be made whole. Right now." What a story! Snap-cracking with allusions and things to think about. The woman, like Jairus' daughter is at the very edge of society, the very edge of existence, and yet she stands for all of Israel – for all of us. She has suffered and bled for twelve years -- one year for each of the tribes of Israel. According to the custom of that time and place, and up until all too recently among our society as well, a woman in such a state is deemed unclean. To say she has bled for twelve years is to put her in an absurd class of humanity, far beyond any hope of redemption and reintegration into acceptability.

Likewise Jairus daughter. Big surprise, she's twelve years old -- one year for each of the tribes of Israel, one year for each of us. She stands at the cusp of her usefulness to society, about to become a woman. Only she doesn't stand, she lies down and dies. She will be mourned and missed, but she won't be of any use to anybody.

These two females represent the edges of society -- the woman is at the lowest edge and falling off. Jairus daughter, who as the child of a leader would be very important (for a female) but she has fallen down too. Once she floats off even the highest end of the society, she's no use to anybody.

What Jesus does is bring them back into the mix, "go in peace" he says to the woman, "give her a sandwich" he says to the girl's family. They're good to go. As Saint Paul observes, there is a fair balance, not too much, not too little. Those who are on the edges of society and falling off are brought back in. as the psalmist declares, out of the depths they cry, and with the Lord there is plenteous redemption! They get to have a life, a fighting chance, a fair shake.

Notice nobody is set to triumph over others in this arrangement; all of us are bound for death, and O how the mighty do fall! And Jesus appears in each of our lives, if only we will watch and wait and listen, to offer each of us a fair, peaceful, and decent life in the meantime.

Finally, observe how Jesus stops in his progress toward curing the emerging life of Jairus' aristocratic and important family. Jesus stops to take care of the poorest, impurest, bottommost creature first. Nothing, nothing can be accomplished in solving the new problems of important folks unless and until we stop and address the old problems of the unimportant folks first. God is talking directly to us in this story. Are we listening?

About Independence Day, the celebration of our nation, which is mirrored in countries around the world on days of their own: It is a day for enjoying the good kind of pride, allegiance with our fellow citizens, our forbears, traditions and the institutions that make up our identity as a nation. It is a day when we remind ourselves of who we claim to be – despite disturbing evidence to the contrary – and we celebrate the ideas and events that made us this way. As we approach our Independence Day, 2024, the 248th year of our founding, as Christians perhaps it would be good to look at the American Experiment, the American Enterprise, at what it is we're celebrating, to try and see how it compares, how it jibes with what we desire and claim to be as followers and members of the mystical body of Christ.

Presumably, there is some kind of correlation between the identity we celebrate as Americans, and the identity we celebrate as Christians. Nobody would willingly want, or admit, let alone claim to be a different person on

Sundays than during the rest of the week, so we ought to be able to draw some parallels, we ought to be able to, if not directly bind, at least identify some mutual validities between the two descriptions of ourselves, Americans and Christians.

If we reserve the right and enjoy the sensations of self-identifying as both Christians and Americans, on the Fourth of July and any other time of the year it stands to reason that those two identities must be, at the very least compatible, if not entirely interrelated and mutually supportive. Life is complicated enough without having to take on a new identity every time the calendar, or the mood, or the exigencies of the moment, or Monday morning's duties dictate an advantage to either Christianity or Americanism as the case may be. And of course most of us understand that all Americans aren't Christians, any more than all Christians are Americans.

But today, here, our job is to clean our house, remove the cobwebs and dust bunnies of conflicting ideologies, sweep away the tendencies we all have to get excited about what feels good in any given moment, mop down the stains of ugly history and past pain, clean our house so that the grace of God – the mercy of God as today's psalmist so beautifully entreats -- may come into us and heal us and allow us a dog's chance of being the kind of folks we would like to be. Any well-meaning non-Christians out there who might overhear us cogitating or deliberating about how to jibe our Christianity with our Patriotism would no doubt be delighted to know what we were doing. Hopefully they are doing something similar in the context of their spiritual frame of reference. What a back-flipping joy it would be to get to the end of our day, with our Hindu and Muslim and Jewish sisters and brothers and learn they all admit to having the same questions and conflicts and inconsistencies and frustrations and moral quandaries as do we; because they do. We pray that a day will come when we can all gently and freely acknowledge this to one another in the interest of lasting peace.

The temptation is to take this show on the road, and with good reason. This is a beautiful and wondrous way to live – in equality. But God knows, and we would do well to remember, that no show is better than its rehearsals, and the best way to celebrate our Declaration of Independence from the rest of the World is to ourselves live as we would have others live. Whether we call ourselves Christians is not the point; whether we live Christian lives is. More than ever before, the most important quality for states and nations to have is the same as that for individuals – the awareness that everyone else has a point of view, a frame of reference, a set of convictions of their own, with validity equal to yours. What sets us apart

cannot be our success in hounding, hectoring or forcing our strictures on others. What sets us apart, as Christians and as Americans will always have to be the joyful seriousness with which we intend and attempt to be who it is we say we are. God will take care of the rest.

Hymn 811 You shall cross the barren desert

You shall cross the barren desert, but you shall not die of thirst.
You shall wander far in safety though you do not know the way.
You shall speak your words in foreign lands and all will understand.
You shall see the face of God and live.

Be not afraid. I go before you always.
Come, follow me, and I will give you rest.

If you pass through raging waters in the sea, you shall not drown.
If you walk amid the burning flames, you shall not be harmed.
If you stand before the pow'r of hell and death is at your side,
Know that I am with you through it all. *Refrain*

Blessed are your poor, for the kingdom shall be theirs.
Blest are you that weep and mourn, for one day you shall laugh.
And if wicked tongues insult and hate you all because of me,
Blessed, blessed are you! *Refrain*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8OfjH1DkZmM>

The Sun Went Down in Beauty

The sun went down in beauty
 Beyond the Missouri side,
As I stood on the banks of the river
 And watched its waters glide;
Its swelling currents resembling
 The longing restless soul,
Surging, swelling, and pursuing
 Its ever-receding goal.

The sun went down in beauty,
 But the restless tide flowed on,
And the phantom of absent loved ones
 Danced on the waves and were gone;
Fleeting phantoms of loved ones,
 Their faces jubilant with glee,
In the spray seemed to rise and beckon,
 And then rush on to the sea.

The sun went down in beauty,
 While I stood musing alone,
Stood watching the rushing river
 And heard its restless moan;
Longings, vague, intenable,
 So far from speech apart,
Like the endless rush of the river,
 Went surging through my heart.

The sun went down in beauty,
 Peacefully sank to rest,
Leaving its golden reflection
 On the great Mississippi's breast;
Gleaming on the turbulent river,
 In the coming gray twilight,
Soothing its restless surging,
 And kissing its waters goodnight.

George Marion McLellan