

The Sunday Missive – November 13, 2022

The Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

The Collect of the Day

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. *Amen.*

Hymn 482 Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
Whose trust, ever child-like, no cares can destroy,
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,
Be there at our labors, and give us, we pray,
Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
Your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-D_aT8CXyc

Isaiah 65:17-25

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.

But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight.

I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress.

No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;

For one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.

They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat;

For like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord-- and their descendants as well.

Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear.

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent-- its food shall be dust!

They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

Psalm 98

Sing to the Lord a new song* ***For he has done marvelous things.***

With his right hand and his holy arm* ***Has he won for himself the victory.***

The Lord has made known his victory* ***His righteousness has he openly shown in the sight of the nations.***

He remembers his mercy and faithfulness to the house of Israel* ***And all the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.***

Shout with joy to the Lord, all you lands* ***Lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.***

Sing to the Lord with the harp* ***With the harp and the voice of song.***

With trumpets and the sound of the horn* ***Shout with joy before the King, the Lord.***

Let the sea make a noise and all that is in it* ***The lands and those who dwell therein.***

Let the rivers clap their hands* ***And let the hills ring out with joy before the Lord, when he comes to judge the earth.***

In righteousness shall he judge the world* ***And the peoples with equity.***

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. For even

when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.

LEVAS Hymn 106 Precious Lord

Precious Lord, take my hand lead me on, let me stand
I am tired, I'm weak, I am worn
Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light
Take my hand, precious Lord lead me home

When my work is all done and my race here is run
Let me see by the light thou hast shown
That fair city so bright where the lantern is the light
Take my hand, precious Lord Lead me on

When my way groweth drear precious Lord, linger near
When my light is almost gone
Hear my cry, hear my call hold my hand lest I fall
Take my hand, precious Lord lead me on

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=as1rsZenwNc>

Luke 21:5-19

When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, Jesus said, "As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down."

They asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?" And he said, "Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is near!' Do not go after them.

"When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately." Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

"But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. This will give you an opportunity to testify. So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls."

Bishop's Address -- Proper 28C

Today we'll depart from our norm a bit. As you know, our diocesan convention was held a week ago yesterday, using the magic of telecommunication. By way of a homily this morning, our incumbent bishop, The Right Reverend Lucinda Ashby has suggested that we parish clergy share the address she offered to the gathered delegates. So, here we go...

"Welcome to the 42nd Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real. This year, our theme is "Courage in the Wilderness," which is the third part of our series on pilgrimage. At our convention in 2019, I introduced pilgrimage as an overarching theme for this episcopate, not knowing that it would be so important to these first years.

There were three lessons of pilgrimage that made good sense for us: In 2020, we talked about "Traveling Light." COVID provided us with an "opportunity" to pare down and find ways to do what was essential. Last year, our theme was "Faithful Ways, Fresh Vistas." The task we were called to was to look at our traditions and customs, and hold

those in juxtaposition with the innovation and creativity we are called to in our ministries.

This year, the theme “Courage in the Wilderness” will carry us forward.

The gospel reading that you heard during Morning Prayer (the story of Jesus walking on the water) was chosen specifically for this convention theme. It may seem odd, as we seldom equate water with wilderness. We often envision wilderness as dry and wild, and a lake doesn't usually remind us of that, especially here in California. Yet, the passage is about the spiritual aspects of wilderness: the perceived danger, the fear the disciples felt, the need for proof that God is present. Jesus tells them to have courage, for he is there. When Jesus commands Peter to walk on the water, Peter steps forward and does just that—until he realizes what he is doing. Peter is able to do what he believes to be impossible as long as he focuses on the fact that Jesus is there too, with him; calling to him.

As pilgrims we are on a journey on the way of love, walking literally and figuratively into places that are new and unsettling—whether they be on water or dry land. Being in the wilderness is something that we understand theologically, scripturally, and spiritually: Jesus goes out into the wilderness for 40 days and lives in that unsettled space himself. The Hebrews leaving Egypt spend 40 years in the wilderness learning to leave old habits and identities behind as they become God's people moving toward the Promised Land.

Prophets live in and emerge from the wilderness—think of John, who meets the people at the River Jordan, crying out for repentance and offering baptism. What happens in the wilderness is often surprising, transforming and renewing. Yet we must be willing to be in that place walking a faithful pilgrimage with the God who calls us. It takes courage to do this. The poet e.e. cummings once said, “It takes courage to show up and become who you actually are.” Showing up in the wilderness, and being willing to follow Jesus in it, is the way in which we grow in faith and become who we are. We don't need much in the way of resources to be faithful followers of Jesus, except for courage.

In the Episcopal church, people often ask for a plan, an end-goal, a product. We have an overall structure of governance that likes order and tradition. As others view our denomination in general, I do not believe that many would put “Episcopalian” and “wilderness” in the same sentence. We do though. In the diocese of El Camino Real, we are the Episcopal Church walking in the wilderness. Our particular wilderness is not a bad place to be. Let’s look at our resources: We have buildings to host ministry---and we are coming up with new and creative ways to use our buildings. Some examples are: Trinity, San Jose, The Episcopal Church of Almaden, and St. Paul’s, Cambria. (And, we might add, St. Peter’s by the Sea!)

We have a tradition of beautiful liturgy, and our worship is expanding. Most of us now use hybrid models for worship, and parishes have grown lay leadership for daily offices and a variety of prayer services. For those with their eyes on the bottom line: in the overall picture, our diocesan finances are solid and our operating income remains steady. Our School for Ministry is thriving both on-line and in-person, in English and in Spanish, the learning taking place is just what we hoped for. If you have contact with anyone taking the lay preaching course, you have probably heard about the excitement and success of the program.

Despite ourselves, we are evangelists, and the good news is out there—partly because of on-line gatherings, and possibly because we’re talking more about what matters. Surprisingly, many parishes are growing in membership because people are connecting with good sermons, the beauty of worship and the warmth of fellowship that characterize our Episcopal Church even on-line. Our Community Trailblazer, Deacon Jen Crompton, is working with St. Benedict’s, Los Osos and the San Luis Obispo Canterbury at Cal Poly. Rather than bringing a newly minted seminarian to a parish and training them to be a traditional parish priest, the Trailblazer takes parishioners outside and trains them to become New Church. It’s a wilderness experience, challenging and faithful.

We desire connection. Our Communications Director, Carole Bartolini, while attending to known modes of communication in our diocese, has

formed a committee to assess the varieties of ways in which we receive and transmit information, especially as this relates to language, age and context.

And we have ourselves, our souls and bodies. Gifted with capabilities and insights, we are well-equipped to walk where God wants us to go. You are going to see today that we have full slates for our elections to Standing Committee, Board of Trustees, and Commission on Ministry—as well as Delegates to General Convention. These bodies are stewards of our resources, ensuring that we have what we need to move faithfully where God calls us. I believe we have people standing for election in part because these governing bodies choose to gather on-line, and in part because of the energy and drive to become New Church. A beneficial by-product of this is a reduction in our carbon footprint in our diocese.

Being in the wilderness is exciting for some, and scary for others. Every risk takes courage, even when the value is high. While at Lambeth Conference at Canterbury this summer, with the 650 bishops from all over the Anglican Communion, I learned of people of great courage. I learned of a bishop in Africa who faces violence toward his family and himself on a regular basis. I learned of a bishop who travels 30 hours down the Amazon River in constant danger from pirates. She is committed to this trip in order to baptize and confirm faithful people. I made friends and traded jokes with a young bishop from South Sudan who tends to 44 congregations located in refugee camps and settlements, working in dangerous and very needy situations. This work is risky and it is essential. It takes courage to be with Jesus in these wilderness experiences.

These examples I have cited from around the globe are by way of saying that anything we set out to do in our own wilderness here in El Camino Real can be done. Our hearts need to be brave and our steps, faithful. Unlike Peter, we aren't being asked to walk on water. Unlike our global friends, we are not being asked to travel among pirates, lead without resources, or live in impossible circumstances. We're just being called to be faithful. To walk with Jesus, and to not know all the answers.

At our Spring Renewal this coming April, we will be inspired to find the place of bravery in our own hearts and the strength in our pilgrim feet to be faithful as we walk The Way. As the Diocese of El Camino Real, we will continue to put “Episcopalian” and “wilderness” in the same sentence, reaching to find the courage that enables us to do so. And we will do so, with God’s help.”

Hymn 371 Thou, whose almighty word

Thou, whose almighty word chaos and darkness heard,
And took their flight;
Hear us, we humbly pray, and, where the Gospel day
Sheds not its glorious ray, let there be light!

Thou who didst come to bring on thy redeeming wing
Healing and sight,
Health to the sick in mind, sight to the inly blind,
Now to all humankind, let there be light!

Spirit of truth and love, lifegiving holy dove,
Speed forth thy flight!
Move on the waters' face bearing the gifts of grace,
And, in earth's darkest place, let there be light!

Holy and blessed three, glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, love, might;
Boundless as ocean's tide, rolling in fullest pride,
Through the world far and wide, let there be light!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFbh3xPk6AA&t=61s>

Current

I'm careful where I step. Water ripples
greenish blue against hot sand; pebbles mixed
with quartz grains and pine needles, sharp
amid the duff, blown down from the
upper stories of the sugar pines
clumped along the beach. Kids falling off
paddle boards into the cold lake, voices
like stretched brake linings in the dry air.
A geometric rim of mountains in the
near distance. A few geese
float detached on the current. Beside
us a family under a mesh canopy
speaks English and French.
I love the present with its layers
of seconds faceted like sparks
hammered off the glinting surface.
I want to stay here endlessly,
standing at the convergence of sand and water
while we watch them sequestered
under the clutter of branches, breathing
suntan lotion. I dread the future, yet it arrives
little by little. Knowingly we disappear into it.
Our bodies dissolve molecule by molecule
swept out to the edge of the intangible,
where light is compressed into blackness.
Where red ants crawl in their columns across
rotting earth, leaving no more
than a trail of resin behind.

Alan Soldovsky