

Reflections on Faith and Life for April 26, 2020 (COVID)

This is the 6th week of empty worship spaces (at least in Wisconsin), with at least 4 more to come. It has brought great joy to my heart that some of you who receive these weekly worship packets are enjoying them! To all who've given positive feedback, *thank you from my heart!* It's actually more difficult for me to prepare worship in writing than to do it in person. I have to imagine all questions that might arise, and all the side comments I would make (who, me? stray away from my text and go down one or more bunny trails??), and try to include all this into the (e)mailed material. But you know me: once a teacher, always a teacher!

Let me share with you some highlights of this week's devotions. From Reuben P. Job: *It was faith in the presence of Jesus in their midst and on their journey that overcame fear in those early disciples. It is still the perfect response to fear today. Let's remind each other and ourselves every day this week that Jesus is in our midst and walks with each of us in our journey of life. Thanks be to God! (When You Pray: Daily Practices for Prayerful Living, p.102)*

This week's gospel is the story of two of Jesus' followers walking on the Road to Emmaus. Keep these words in mind as you read the gospel later on: *In the Emmaus Resurrection story, we have a powerful and moving picture of Jesus coming alongside two of his disciples on the road (and notice that they are not of the inner circle of the apostles). He walks with them; he is concerned about their sadness, and he continues to be their teacher as he was in life. He responds to their desire for his continued company—"stay with us"—and joins them for a meal. In the familiar gesture of taking, blessing, and breaking bread, at last their eyes are opened, and they recognize their companion on the road. Then they can recognize also that he had kindled their hearts in his teaching on the Scriptures, in the way he helped them to see afresh the familiar stories of patriarchs and prophets and the history of their people. I find this a marvelous parable for the Christian life. While most of us will have times set aside for prayer, for coming together in worship and fellowship, perhaps for solitude or for study, most of it happens "on the road." As he travels with us, he makes himself known in word and sacrament—in the opening of the Scriptures, and the breaking of the bread (The Road to Emmaus, Helen Julian, C.S.F; pp. 177-178; in When You Pray, by Job, p. 104).*

In my *Disciplines* from The Upper Room, this week's author Jane Herring (Presbyterian pastor) reflects on "*our relationship to God as cherished and beloved ones: children who are precious, costly. . . God yearns for a living relationship with us, not fearful sacrifices. The very act of calling to God for deliverance, resurrection, and new life is an act of thanksgiving and joy.*

Perhaps today is the day to breathe in [remember the COVID-10 virus that is so damaging to lungs!] the reality that God seeks to resurrect any area of your life where death seems to have a foothold. Can you call out to God for help and believe this call is precious to God? Can you take a chance on such an act of thanksgiving? Or perhaps you have seen evidence of life renewed in you. How can you act in a way that joyously honors God's saving work?

Let us pray: God who cherishes my life, I call out to you for deliverance. Help me believe that you desire for me the same resurrection you gave the world through Jesus Christ. Help me act in this joy and thanksgiving today. Amen (Disciplines, 2020, p. 145).

Now words from Maya Angelou, former Poet Laureate of the United States: *Prepare yourself to be a rainbow in somebody else's cloud. . . Be a blessing to somebody."*

And finally, words I received in an email from an unknown source:

Having a conversation with my grandma who has Alzheimer's:

Me: "It was nice seeing you."

Grandma: "It was nice remembering you."

Me: "You remember me??"

Grandma: "I don't remember your name, but I remember that I love you."

May you remember, today and always, that you are both known by your name and cherished by our God, who created you before the foundation of the world to be his precious child!

Please notice the in-color cover sheet! Rose figured out how to do that! And please note the words on the cover, because they're out of today's gospel!