

*Holy Week Private Prayer Retreat:
Praying with Jesus during the Pandemic
Spring 2021*

Susan Phillips (New College Berkeley)



The concurrence of Lent with the global pandemic—twice!—is remarkable. For 40 days each year the Christian church remembers God’s great love for us, expressed most profoundly through Jesus’ life, ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection. People often fast from certain foods and other pleasures in order to focus more fully on God. During this pandemic, Christian and otherwise, we’ve been fasting: fasting from physical proximity to so many people we care about, from going to our places of work (unless we are bravely carrying on with work essential to the common good), from mingling in public spaces to enjoy meals, music, art, recreation, and so much more. We have fasted from communal worship, too, though many of us gather electronically to remember Jesus, sing, and pray.

Given the season and the circumstances, I offer you, for a second year, this private prayer retreat for Holy Week. It contains verses from Scripture, poetry and prose, images, and lyrics for every day from Palm Sunday through what our Eastern Orthodox brothers and sisters call Bright Monday, the day after Easter. Feel free to take time each day using this as a springboard for your own communion with God. Feel free, too, to share the retreat with anyone you think might welcome it.

We in the community of New College Berkeley send you our wishes for God’s blessings and assurance of love in this Holy Week.

Susan

I. Palm Sunday



In ancient times palm branches represented goodness and victory. Palm Sunday commemorates Jesus' return to Jerusalem, where a large crowd welcomed him and others plotted his arrest. What a mixed experience for him and his disciples; what an occasion for courage and integrity.

[T]he great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. ¹³ They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed is the king of Israel!"

¹⁴ *Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:*

¹⁵ *"Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion;*

*see, your king is coming,
seated on a donkey's colt."*

¹⁶ *At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.*

¹⁷ *Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. ¹⁸ Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. – John 12:12-19 (NIV)*

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. – Revelation 7:9 (NIV)

Palm Sunday
by Malcolm Guite

Now to the gate of my Jerusalem,
The seething holy city of my heart,
The saviour comes. But will I welcome him?
Oh crowds of easy feelings make a start;
They raise their hands, get caught up in the singing,
And think the battle won. Too soon they'll find
The challenge, the reversal he is bringing
Changes their tune. I know what lies behind
The surface flourish that so quickly fades;
Self-interest, and fearful guardedness,
The hardness of the heart, its barricades,
And at the core, the dreadful emptiness
Of a perverted temple. Jesus come
Break my resistance and make me your home.

Hymn:

LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS

All Glory, Laud, and Honor

55

(ST. THEODULPH. 7, 8, 7, 8, D.)

THEODULPH of Orleans, circa 820
Translated by JOHN M. NEALE, 1854

MELCHIOR TESCHNER, 1615

1. All glo - ry, laud and hon - or To thee, Re-deem - er, King,
2. Thou art the King of Is - rael, Thou Da - vid's roy - al Son,
3. Thou didst ac - cept their prais - es; Ac - cept the prayers we bring,

To whom the lips of chil - dren Made sweet ho - san - nas ring!
Who in the Lord's name com - est, The King and bless - ed One!
Who in all good de - light - est, Thou good and gra - cious King!

The peo - ple of the He - brews With palms be - fore thee went;
To thee, be - fore thy pas - sion, They sang their hymns of praise;
All glo - ry, laud and hon - or To thee, Re-deem - er, King,

Our praise and prayer and an - thems Be - fore thee we pre - sent.
To thee, now high ex - alt - ed Our mel - o - dy we raise.
To whom the lips of chil - dren Made sweet ho - san - nas ring! A-MEN.

*Here's a link to a performance of this hymn: <https://youtu.be/pHN8UAK6Yow>

Reflection:

What's it like to imagine yourself accompanying Jesus into Jerusalem, noticing the celebration, anticipating the agony?

Jesus' disciples realized the danger they were headed toward. Perhaps they had a conversation something like this:

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo. "So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such time. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us."
– J.R.R. Tolkien (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1954)

Thinking of the pandemic which we've been living through, and all its attendant crises, laments, and griefs, what, if anything, gets in the way of your whole-hearted reception of Jesus? Using Guite's imagery, what kind of Jerusalem is your heart?

II. Monday of Holy Week



The Beacon by Abigail Henrie

*“Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
 my chosen one in whom I delight;
 I will put my Spirit on him,
 and he will bring justice to the nations.
²He will not shout or cry out,
 or raise his voice in the streets.
³A bruised reed he will not break,
 and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
 In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;
⁴he will not falter or be discouraged
 till he establishes justice on earth.
 In his teaching the islands will put their hope.”
⁵This is what God the Lord says—
 the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out,
 who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it,
 who gives breath to its people,
 and life to those who walk on it:
⁶“I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness;
 I will take hold of your hand.
 I will keep you and will make you
 to be a covenant for the people
 and a light for the Gentiles,
⁷to open eyes that are blind,
 to free captives from prison
 and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.
 – Isaiah 42:1-7 (NIV)*

When Martin Luther was dealing with the plague of the Black Death, he wrote these wise words that can help inform the way we approach things happening in our world right now:

I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me however I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God. (from Luther’s Works, 1527, Volume 43, p. 132, letter to the Rev. Dr. John Hess)

Hymn:

May We Be a Shining Light to the Nations (Chris Christensen)

May we be a shining light to the nations
A shining light to the peoples of the earth
Till the whole world sees the glory of your name
May Your pure light shine through us.

May we bring a word of hope to the nations
A word of life to the peoples of the earth
Till the whole world knows
There's salvation through your name
May Your mercy flow through us.

May we be a healing balm to the nations
A healing balm to the peoples of the earth
Till the whole world knows
The power of your name
May your healing flow through us

May we sing a song of joy to the nations
A song of praise to the peoples of the earth
Till the whole world rings
With the praises of your name
May your song be sung through us

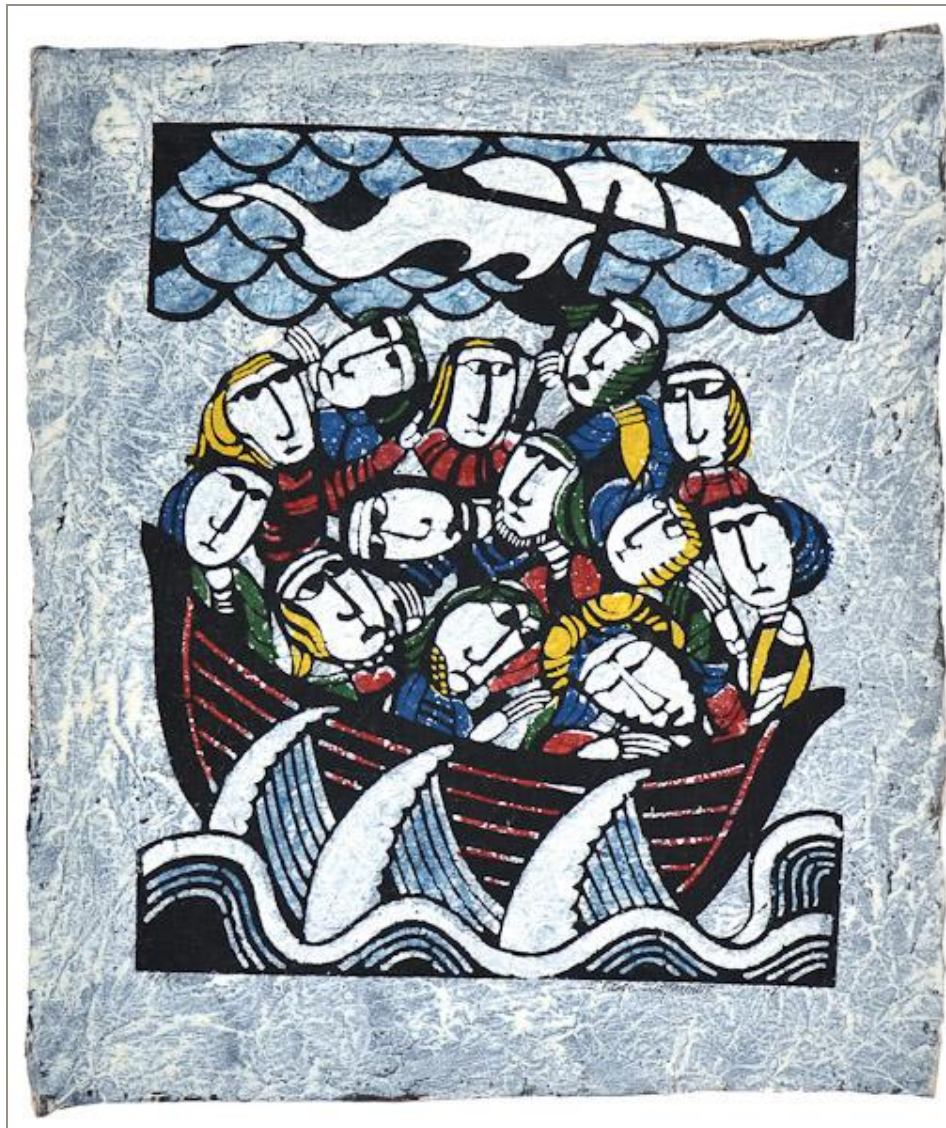
May your kingdom come to the nations
May your will be done in the peoples of the earth
Till the whole world knows
That Jesus Christ is Lord
May your kingdom come in us (2).

*Here's a link to an audio/video version of the hymn:
<https://youtu.be/yIhUn1IVTOY>

Reflection:

As we enter this week of remembering Jesus' final free days on earth with friends, pay attention to how you feel. No doubt, dread mingles with hope—feelings also of the pandemic. In this time, how do you imagine God's mercy flowing through you to the world?

III. Tuesday of Holy Week



The Boat in the Storm by Sadao Watanabe

During these ominous days of his life, Jesus must have clung to his knowledge of God's great love. For millennia people have found that kind of lifeline in the words of Isaiah, which have tumbled off the lips of people in exile, exodus, holocaust, storms, and epidemic. We hold onto them now, and try to still our minds and hearts to hear God speak to us.

*But now thus says the LORD,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
³For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.
I give Egypt as your ransom,
Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.
⁴Because you are precious in my sight,
and honored, and I love you.... —Isaiah 43:1-4*

Be Still and Know
by Rebecca St. James

Alone in the valley
I cried for You to fill me with
Your peace
So when the lightning strikes
thunder rolls around me
Still I live in peace
You ask that I

Be still and know
You are God
You are God...

When the fires rage
When the storm surrounds me
Still I live in peace
Though the mountains fall
Crash into the ocean
Still I live in peace
You ask that I...

Be still and know
You are God
You are God.

You ask that I

Be still and know

You are God

You are God.... [Amen.]

Hymn:

***Do Not Be Afraid* by Michael Larkin**

Listen to these words from Isaiah brought into song: <https://youtu.be/vJoWYKaOdJU>

Reflection:

You don't need to imagine a storm or a threatening circumstance, for we're in one—the pandemic and its associated crises. God says, "When you pass through the pandemic, I will be with you." Allow yourself to cry out honestly to God about all that you're feeling. Then, sit with God's words of love and accompaniment.

IV. *Wednesday of Holy Week*



Fragrance at Bethany by Makoto Fujimura

Biblical expectation responds to and includes the shadows. The Light shines in the darkness and is not overcome. Mary experiences joy in Jesus' birth, and also is told by Simeon that "a sword will pierce your own soul...." (Luke 2:35).

Death is just around the corner, *and* the fragrance of the perfume fills the house. Jesus who washes the feet of others, breaks bread and feeds us, is here the recipient of those loving acts.

Light and shadow. This is the truth of our lives. God's grace touches our wounds and unrequited longings. We are not to feign happiness. We are to be human, and in our humanity—with all its beauty and ugliness—God welcomes us. Sometimes that welcome is extended through other people.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. – John 12:1-3

God, give us grace to accept with serenity
the things that cannot be changed,
Courage to change the things
which should be changed,
and the Wisdom to distinguish
the one from the other.

Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
Taking, as Jesus did,
This sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it,
Trusting that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will,
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.

Amen. —Reinhold Niebuhr (*Serenity Prayer*)

Hymn:

Ubi Caritas

TAIZE

Ostinato Refrain

ALL

F C Dm B^b D G C

U - bi ca - ri - tas et a - - mor,

CHOIR

U - bi ca - ri - tas et a - - mor,

F C Dm Gm C 3 F

u - bi ca - ri - tas De - us i - bi est.

u - bi ca - ri - tas De - us i - bi est.

Verses

F C Dm B^b D G

1. † Your love, O Je - sus Christ, has gath - ered us to - geth - er.
 2. Let us love one an - oth - er as God has loved us.
 3. † The love of God in Je - sus Christ † bears e - ter - nal joy.

C F C Dm Gm C F

May your love, O Je - sus Christ, be fore-most in our lives.
 Let us be one in love to - geth - er in the one bread of Christ.
 † The love of God in Je - sus Christ will nev - er have an end.

Text and Music: Jacques Berthier (b.1923). ©1979 Les Presses de Taize. All rights reserved.

*Here's a link to this song: https://youtu.be/X9e_QO1ATho

Reflection:

Imagine yourself with Jesus in this twilight before the Last Supper and Gethsemane. He comes to Bethany, and it's as though he's in a foxhole while the battle rages around him. He's come from the battle and he will venture back into it again soon.

Remember a time you were in a similar situation. Perhaps someone sought you out in a place of great crisis or walked with you through a leg of an ordeal. Perhaps you've sought out the comfort of other people in this season of quarantine.

What does remembering Jesus' meal at Bethany (or your own encounter in crisis) help you see in your life today? How do your own experiences draw you closer to Jesus?

V. *Holy Thursday*



The Last Supper by Vladimir Zunuzin (2016)

We now enter the Triduum of Holy Week, the three days before the Feast of Easter. We remember the Last Supper where Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, gave them the Eucharist, and implored them, “Remember me.”

From that meal, Jesus and some disciples went to Gethsemane, where he asked them to stay with him, abide with him, watch, and pray.

O God, who have called us to participate
in this most sacred Supper,
in which your Only Begotten Son,
when about to hand himself over to death,
entrusted to the Church a sacrifice for all eternity,
the banquet of his love,
grant, we pray,
that we may draw from so great a mystery,
the fullness of charity and of life.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. [Amen.]

— Collect for 9 April 2020, *Give Us This Day* (a Benedictine lectionary)

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. — 1 Cor. 11:23-26

The Last Supper by Jack Stewart

Pieces of torn bread on the tablecloth.
Plates empty in front of them as if they
have just removed the halos they will wear
in a few years. Jesus holds out his arms
like he is scolding them for such a mess.
They look startled, like they are seeing it
for the first time: it couldn't be their fault.

Leonardo claimed this is the moment
of Christ's announcement of betrayal,
and of course it is not clear who Judas is.
But what I notice is the wine—or seeming
lack of it. No goblets. No chalice.
The grail no bigger than a shot glass.

Yet somehow that makes sense.
That makes sense. A bartender measures
as reminder of the power that he serves.
We sip liqueurs between our fingertips.
It takes so little to be satisfied.

It takes so little to linger
in camaraderie. Only a heartbeat
of belief is necessary.
By small increments we learn to taste.

Hymn:

Stay with Me (Jacques Berthier and Taize © 1984)

159

Stay with Me

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It consists of two systems of music. The first system has a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble clef part has a melody with lyrics underneath. The bass clef part has a bass line. Chords are indicated above the treble clef: Dm, Gm⁶, Dm, Gm⁶, Dm, C. The lyrics for the first system are: "Stay with me, re-main here with me; watch and". The second system also has a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble clef part has a melody with lyrics underneath. The bass clef part has a bass line. Chords are indicated above the treble clef: F, C, Dm, Asus, A. The lyrics for the second system are: "pray, watch and pray." Above the final measure of the second system, the instruction "Repeat as desired" is written.

*Here is a link to the music: <https://youtu.be/LmAoCHqvS0Q>

Reflection:

How hard it was for the disciples to watch Jesus submit to his destiny! Almost unbearable to have their feet washed by him; impossible to stay awake as he agonized in the garden.

Consider how you struggle to be awake to all that is happening—to Jesus and also to our world as together this week they groan in agony.

VI. *Good Friday*



As a child I could not understand why this day of Jesus' execution was called "good." I thought it should be called "Black Friday," like the medieval plague named the "Black Death." I have learned, however, that "Good" in Good Friday means "pious, holy," as in "The Good Book." It was a holy death—Jesus loved God and us, and so he accepted death.

In this season of pandemic, we have seen some pious deaths from illness and grievous suffering from those who love and care for them. Jesus' death was torturous, brutal, and salvific. Most of our deaths won't be so. Yet we hope that when our times come we'll die good deaths, facing eternity with hope, speaking love as we go.

⁵...God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. —Romans 5:5b-7

XII: Jesus dies on the cross
by Malcolm Guite (from *Stations of the Cross*)

The dark nails pierce him and the sky turns black
We watch him as he labours to draw breath
He takes our breath away to give it back,
Return it to its birth through his slow death.
We hear him struggle breathing through the pain
Who once breathed out his spirit on the deep,
Who formed us when he mixed the dust with rain
And drew us into consciousness from sleep.
His spirit and his life he breathes in all
Mantles his world in his one atmosphere
And now he comes to breathe beneath the pall
Of our pollutions, draw our injured air
To cleanse it and renew. His final breath
Breathes us, and bears us through the gates of death.

Hymn:

Were You There? (African-American spiritual, 1899)

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? (Were you there?)
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
O sometimes it causes me to tremble! tremble! tremble!
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nail'd him to the cross? (Were you there?)
Were you there when they nail'd him to the cross?
O sometimes it causes me to tremble! tremble! tremble!
Were you there when they nail'd him to the cross?

Were you there when they pierced him in the side? (Were you there?)
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
O sometimes it causes me to tremble! tremble! tremble!
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?

Were you there when the sun refused to shine? (Were you there?)
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
O sometimes it causes me to tremble! tremble! tremble!
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

*Here's a link to a contemporary performance of this classic spiritual:
<https://youtu.be/LRaFdFkOVyY>

Reflection:

Good Friday makes us tremble, and rightly so. The fierce love and justice of God is not tame. It has the force to meet our own pain, our lament, our grief. Nothing is out of its bounds. God knows suffering. Jesus as he died, quoting Ps. 22, lamented to God.

Many have said that this pandemic evokes our lament, a prayer to God from a place of suffering. Here's a guide for writing your own prayer of lament (from Jim Martin, International Justice Mission) (the numbers in parentheses refer to Psalms):

Write Your Own Lament

Your own lament can be a simple and powerful prayer expressing your complaint to God and asking for specific help. You don't need to labor over this for a long time. One or two simple, clear lines per category below is all it takes.

1. Address God directly

"O Lord", "Mighty King", "Lover of Justice" ...

- *What role does God play in this situation? What name do you ascribe to him?*

2. A review of God's Faithfulness in the Past

"For he divided the sea and led them through, making the water stand up like walls." (78)

- *How has God been faithful to you in the past? How has he shown up?*

3. The Complaint

"I am forgotten, cut off from your care. You have thrown me into the lowest pit and the darkest depths." (88)

- *What is the source of your grief, sorrow or anger? What painful situation is before you? (Feel free to be specific here and include more than just a couple of sentences if it helps.)*

4. A Confession of Sin or Claim of Innocence

"Because of your great compassion blot out the stain of my sin." (51) "O Lord my God I have done wrong." (7) "I have kept the ways of the Lord; I have not turned from my God to follow evil. I am blameless before God." (18)

- *Is there anything within you that aches for forgiveness? How have you failed to trust and obey God, or conversely, in what ways have you been faithful?*

5. A Request for Help

"Listen to my prayer O God, do not ignore my cry for help! Please listen and answer me, for I am overwhelmed by my troubles." (55)

- *What specific thing are you asking God to do? In what ways do you long to see Him move?*

6. A Declaration of the Response/Character of God

"But you have been our king from the beginning, O God; You have saved us many times." (74)

- *Recount the ways in which God has responded to your suffering in the past. What evidence do you have that he will show up again? Who do you know God to be based on your experiences with him?*

7. A Vow to Praise/Statement of Trust in God

"The Lord has heard my plea; The Lord will answer my prayer." (6) "Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—My Savior and my God. Now I am deeply discouraged but I will remember You." (42) I love the Lord because He hears my voice and my prayer for mercy. Because he bends down to listen I will pray as long as I have breath!" (116)

- *Looking beyond your current circumstances, what are the reasons God is nevertheless worthy of praise and trust? Articulate these as clearly and honestly as you can.*

VII. *Holy Saturday (the final day of Lent)*



Jesus entered into the finitude of human existence, in life and death. On the Sabbath when he was in the tomb, the forces of creation and eternity mingled. On Holy Saturday there is grief, but not only grief. The day also contains anticipation and acknowledgement that Jesus is harrowing Hell. New life is beginning. Tears mingle with sweet smelling spices. The light shines in the darkness, like phosphorescence in a black sea. Evening comes, yet we are not alone.

*Listen to this prayer of mine, GOD;
pay attention to what I'm asking....*

*The enemy hunted me down;
he kicked me and stomped me within an inch of my life.
He put me in a black hole,
buried me like a corpse in that dungeon.
I sat there in despair, my spirit draining away,
my heart heavy, like lead.
I remembered the old days,
went over all you've done, pondered the ways you've worked,
Stretched out my hands to you,
as thirsty for you as a desert thirsty for rain.*

*Hurry with your answer, GOD!
I'm nearly at the end of my rope.
Don't turn away; don't ignore me!
That would be certain death.
If you wake me each morning with the sound of your loving voice,
I'll go to sleep each night trusting in you. —Ps. 143:1-8*

Let Evening Come
by Jane Kenyon

Let the light of late afternoon
shine through chinks in the barn, moving
up the bales as the sun moves down.

Let the cricket take up chafing
as a woman takes up her needles
and her yarn. Let evening come.

Let dew collect on the hoe abandoned
in long grass. Let the stars appear
and the moon disclose her silver horn.

Let the fox go back to its sandy den.
Let the wind die down. Let the shed
go black inside. Let evening come.

To the bottle in the ditch, to the scoop
in the oats, to air in the lung
let evening come.

Let it come, as it will, and don't
be afraid. God does not leave us
comfortless, so let evening come.

Hymn:

This hymn is sung by Christian communities around the world on the
morning of Holy Saturday:

*Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
And with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly minded,
For with blessing in His hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
Our full homage to demand.*

(an amplification of Habakkuk 2:20—"The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth
keep silence before him"—and one of the oldest hymns in the Christian tradition,
coming to us from 275 CE and placed in Church's liturgy in the 4th c.)

*Here's a link to an audio version of the hymn: <https://youtu.be/3QU3-E5mWNg>

Reflection:

Spend 15 minutes in silence. Silence is counter-cultural and not easy. Studies have found that some people would rather receive an electric shock than sit silently, not doing anything.

Put your phone away from you, let your hands lie at rest, and move into a receptive stance. What do you see? hear? feel? smell? What do you notice in your mind? heart? soul? Turn your attention to God. Notice how you experience the Holy (perhaps your heart is burning within you, perhaps you experience inexplicable peace or compassion).

After the 15 minutes have passed, offer your own words to God. Feel free to write them.

VIII. *Easter*



Christ is Risen: The world below lies desolate
Christ is Risen: The spirits of evil are fallen
Christ is Risen: The angels of God are rejoicing
Christ is Risen: The tombs of the dead are empty
Christ is Risen indeed from the dead,
the first of the sleepers,
Glory and power are his forever and ever. [Amen]

~ St. Hippolytus (AD 190-236)

Having observed the 40 days (not counting Sundays) of Lent, we arrive at the feast day of Easter, joining people around the world in great rejoicing! Lent is a penitential season, a speed-bump in the church year when we slow down, take stock of our lives and souls. It's an opportunity to fast from what interferes with our drawing close to God, and a time for extending special kindnesses to others. Now we step freely into Resurrection living, eager to see God more clearly, love God more dearly, and follow Jesus more nearly, day by day.

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you."

—Mark 16:1-7

Love (III)

by George Herbert (1593-1633)

Love bade me

welcome: yet my soul drew back,

 Guiltie of dust and sinne.

But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack

 From my first entrance in,

Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,

 If I lack'd anything.

A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:

 Love said, You shall be he.

I, the unkinde, ungratefull? Ah my deare,

 I cannot look on thee.

Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,

 Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame

 Go where it doth deserve.

And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame?

 My deare, then I will serve.

You must sit down, sayes Love, and taste my meat:

 So I did sit and eat.

Hymn:

Holy, Holy, Holy (by Reginald Heber, late 18th c.-early 19th c.)

Holy, holy, holy
Lord, God Almighty
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee

Holy, holy, holy
Merciful and mighty
God in three persons blessed Trinity

Holy, holy, holy
Though the darkness hide Thee
Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see

Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee
Perfect in power, in love, and purity

Holy, holy, holy
Lord, God Almighty
All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea
Holy, holy, holy
Merciful and mighty
God in three persons blessed Trinity

*Here's a link to an audio version of the hymn: <https://youtu.be/JwuDSw-9cUQ>

Reflection:

After 40 days of not saying "Hallelujah," shout it out! Coming from the Hebrew Bible, "hallelujah" means, sing a joyous song to God. It's an invitation as well as an exclamation of praise.

Pray a prayer of reflection and praise. Here's a way of doing that with an Easter prayer of Examen (adapted from <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/15714/an-examen-for-easter-week/#sthash.UJhZozfn.dpuf>):

Give Thanks. I thank God for this day, for my life, for all I am and have, and for His Word.

Pray for Light. I ask the Father to let me see my day as the Holy Spirit sees it, and to show me what I need to see.

Find God. I look at my day in the light of the Spirit.

I look at what I have done and not done.
Where have I found God?

Anything Wrong?

Have I ignored God? Have I neglected God's gifts?
Where have I pleased others instead of pleasing God?
I express my contrition to God and repent of my sins.

What Now?

I look forward in hope.
What am I to do now? What do I have to avoid?

IX. Easter Monday (also called Bright or Renewal Monday)



The Supper at Emmaus, artist unknown, National Galleries of Scotland

Eastern Orthodox Christians call today “Bright Monday,” and the whole week following Easter is called “Bright,” bright with the light of the risen Christ. We are post-Resurrection people. We trust that Christ has risen and that we are always accompanied by the Spirit. Yet we strain to experience that which we trust. We are like Jesus’ followers in the post-Resurrection stories: We lament and also hope; we doubt and also trust; we give up and return to whatever is our fishing, and we also are ready to hear a voice calling our name. This week is an opportunity to consider how we might attune ourselves to the holy presence with us. Perhaps being quarantined during this season has allowed us the time to more conscientiously think about what helps us notice God.

Now on that same day two of them were journeying to a village called Emmaus about 7 miles from Jerusalem, and they talked to each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?"

They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"

He asked them, "What things?"

They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him."

Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were journeying on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over."

So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"—Luke 24:13-32

"...for they shall see God": Matthew 5:8
by Luci Shaw

Christ risen was rarely
Recognized by sight.
They had to get beyond the way he looked.
Evidence stronger than
his voice and face and footstep
waited to grow in them, to guide
their groping from despair,
their stretching toward belief.

We are as blind as they
until the opening of our deeper eyes
shows us the hands that bless
and break our bread,
until we finger
wounds that tell our healing,
or witness a miracle of fish
dawn-caught after our long night
of empty nets. Handling
his Word, we feel his flesh,
his bones, and hear his voice
calling our early-morning name.

Hymn:

We've spent Lent, Holy Week, and now embark on Bright Week within the strange circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated crises. We're isolated physically and united together in lament and hope.

This hymn was written by a person in deep grief over the deaths of his wife and children. It has been performed to encourage people in times of crisis. The words are copied here, and there is also a link to it being sung in March 2020, by a group of singers separated (but only physically) by the pandemic.

It Is Well with My Soul (Horatio Spafford and Philip Bliss, 1826)

When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to know^a
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Refrain

It is well, (it is well),
With my soul, (with my soul)
It is well, it is well, with my soul.
Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:
If Jordan above me shall roll,
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life,
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.

But Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul.

And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
A song in the night, oh my soul!

*Here is the audio link: <https://youtu.be/GHU-fFrxiQg>

Closing Benediction:

[O God,]

May the light of Jesus shine continually to drive away all darkness. May Christ, the Morning Star who knows no setting, find his light ever burning in our hearts—he who gives his light to all creation, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

(Adapted from the Book of Common Prayer -1979, the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America)