2020 Holy Week Daily Reflections During COVID19

A Prayer in Holy Week

Holy One,
In community we share both our living and our dying.
In community may we be receptive to your presence moving among us in memory, shared stories, careful listening, love, compassionate, and hope.
Though we now hold a physical distance, we claim your Incarnational Spirit holding the space between us—loved ones and strangers, colleagues and souls we serve—as sacred.
In this Holy Week, as we pause and devote this time to prayerfully consider the fullness and complexity of life, speak that we may hear, and hear that we may be known. Amen

Monday, April 6, 2020

Invitation – Read the passage below slowly 2-3 times. If you are able to, read it aloud and hear the sound of the words. Pause after each reading to notice what image or phrase "shimmers" or captures your attention.

Psalm 130:1-6

Out of the depths I cry to You! In your mercy, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!
If You should number the times we stray from You,
O Beloved, who could face You?
Yet You are ever-ready to forgive, that we might be healed.
I wait for you, my soul waits, and in your Word, I hope;
My soul awaits the Beloved more expectantly than those who watch for the morning.[1]

Traditionally psalms such as this one were sung. Psalm 130 appears to belong to a series of penitential psalms sung during autumn pilgrimage festivals and possibly at night. At the start of Holy Week, may our souls await the Beloved.

Reflections

- As I imagine a soloist or cantor singing these words at the close of day, what images draw my attention?
- When have I called out to God from "the depths" or while keeping vigil or sleeplessness in the long "night of the soul" (John of the Cross)?
- What or who sustained me at the places of deepest pain in my life?
- How may I compose and sing the song of my heart, the cry of my soul, and the sighs of my body this Holy Week? What is my psalm to sing?

[1] Nan C. Merrill, *Psalms for Praying* (New York: Continnuum, 1996), paraphrase of Psalm 130:1-6.

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Amen

Tuesday, April 7, 2020

Invitation – Read the passage below slowly 2-3 times. If you are able to, read it aloud and hear the sound of the words. Pause after each reading to notice what image or phrase "shimmers" or captures your attention.

St. Patrick's Breastplate (The Deer's Cry)

God to enfold me, God to surround me,
God in my thinking, God in my speaking,
God in my sleeping, God in my waking,
God in my waiting, God in my hoping,
God in my mind, God in my heart,
God in my life, God in my death,
God in my ever-living soul,
God in my eternity

The ancient Celtic lorica prayers are also called encircling, or shielding, prayers. Such prayers were spoken each day as prayers of protection and also prayers of awareness of the fullness of living and dying—that each day holds both.

Reflections

- What prayer or song am I clinging to this Holy Week?
- In what parts of my life—at work or home—do I find it most difficult to claim God's presence? What part of above lorica was most difficult? What part was most comforting?
- What would my lorica, or prayer of protection and awareness of life's complexities be? What would I include?
- Who has been gentle and compassionate with me—offering me protection and care—when I was in grief, anger, anxiety, or pain?

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Amen

Wednesday, April 8, 2020

Invitation – Read the passage below slowly 2-3 times. If you are able to, read it aloud and hear the sound of the words. Pause after each reading to notice what image or phrase "shimmers" or captures your attention.

The Lord's Prayer (Our Father)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Jesus provides this model prayer in Matthew 6:5-13 as a way to teach his followers how to pray – to honor God and honestly speak the needs and desires of our hearts.

Reflections

- What, if any, experience or memories do I have of praying the Lord's Prayer?
- As I read and heard the words, what images or phrases drew my attention? What line resonated with my life today?
- Where do I perceive hope, God's presence, or challenge in this prayer? What would I add to it today?
- Consider all the varied experiences of waiting occurring throughout your work day or time at home right now. How might that time become a practice of waiting on God through prayer?

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Amen

Maundy Thursday, April 9, 2020

Invitation – Read the passage below slowly 2-3 times. If you are able to, read it aloud and hear the sound of the words. Pause after each reading to notice what image or phrase "shimmers" or captures your attention.

Embodying the Body of Christ

"If we show the Lord's death in communion, we must show the Lord's life in the world. If it is a Eucharist on Sunday, it must prove on Monday that it was also a Sacrament."[2]

Rev. Maltbie Davenport Babcock (1858-1901) was a United States Presbyterian minister, hymn writer, and poet. On this Maundy Thursday, his words invite us to consider how we are to be the embodied, living Christ in a world balancing precariously between being physically and spiritually alive and dying.

Reflections:
- Today we are invited to Christ's Table to remember and share in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. What significance does sharing Communion (Lord's Supper) in my community or family of faith have for me?
- How may I "embody" the ritual of Communion in such a way that I am part of the Living Body of Christ (hands, feet, heart, and voice) in the world?
- Each person I meet may be living through the deepest pain or grief of their lives unbeknownst to me. How may I offer Christ's last commandment—to love each person with deep compassion, care, and kindness—in the midst of my own pain, grief, and exhaustion?
- How may Christ's Communion offer respite, nourishment, and sustenance to my soul, mind, and body?

[2] Maltbie Davenport Babcock, *Thoughts for Everyday Living* (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1901), 129.

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Good Friday, April 10, 2020

A Prayer in Holy Week

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Invitation – Read the passage below slowly 2-3 times. If you are able to, read it aloud and hear the sound of the words. Pause after each reading to notice what image or phrase "shimmers" or captures your attention.

The Cross Laid Bare

You spoke of hope, how we must identify with it—be it for an unbelieving world. Can you tell me how to live that hope today? Can you bring that hope out of the pulpit and explain it so that those without money, without jobs, without power, without purpose can understand? Can you tell me what hope there is for kids whose parents are never there when they need them, for the old folk frightened to walk to the shops, for people whose health has gone—and who suffer so greatly?

I read long ago that only a suffering Christ makes sense. Today the suffering is around me and in me and a triumphant Christ is offensive, for April 2020 is an eternal Good Friday and even Jesus broke down on the cross. We are not ready for hope—not yet—and some of us are not sure that we will recognized it when it comes.[3]

Ruth Burgess' unflinching meditation upon the cross invites profound honesty before God in the face of suffering and loss.

Reflections

- What suffering and loss do I need to name before the Cross today?
- For what, and from whom do I need forgiveness?
- How may I acknowledge authentically and compassionately the toll of this global reality of COVID19 upon my colleagues, my loved ones, and persons in my care?
- What hope do I claim? And if I cannot hope today, how may I persist to love regardless?

[3] Ruth Burgess, "Hope" (paraphrased) in *Eggs and Ashes*, eds. Ruth Burgess and Chris Pohill (Glasgow, UK: Wild Goose Publications, 2004), 202.

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Amen

Holy Saturday, April 11, 2020

Invitation – Read the passage below slowly 2-3 times. If you are able to, read it aloud and hear the sound of the words. Pause after each reading to notice what image or phrase "shimmers" or captures your attention.

The Present Moment

I sit in the calm
'midst the storm's rage.
Behind me whirl griefs and sorrows long ago exposed—
pains grown woozy with time.
Before me spin future unknowns—
In shadow dances they tempt me
to draw into their fury
and be shredded with anxiety
fear
questioning
despair.
To left, to right
turn today's woes.
Ever present, they stand ready to suffocate,
but I sit in the calm—for the moment, all is still. (HCB)

Holy Saturday invites an attuned awareness of the eternal present. Here, we live within Sacred Mystery and keep vigil.

Reflections

- Am I able to draw into a calm center through the daily storms I am navigating?
- What threatens to consume my mind, heart, and rest?
- How may I enter into silence or stillness for a span of time on this Holy Saturday?
- For what or who am I holding vigil?
- What or who enables me to wait upon the Lord today?