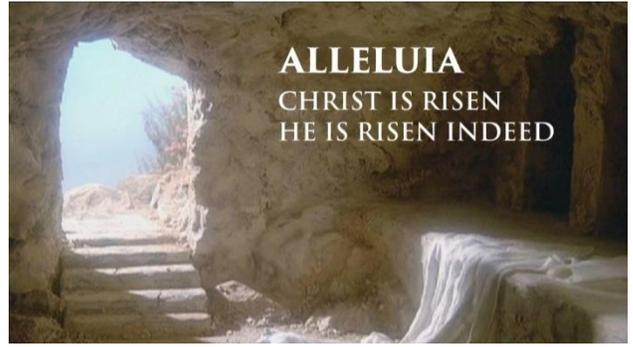


Grace Notes in Miniature

For Tuesday, May 19, 2020

Dear friends:

As I write this, I have been listening to the Premier and Minister of Education giving an update on education. I know that many, while recognising the common sense in the decision to not relax the measures which are keeping us at a safe distance, are disappointed. I've mentioned before that patience is a virtue which I have to work very hard to cultivate and feel especially for those whose mental health is being taxed by the demands of isolation. This isn't a new issue for the Faithful. Consider Psalm 13: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbcE2HRhyrQ>



How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
² How long must I bear pain^[a] in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?
³ Consider and answer me, O LORD my God!
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,
⁴ and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed";
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.
⁵ But I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
⁶ I will sing to the LORD,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

One of the things I enjoy about this psalm is that, first of all, it is very short and easy to pray, but secondly, it goes from the feeling of abandonment to trust and thanksgiving in six verses. In speaking with people who are struggling with isolation and what feels like internment right now, the uncertainty and open-endedness of our situation cause a lot of the difficulty.

If we then turn to the readings of today, it is to be reminded of the hopefulness of the Easter celebration which still continues. The Entrance Antiphon for today's Mass is from Revelation 19: Let us rejoice and be glad and give glory to God, for the Lord our God the Almighty reigns, alleluia.

Which leads us to another well-known passage in Romans 8:35-39: ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.'

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NRSV)

One of my favourite pieces is “On Eagles’ Wings” because of the hope for which it stands. Perhaps that is why it so frequently sung at funerals and memorials – at a time when we really need to reach out in hope. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MvpjxfWrjzY>

This recording, made with a public school choir from New York City, also is a sign of hope; these children offer a beautiful rendition of “You Raise Me Up”.

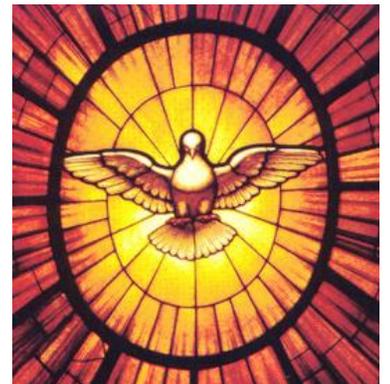
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyATkHieozw>

And this piece from two of our contemporary liturgical composers, Lori True and David Haas: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dcg2SLjWqtQ>

Next Sunday is a day celebrated this coming Thursday in parts of the world, the Ascension of the Lord. The Vatican gave many countries permission to move the observance to the Sunday to encourage more people to keep it. It would otherwise be another Holy Day of Obligation on a weekday and would impose hardship for many people. (Remember that as Canadian Catholics, other than all Sundays of the year, we only have two Holy Days of Obligation: Christmas Day and its Octave, the Feast of Mary, Mother of God. Other days of obligation moved to the closest Sunday are Epiphany and Corpus Christi.) You may enjoy hearing American Catholic evangelist Jeff Cavins break open the readings of this day at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDvFQQFJLWE>

Traditionally, Ascension Thursday was the day to begin a novena in preparation for the Feast of Pentecost; that we celebrate the Feast on the nearest Sunday in Canada need not stop us from starting this novena. The prayers can be found at a number of sites, including

<https://www.praymorenovenas.com/novena-to-the-holy-spirit> and Aleteia. It is suggested that this was the first novena in the life of the Church as the disciples waited after the Ascension for the Holy Spirit to come to them in the Upper Room. We pray each day for one of the gifts of the Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (otherwise interpreted as awe or wonder).



Let’s pray that the gift of fortitude, in particular, may help all of us to overcome the demands of our present challenges. Get fired up as you clap along to this!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2RMN7y-9aE>

Gillian