

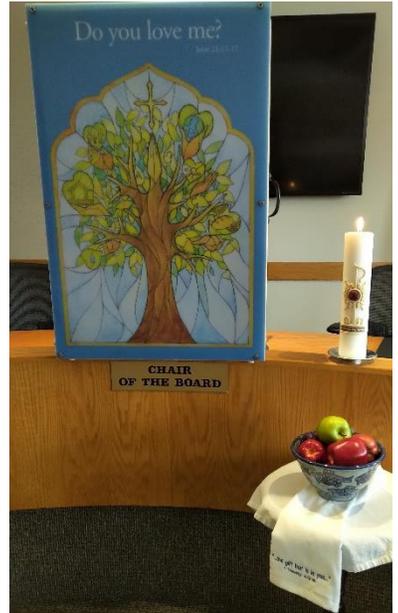
Grace Notes in Miniature

Wednesday, June 24th, 2020

Dear friends,

This morning the staff of the CEC held their end-of-year prayer service, and we prayed for you. We prayed for students and staff, for our communities, for all those who are retiring and moving on, and for everyone who has been affected by COVID-19 – which, in essence, is all of us.

It felt strange to be praying invisibly as we followed a slide show on the Teams program and, as we couldn't see or hear the whole group, it was an exercise in trust that those who had readings or prayers to proclaim would do so and that people were joining with us in prayer.



Because the closing liturgy for those of us who work out of the Board offices is usually the Wednesday of the fourth week of June, it has often coincided with Ste-Jean-Baptiste and with these readings; personally, I felt they were excellent ones to bring our school year to a close.

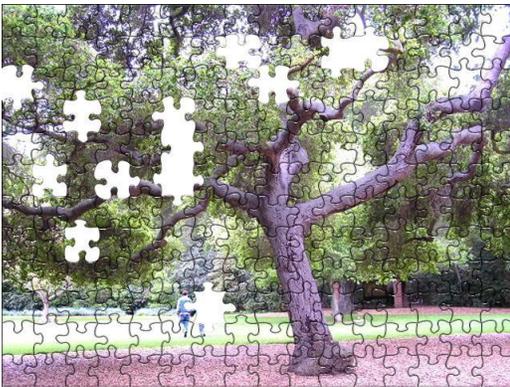
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJS3Xsdqb7E>

In the 1990's when I was doing Basic Army Officer Training in Farnham, Quebec, we were very grateful for this day because, in Quebec, it was a statutory holiday. As we were employed by the Department of National Defence of the Federal Government, we also got Canada Day a week later. What a gift to have two "jours de congé" within a week of each other which allowed us to relax a bit from the pace of our training! I think the liturgy marking the end of a school year is a signal to many of us that things can slow down a little – even in parish life, as many parishes minimise programs over the school holidays. This mediaeval hymn to John the Baptist is very prayerful, whether or not one understand the Latin, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=viu-PhML3D8> and may encourage you to slow down and take a few moments of Sabbath today.

The readings for today all call us to focus on God's presence in our lives from before we were born. Isaiah seems to be questioning his worth but then rallies that he is honoured in the sight of the Lord and that God has become [his] strength. The psalm (139) reminds us that we are wonderfully made. In the reading from Acts, we are reminded that John felt he wasn't worthy even to untie the thong of Jesus' sandals, yet here we are some two thousand years later with his birthday on our calendar.

The Gospel is a story of a break with tradition: it tells us that Zechariah is made mute until he gives his son the name John. In a culture where every first-born son was named for his father, this indicates that God has something different in store for him. I am reminded that the first part of the baptismal liturgy is a request to the parents to name their child. God already calls us each by name and has a plan for us. And each of us fits in a special way.

This morning I used the analogy of a jigsaw puzzle. The bag of pieces of the



unassembled puzzle contains some which are brightly-coloured or of interesting shapes, some which have straight edges to form the borders, and some which may seem very non-descript in their lack of colour – until we are almost finished and find they are missing. And some which make no sense when we're trying to figure out where they go; when we do fit them in, they often highlight a streak of light or something special we hadn't noticed or anticipated!

I used to have a bumper sticker which said, "No one knows what I do until I don't do it". And many of us often feel that no-one would notice if we weren't there to do the job we do. But Luke 12:7 tells us that "even the hairs of your head are all counted."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-8Y7_08nqQ

As this week and this school year come to a close, may all of us rest in the knowledge that we are where God needs us to be right now. May we share with each other, "The LORD watch between you and me, when we are absent one from the other." (Gen 31:49)

With every blessing,
Gillian

