

Grace Notes

Friday, April 9, 2021

Dear friends:

I arise today through the strength of heaven...

Christ with me, Christ before me

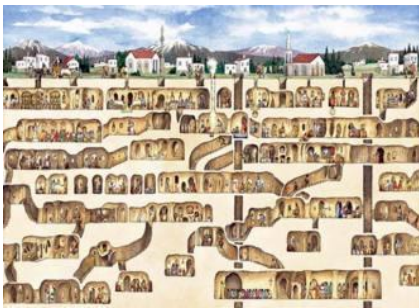
Christ behind me, Christ in me

Christ beneath me, Christ... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lr3htl3UIBk>



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Perhaps my Celtic roots are responsible for my love of St Patrick's Breastplate and many of the beautiful musical variations of it. The words "strength of heaven" may have stronger meaning at this time as many struggle with the burdens of isolation imposed on us by the pandemic. This year, more than many before, we need to be able to open our hearts to the joy and promise of the Resurrection, to celebrate the whole of Easter – until May 23rd this year. It is so easy to let the excitement of Easter Sunday slide as we feel cut off from our



faith communities by restrictions on church occupancy and the fears of being infected; however, we can take inspiration from the many stories of faith blooming underground when it was cruelly suppressed, for example in Communist China or the Soviet Union. On a trip to Turkey, I learned of the 20,000 or so Christians who literally lived underground in Cappadocia during a time when to be Christian was to

invite execution.² This site goes underground as many as thirteen levels and is connected by a string of tunnels about nine kilometres long. I also love this story of a crowd in Kiev in the 1930's: after an hours long harangue against the stupidity of faith and proclaiming the rightness of atheism, Nikolai Ivannovich Bukharin asked if there were any questions or comments. An old man, possibly a Russian Orthodox priest, shuffled forward and shouted, "Christ is risen!" as one, the people gave a thunderous response, "Indeed He is risen". Maybe it is time that we started to use that greeting and exchange again.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ht31WJ-qIEI>

The Easter story could not happen at a better time for us in the northern hemisphere as we see the earth come to life again after the starkness of winter.



¹ Sculpture - Triumph by Timothy P. Schmalz

² <https://travelingepic.com/2012/04/06/cappadocia-turkey-alien-7-wonders-of-the-universe/>



One of the silver linings of my confinement to home is having seen a whole year of the life of my garden in ways I had never done before: the cycle of life.

³This week we have listened to the many familiar stories of Jesus appearing to his disciples after the Resurrection. Saturday's gospel

reading reminds us of our mandate, arising from our baptism, to "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to all creation." (Mark 16:15) Implicit in these words is a call not only to reach out to people but also to take responsibility for creation – for our world.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbwKRYdP6zI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Modb0SR97IU> Bishop Barron tells us "The human heart is wired for God". Can we be part of the direct current, conducting that message to those whom we encounter each day? Let's be conductors and not resistors!

We celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday this weekend with the story of "Doubting Thomas"; I always see this as a great message of hope for all of us and remember the words of Mark 9:24, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" for the times when faith is challenged or difficult. We may gain strength from the Chaplet of Mercy

<https://www.thedivinemercy.org/message/devotions/pray-the-chaplet> introduced by Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska.

The readings of next week are truly teaching moments as Jesus explains to his friends and followers what it means to know God through him and to live by the "Way, the Truth and the Life". The message is very clear: Love God and love your neighbour. Period. Without qualification or selection.

Next Saturday is the memorial of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, Protectress of Canada, the first North American Indigenous woman to be canonised. We have her prayer posted in all of our HCDSB buildings; let's remember that she is a patron of ecology, of those who have lost their parents, and of World Youth Day, and make sure that our young people know her story. ⁴



May we all take time in this season of spring to spend time with our Lord. **Christ is risen; indeed He is risen!**

Gillian

³ On the road to Emmaus, Helge Boe

⁴ <http://t0.gstatic.com/licensed-image?q=tbn:ANd9GcQxV80NLqAau6l9Ep-pYC2l1I5BFIdwwMWB-IJ3mdtPQCHPF9KWIFBQCFC5u2tn>