

Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 22, 2020
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Church of the Holy Cross, Dunn Loring

Opportunity Knocking

“Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

You might think that our collect for today is poorly timed. We cannot be together, we cannot share the bread of life with each other because we are in the middle of a global pandemic. Seriously, where are we going to get the bread and share it in the middle of this crisis? The store shelves are empty—wiped out by panic that there will not be enough for everyone, so we need to get what we need for ourselves, now! I have a coffee cup from the Disney film *Finding Nemo*, with the seagulls on it all repeating, “Mine, mine, mine, mine, mine.” Fear, is one way to respond to this crisis.

But I have good news for you. The bread of life is inside us. God abides in us, and we need only reach into our center to bring forth this life-giving bread. I have seen proof that God is with us in this crisis and in every normal, average day that we have had, and that I know we will have again. Alongside the frightening news stories are stories of people singing together from their windows and balconies, businesses reconfiguring themselves to feed people, make hand sanitizer, develop vaccines, ramp up production of ventilators. Neighborhoods coming together—using safe social distancing – to let each other know that we are not alone.

I put out a call to Holy Cross to ask anyone who is isolated and needs errands run to please contact me. So far, no one has—we are blessed in that way. The second part of my request was for people who are healthy and able, to please let me know if they would be willing to run errands for those isolated and vulnerable. That list is long and growing. This is one of many examples of the ways we make visible the life-giving bread inside of all of us. I see it in people willing to share what they have with each other. The fact that we are here in an online worship service is the result of people giving of their time and talent to help us discover new ways of doing things that we had only briefly imagined. I am so very proud of the people of Holy Cross, and of everyone around the world, coming together in love to stand with each other. In every adversity, there is great opportunity to show up and be a light in the world. I am overwhelmed by the love and display of the human spirit we are experiencing.

Yes, there are scammers and price gougers, but they are only people who cannot yet see the love of God inside themselves. We are only human, with egos that are linear and logical. We like to divide life into compartments—good and bad, dark and light, happy and sad, old and young, rich and poor, sick and healthy, better or worse—that last bit sounds like a marriage vow. Love lights the path that transcends our blindness, our black-and-white judgments, and opens our eyes to the reality of life in God. When we see with eyes of love, our comparisons fall away.

In our darkness, in our fears, in our blindness to the needs of others, *that is where our demons hide*, and thrive. That is where our judgment of others is born and grows. And we are all blind in some ways. But our measure of how others stack up against us means nothing to God. To God we are equally beloved children.

We all spend time in darkness. We all have a dark side, we are not perfect. Yet Ephesians tells us that light exposes what we do in secret. When we get still and quiet enough to hear the small still voice of God calling us, and we answer that call, the light in us turns on, and dispels our darkness. We are *only human after all*.

This time of adversity is an opportunity to see in a new way forward, to heal our vision in those places where we have been blind. Be kind and gentle with everyone. Open your eyes and see each other in a new way, the way God sees you. Take this time to cultivate a patient, forgiving and loving way of seeing the world.

Thomas Merton wrote in several places, about the light inside of us, “If only [people] could all see themselves as they really are.” And, “I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other.” “There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun.” There is light in all of us.

In our readings today, we hear A story of sight and the many forms of human blindness, and references to light are peppered throughout the text. How does our vision of life affect how we act in the world? How do our areas of blindness affect the way we show up for others? We cannot see clearly if we are in a dark place, but God sees the heart. And I thank God that is the case, because if I am judged by my doing only and not my whole being, I am in trouble—we all are.

We see so vividly now that we are not in control of our lives. We cannot control what is happening. But we can control the way we respond. We can embody God’s love. Early 20th century novelist and painter Herman Hesse wrote, “Some of us think holding on makes us strong; but sometimes it is letting go.”

We have an opportunity to let go, to forgive, to release resentments. If you do not think you have ever done something that hurt or offended another, especially those you feel have harmed you, then I ask you to re-examine yourself and your actions—we are human and we all make mistakes, intended or not. What is it they say the road to hell is paved with? Ah, yes, good intentions, positive ideas left undone. I believe the bedrock of that road is made of offences we commit against others that we fail to see. I know I am guilty of this; I think we all are. What if we take this opportunity to let go of judgment and harming, and pave our paths forward with compassion and forgiveness, for ourselves and others? What if we make every moment sacred? What if we walk around filled with light, and shining like the sun?

In closing, I want to read you a poem—I will tell you about it when I finish.

"And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and grew gardens full of fresh food, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And the people began to think differently. And the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed."

This poem was written in the 1800s by Kathleen O'Meara, an Irish-French Catholic writer of the late Victorian period. Her words, like the words of the scripture, speak to us today—we can learn from the past. Right now, opportunity is knocking on all of our doors. Answer the door, and embrace the light of wisdom, and the love God offers – our future depends on it. Amen

1 Samuel 16:1-13, Ephesians 5:8-14, John 9:1-41, Psalm 23