

Letter # 10 - April 8, 2020

In the final analysis, the questions of why bad things happen to good people transmute themselves into some very different questions, no longer asking why something happened, but asking how we will respond, what we intend to do now that it has happened. - Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Dear Friends,

We are in the midst of what many believe will be the most critical weeks of the spread of the Coronavirus. It brings up new levels of fear and anxiety after we have already been feeling fearful for weeks. It can begin to wear on us, and we can begin to devolve by becoming short with the people near us.

While this is a natural reaction, let us not “lead with our anxiety”.

If we find ourselves snapping at other, barking at the dog or just brooding in the corner; take it as a sign that we need to draw from a different well within our own beings. Take a moment, to take deep breaths (yes, again and again) and meditate. Begin to focus on the word, “courage”. You may want to even repeat it over and over again. Sometimes, even when we don’t feel it at the moment, by calling “courage” up through a mantra, courage begins to arrive.

We all have a part in this battle. Let us not lead with our fear even if it is normally justified but let us lead with courage and hope. Let us be the very hope we are looking for in our most difficult moments.

Roger

In today's Letter:

1. Weekly Prayers
2. Online Easter Service
3. Roger's Reflection: Easter in the Age of Social Distancing
4. Poem submitted by David Copeand
5. Invitation - National Daily Health Survey for Novel Coronavirus from Stanford Medicine

Our Prayers List:

Our prayers for victims of Covid-19 who have died or who are seriously ill.

Our prayers for frontline healthcare workers, essential services workers. In particular, our prayers for Midori Nishimura's colleagues who are healthcare workers working with a shortage of equipment and masks: Pearl, Joe, Tom, Sayaka and Anna.

Haruye Ng, Paul Osaki, Sue Nakamura, Tak Nishiura, Sam Nieda, Kiyu Shizuru, Lea Haratani, Hitoshi Tachibana, Chloe Gong, Ginger Powell, Kamila Young, Jieun Lee, David Nelson, Patricia Orr, Jamie Campbell, Mel Imai, Harry Hatasaka, Amy Shao, Hiroko Yoshida, Patrick Chow, Patricia Orr, Ray Narimatsu, Rev. Mariellen Sawada Yoshino, and Sue Lemba.

Our prayers for the family in the passing of Atsumi Minami who was Sachiyo Yamasaki's former boss.

ONLINE EASTER SERVICE!

This Easter Sunday, April 12th, email #11 will arrive in your email box at 9:55 AM. Along with a written reflection, you will be able to click on a link to join us for a special online Easter worship. The worship will include music by Melody Chou, Liam Chou, DeeDee Kato, and Keiko Kagawa. There will be poetry by Brynn Saito, reflections by Rev. Jon and Rev. Roger. There will even be Fellowship time after the service.

This Sunday, be sure to log on and join us for worship. If you miss the 10:00 AM start, don't worry you can actually log on anytime.

As you receive this email, you should be getting a hardcopy of our Easter newsletter. In case you do not get a hardcopy newsletter, here's the reflection from that email:

Easter in the Age of Social Distancing

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first... – John 20

On the first Easter, one may make the case the disciples were practicing social distancing. The beloved disciple ran ahead (possibly to get 6 feet away from Peter). In the other gospels, Mary speaks to an angel– not too close - no hugging and speaking far enough away to confuse the angelic being with the gardener – Yep, good social distancing.

And then, there's Jesus. He certainly was practicing social distancing. Nowhere to be seen.

Obviously, I jest, but it does beg the question of the relevance of an event that took place over 2000 years ago to our current experience, now. What does the resurrection of Christ mean in the midst of a pandemic? What is the Easter message in the midst of "sheltering-in-place" and social distancing?

Too often, we Christians treat Easter as if it is an anniversary of a special event. It is something to be celebrated sometime in March or April commemorating the foundation of our faith. While it is central to our faith, it is not rooted in that single moment, but it is a timeless encounter with God that speaks to us in any period, in any age and in any circumstance.

The risen Christ is about whenever we face our darkest moments, feel genuine suffering, struggle, and fear; then live in that dark space for the metaphorical 3 days, but we continue to have the faith that God - the very essence of our being, the energy, and Spirit from which we are created – is still with us. And most importantly, will not abandon us but lead us to new life in ways that we could never imagine if we lived without this faith.

Easter is a timeless experience. Jesus is resurrected here today as much as he resurrected over 2000 years ago. Our faith is not rooted in an anniversary but in real energy and Spirit that continues to feed us even as we shelter-in-place, social distance or directly fight against this coronavirus pandemic.

At this moment, we may be in a time that is more like the 3 days, between Good Friday and Easter, but nonetheless, the Spirit of resurrection is still with us.

As we “commemorate” Easter, let us not lose sight of the real power and the real Love that is in rising up within us, now, here, today. Let us do more than celebrate Easter – but let us live it!

Roger

The following was submitted by David Copeland (Colorado). We truly miss David’s presence with us and especially his "Children’s Time" lessons. It’s nice to connect!

Poem Composed Following a Terrible Earthquake
By Soto Zen Buddhist hermit-monk, Ryokan (1758-1831)

Day after day after day,
At noon and midnight, the cold was piercing.
The sky was thick with black clouds that blocked out the sun.
Fierce winds howled, snow swirled violently.
Wild waves stormed heaven, buffeting monster fish.
Walls trembled and shook, people shrieked in terror.
Looking back at the past forty years,
I now see that things were raging out of control;
People had grown lax and indifferent,
Forming factions and fighting among themselves.
They forgot about obligations and duty,
Ignored notions of loyalty and justice,
And only thought of themselves.
Full of self-conceit, they cheated each other,
Creating an endless, filthy mess.
The world was rife with madness,
No one shared my concern.
Things got worse until the final disaster struck-
Few were aware that the world was star-crossed
And dreadfully out of kilter.
If you really want to understand this tragedy look deep inside
Rather than helplessly bemoan your cruel fate.

From Patsy Obayashi - The following link is an invitation to participate in a "National Daily Health Survey for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

"Our goal is to learn and predict which geographical areas will be most impacted by coronavirus based on how you are feeling. This information will be used to inform local and national responses, such as redirecting medical resources or improving policies and public guidance. Given the 9-10 day delay between onset of symptoms and hospitalizations, and the 20% hospitalization rate of patients, tools like this will be necessary to truly track and fight the spread... "Your involvement will hopefully help save lives. As a country, we are all in this together!" - Stanford Medicine

Click here:

<https://med.stanford.edu/covid19/covid-counter.html>

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