

## Requiem or Renaissance

### April 2, 2022 – Opening Liturgy

Our time in the season of Lent is drawing to a close. We are about to stand with Jesus at the Mount of Olives. We walk alongside as he rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. The way is paved with cloaks spread on the ground and palms waving in the air. Amid the rejoicing and the adulation, Jesus whispers, "This is the beginning of the end. This is the beginning of the end."

In a few more days we stand while Jesus endures the agony of the cross, not bearing to look while his earthly body dies. Just a couple of days later the women find the tomb empty. Jesus appears and whispers, "This is the end of the beginning. This is the end of the beginning."

Some weeks later with fire and wind Jesus' followers receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For those who ate and walked with Jesus and for some who didn't, Jesus' death and resurrection is the spark that ignites the Jesus movement.

As followers of Jesus, we are always being called into endings that are beginnings and beginnings that are endings. Welcome to Requiem or Renaissance, a process in which you and your congregation will discern the future that Jesus is beckoning you to follow him into. Will it be a requiem? Are you discerning the beginning of the end? Will it be a renaissance? Are you discerning the end of the beginning? None of us has the answers to those questions. They will unfold over months as we pray, worship, laugh, study and rest in God together.

We have time. We have life and breath. And we are beloved of God no matter what. And so we begin this journey of endings and beginnings.

For right now we will ponder and wonder about what we carry on this journey.

#### **What do you love?**

And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:37-40)

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34, 35)

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Love is at the center of Christian life. In our culture the word love is sometimes so broad we don't know what it means. We say, "I love this restaurant" or "I love that dress" and we also say "I love my children" but we wouldn't confuse those kinds of love as being the same. In the first case, love is a preference, in the second love reflects both a deep bond and a deep commitment.

Our first question today is what do you love? As leaders and stewards of our churches we might ask, what do **we** love about our church: Our local communities, the Episcopal Church.

- What brings you joy and delight?
- Where do you find comfort?
- What inspires you?
- What gives you courage to love and Jesus loves?

We might also consider the ways our we and our churches are bearers of love. As a community, what do we love?

- What deep commitments move you to act in love toward others?
- What cries and needs in your town move your church to reach out in love?

What do you love?

O Lord, let Your love dissolve my hardened heart. Let your love raise me above myself. Let Your love reveal to me joy beyond imagination. Let my soul exhaust itself by singing praises of your love. Let me love you more than I love myself, and let me love myself only for Your sake. And let me see Your love shining in the hearts of all people, that I may love them as I love you.  
~Thomas a Kempis

## **What have you lost?**

What have you lost?

### ***A Community Poem***

What we're learning about grief  
is that it rolls like a heavy mist  
settles into the crevices  
lingers on the skin.  
Visits, then visits again  
lurking under the chair.  
And, when we're not watching  
reaches out with tiny claws  
and bats our ankles.

What we're learning about grief is it sneaks up on us.  
We find ourselves on the couch with a well of rage  
living in the pit of our stomachs and nowhere for it to go,  
and it chokes us.

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What we're learning about grief  
is that it is a language.  
Suffering is its own speech;  
it will not go away just because we won't look it in the eye.

What we're learning about grief  
is it drips, like water.  
It gets in everywhere  
through the small unseen fissures in the ceiling.  
We can ignore it like dust.  
Just keep too busy with laundry and living.

What we're learning about grief  
is that it can turn us into people we don't want to be,  
can help us become people we never thought we could be.  
It transcends color, race, religion, gender.

What we're learning about grief  
is that its mother is loss, its father -- change.  
Knead grief, as you would bread.  
Weave grief, as you would thread.

What we're learning about grief is  
there is no vaccine against it.  
We can't develop antibodies.  
In these times it is something we all have.

What we're learning about grief  
is to acknowledge its presence,  
its many forms and guises,  
then to use it, while reaching out,  
connected to everyone who is braving this same storm.

What we're learning about grief is  
that it is still learning about us,  
learning that we are strong and resilient.  
If the trees can keep dancing,  
So can we.

*<https://www.npr.org/2020/04/30/845910766/if-the-trees-can-keep-dancing-so-can-i-a-community-poem-to-cope-in-crisis>*

**A reading from the 1<sup>st</sup> letter of Peter:**

You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. For "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of

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grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures forever." That word is the good news that was announced to you.

For what do you mourn? What absences, what lack, what holes in your heart are you carrying?

### **Where does it hurt?**

Where does it hurt?

Hurt goes by many names:

Disappointment  
Betrayal  
Being ignored  
Being attacked  
Being misunderstood

We often recognize a wound by the people and conversations we avoid.  
We get clues to where we are hurting by the risks we won't take.

And yet, healing is such a great gift

John O'Donohue writes

"The beauty that emerges from woundedness is a beauty infused with feeling, a beauty different from the beauty of landscape and the cold perfect form. This is a beauty that has suffered its way through the ache of desolation until the words or music emerged to equal the hunger and desperation at its heart.

It must also be said that not all woundedness succeeds in finding its way through to beauty of form. Most woundedness remains hidden, lost inside forgotten silence. Indeed, in every life there is some wound that continues to weep secretly, even after years of attempted healing. Where woundedness can be refined into beauty a wonderful transfiguration takes place."

Where are your hurts and wounds?  
What is personally painful for you right now?  
Where is your church hurting right now?  
What wounds remain hidden?

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“We ask that streams of Easter light might flow into the intimacy and privacy of our hearts this morning, to heal us and encourage us and enable us to make again a new beginning.”

— John O'Donohue, Walking in Wonder: Eternal Wisdom for a Modern World

## **What do you dream?**

What do you dream?

The poet Langston Hughes wrote:

Hold fast to dreams  
For if dreams die  
Life is a broken-winged bird  
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams  
For when dreams go  
Life is a barren field  
Frozen with snow.

What do we need to dream? We need faith. We need hope. We need trust in God through Jesus Christ. Here's what the Bible tells us about those pillars that uphold our dreams.

For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Romans 8:24-25)

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Hebrews 1:1)

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21)

What fragile dreams, what newborn hopes, what wild imaginings are you carrying?

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**Closing Prayer – *Wee Worship Book*, Iona Community**

From where we are to where you need us,

**Jesus, now lead on.**

From the security of what we know to the adventure of what you will reveal,

**Jesus, now lead on.**

To refashion the fabric of this world until it resembles the shape of your kingdom,

**Jesus, now lead on.**

Because good things have been prepared for those who love God,

**Jesus, now lead on.**