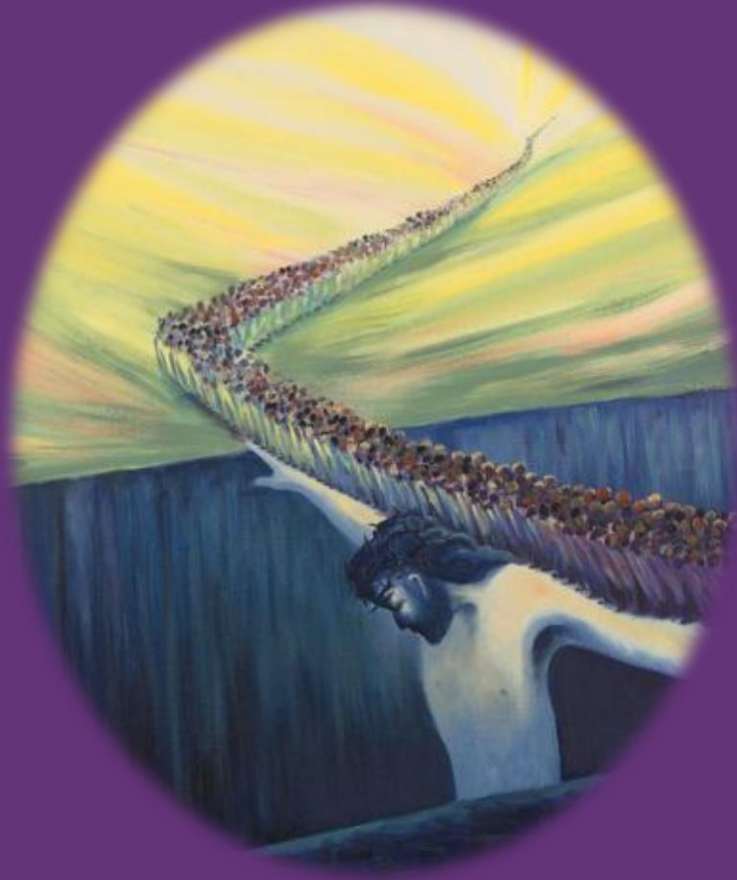


“BRIDGES”



Reflections for the Season of Lent
2018

The West Virginia Institute for Spirituality
Charleston, West Virginia

February 17, 2018

Your people shall rebuild the ancient ruins; the foundation from ages past you shall rise; Repairer of the breach, they shall call you, Restorer of ruined dwellings. - Isaiah 58:12

As a West Virginian, we cannot forget the collapse of the Silver Bridge in Point Pleasant, West Virginia on December 15, 1967. On the fiftieth anniversary of this tragic disaster, there was a recommitment for more frequent bridge inspections, repairs, restoration and replacement so that this disaster would not be repeated.

The Scripture Reading for today is a tangible reminder that the purpose of our lives should be to become bridge builders, inspectors, restorers and repairers for God. The bridges, we are building, are between our God, ourselves, and the whole human race.

Prayer Practice:

Repairer, Restorer or Both?

This is the beginning the fourth day of our Lenten journey. We have observed Ash Wednesday and our First Friday in Lent. Now Lent as a Penitential Season is becoming a reality. Lent is a time for inspecting, repairing and restoring bridges with our God and extending this inspection of our bridges with the whole human race.

Prayerfully read Isaiah 58.

Ponder specifically the verse of Isaiah 58:12. Ask yourself-How is God, “the Repairer of the breach,” “Restorer of ruined dwellings, and/or both for me? Now ask yourself, “Where does the bridge between God and me need inspection, repair, restoration or all of the above?”

Quietly listen to what God will tell you. Record what you heard when you allowed God to speak to you.

Next, prayerfully ask yourself, “How can I be a bridge repairer, restorer or both between God and the people I am called to serve?”

Quietly listen to what God will tell you.

Record what you heard when you allowed God to speak to you.

Bob Harrison, Ph.D.

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First Sunday of Lent
February 18, 2018

“Christ suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the Spirit. In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient while God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism, which saves you now.” 1 Peter 3:18-21a NAB

After the flood, God made a promise to Noah. *“I will establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all bodily creatures be destroyed by the waters of a flood; there shall not be another flood to devastate the earth.”* (Genesis 9) The rainbow is the sign, the bridge, between God and His people in the Old Testament. And the cleansing waters of the flood temporarily washed away the sinfulness of the people in Noah’s time. Unfortunately, people continued in their sinful way. So God needed another way to wash away the sinfulness of His people.

In the New Testament, a New Covenant is made with all people through the person of Jesus Christ. He is the bridge between the covenants. And the waters of the flood are a precursor to the baptism we all receive as we enter God’s family. But unlike the flood in Noah’s day, the water of Baptism is a permanent sign of our salvation through the blood of Jesus. Yes we still fall short of what God wants us to be. But Jesus, the bridge between God and His people, reaches out to us in forgiveness, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Prayer Practice:

Reflect on the symbols of water and blood. Contemplate the cleansing power of both. And remember to thank Jesus for giving us both Baptism and Reconciliation as a way of receiving His forgiveness when we are less than what God wants us to be.

Marie Crim

WVIS Associate Spiritual Director Intern

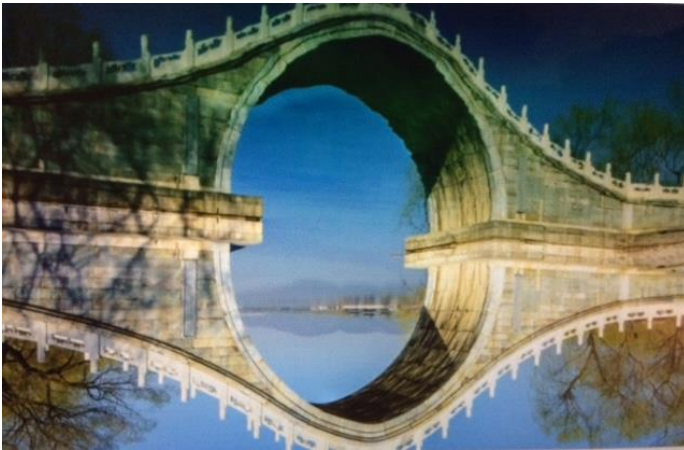
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February 19, 2018

“Blessed are those...who follow You with their whole heart, who enfold the world with love and walk on peaceful paths! O that I might reflect the Light!”

Psalm 119, Psalms For Praying

It has been a loud, tumultuous year with Tweets attacking, Talking Heads decrying, citizens shouting, friends and families fighting, and women marching. The challenge this year has been to stay in my own life, be at peace, answer God’s call, and be a responsible citizen advocating for Gospel values. The answer for me has been a daily contemplative practice from which flows the love and serenity I can carry to my family, neighborhood, church community, and the ripple effect outward to the world, the universe, and as Ilia Delio says, to the farthest star! Just as this beautiful Moon Bridge (Jade Belt Bridge in China) is reflected in the peaceful waters we are to reflect the Christ who is our Light and thus WE become the Bridge by which Christ comes into the world in our time and in our place.



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February 20, 2018

May we

Know You more clearly,

Love You more dearly,

Follow you more nearly,

Day by day

(St. Richard)

During my most recent eyeglass fitting, the optometrist took a nose bridge measurement, which determined the distance between my lenses. Without this little piece of connecting metal the functionality of my lenses would be useless. However much like finding the perfect pair of jeans, I discovered that one bridge size does NOT fit all.

If I tried to fit into a pair of glasses that were too small, they would pinch my nose. If I tried to fit into a frame that was too big they would slide down my nose. The optical technician worked diligently and patiently to custom fit my new glasses so my vision was clear.

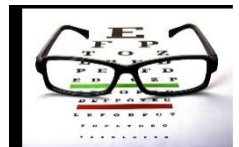
I compare this experience to my spiritual life. I think back over times in my development when I tried to fit into someone's view of who or what I should be. Or the times I tried to fit someone into my view of who or what they should be.

When I look at my own and other's formation field, through worldly self-centered lenses not bridged by my loving God, my vision becomes cloudy, dark and unfocused.

The good news is I have a merciful, loving, and forgiving Creator that is more ready to adjust my spiritual insight than I am ready to ask for adjustment.

During this Lenten season, I ask the "King of Spiritual Optometry" for the grace of receiving custom fitted "spiritual glasses" with adjusted lenses that give me vision and insight to know, love and follow the God of my understanding more clearly, dearly and nearly each and every day.

REFLECTION: Do your "spiritual eyeglasses" need adjusted?



Leanna Lake, WVIS Associate SD

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February 21, 2018

...he stretched out his arms between heaven and earth...

Nineteen years ago I was supposed to give a presentation for a Lenten retreat. My piece was to be on the important physical gestures of Holy Week. I had focused on walking with Jesus into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), sitting at table sharing the Last Supper (Holy Thursday), and opening our arms to suffering (Good Friday). I confess that my ideas were woefully underdeveloped, and I ended up cancelling at the last minute because my six-year-old daughter was sick and needed to go to the hospital.

I had been inspired by a phrase I had heard, but couldn't place, "he stretched out his arms between heaven and earth."

This was before Google became a household word, let alone a verb, so it took me a while to locate the source: one of the prayers used in the Catholic Mass before 2010 (Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation I from the 1975 Sacramentary). Here it is in context: *When we were lost and could not find the way to you, you loved us more than ever; Jesus, your Son, innocent and without sin, gave himself*



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into our hands and was nailed to a cross. Yet before he stretched out his arms between heaven and earth in the everlasting sign of your covenant, he desired to celebrate the Paschal feast in the company of his disciples.

What caught my attention then, and holds it still, was the image of Jesus reaching out, absorbing and containing my suffering, connecting heaven and earth, and spanning the chasm that I keep creating between myself and God.

Stretch out your arms in a gesture of vulnerable acceptance and pray:

When I am lost and cannot find the way to you, you love me more than ever, O God. Jesus, your Son, gives himself into my hands to be nailed to my cross. He stretches out his arms between heaven and earth in the everlasting sign of your covenant and he desires to celebrate a feast in my company.

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February 22, 2018

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Psalm 27:1

“In the tent of meeting, outside the curtain that is before the covenant, Aaron and his sons shall tend [this light] from evening to morning before the Lord. It shall be a perpetual ordinance to be observed throughout their generation by the Israelites.” Exodus 27:21

What do you fear? There is a children’s story that I think of when I think of fear. In this story, the main character, Franklin, is afraid of the dark, which makes it particularly difficult for him, since he needs to sleep inside his shell which is very dark. He is a turtle, after all. He goes and visits his various animal friends and asks them for advice. It turns out his friend, the bird, is afraid of falling out of the sky, so he equips himself with a parachute. His friend, the duck, is afraid of deep water so she uses inflatable water wings, and his friend, the lion, is afraid of loud noises, so he uses ear muffs to muffle the sounds. Franklin realizes none of these ideas will work for him, but they do help him think in a new way. The last picture in the book shows him inside his shell with a night light on and he is fast asleep.

The Israelites kept their own night light on in the tabernacle. It burned from evening until morning and was symbolic of God’s presence with them. I imagine there were not very many pray-ers coming in the middle of the night to experience this symbolic light. But I also can understand how just knowing that it was there, knowing that it was on in the darkness, was a great comfort to them as they traversed the wilderness.

Fear is perhaps the biggest barrier to connection with others, God, and ourselves. Franklin did not let his fear overwhelm him, but he persisted in finding his own answer. What helps you when you are afraid?

Prayer Practice: Pray these selected verses of Psalm 27 as paraphrased by Nan Merrill.

Love is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?
Love is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? . .
. . .
Teach me to be love, as you are Love;
Lead me through each fear;
Hold my hand as I walk through
 valleys of illusion each day,
That I may know your Peace. Amen.

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February 23, 2018

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Matthew 5:23-24

The time of Lent is a time for us to reflect on our shortcomings, a time of penitence, a time of sacrifice, and a time for cleansing our hearts. It is a time to ponder Christ's sacrifice for us, and how he bids us to live our lives according to the Gospel. In today's reading from the lectionary, he asks us in no uncertain terms to build bridges, to be reconciled with our "brother". That brother may be man or woman; Catholic, Jew, or Muslim, family, friends, or stranger. We are called to love.

Jesus loves us. By His death and resurrection, He became the bridge between us and the Father. We should, in this Lenten season, seek also to be a bridge for others to come to the Father. We should seek, by our speech and actions, to build and/or rebuild bridges with our neighbors, our loved ones, and all we meet. Let us be Jesus, the bridge, to all we meet.

Practice:

If you can, attend a Stations of the Cross today (or next week). Focus on each Station how Jesus was building a bridge for us, because He loved us, and wished, through His Body and Blood to share His divinity with us.

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Rooted and growing in the light of God's love.

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