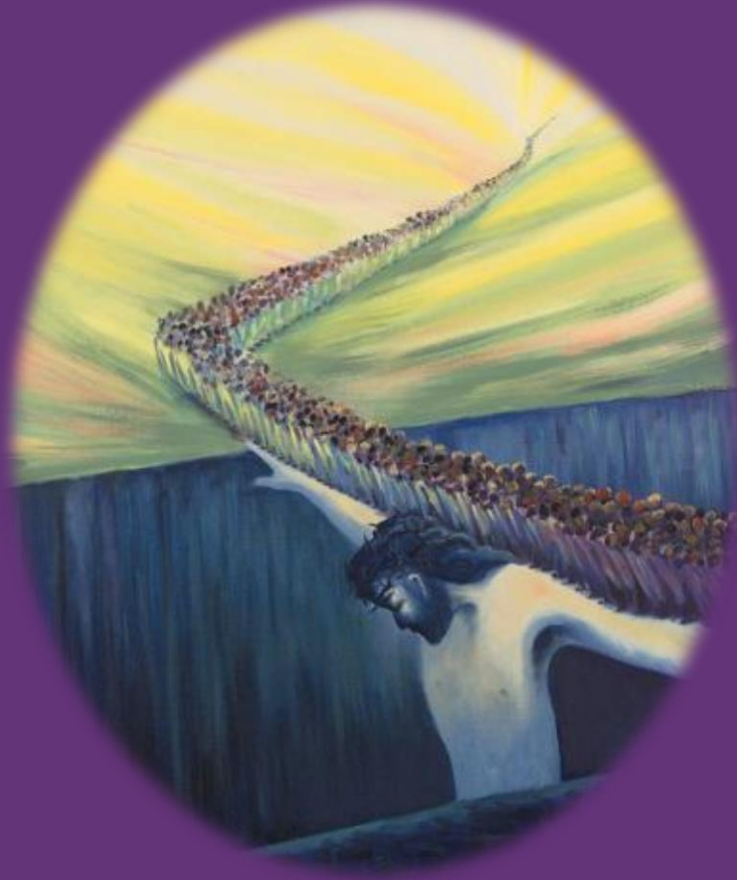


“BRIDGES”



Reflections for the Season of Lent
2018

The West Virginia Institute for Spirituality
Charleston, West Virginia

March 24, 2018

I will gather from all sides to bring them back to their land.

Ezekiel 37:21-28

Does it not seem that the people of God are scattered? Everyone seeming to go their own separate ways. That there is no cohesiveness to who God is or what relationship God has with God's creation.

Lent is a time to reflect on how scattered we might be. What is our relationship with God? Just how does Jesus' passion and death and finally His resurrection impact our life right today?

God calls each of us to gather in God's name and to worship the God of the universe by growing deeper in love and mercy to God and God's creation, that being each other.

How shall we build a bridge to God? We can't do it alone, but as a people gathered together under the one common bond of the Creator, we can do just that, build a bridge.

Prayer Practice for the Day:

Pray that all who are scattered or estranged from God might, through our witness to God's love and mercy, will be that bridge which brings others back to a deeper relationship with the Creator.

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March 25, 2018 - Palm Sunday

*The Lord God is my help,
therefore, I am not disgraced;
I have set my face like flint,
knowing I shall not be put to shame. Isaiah 50:7*

When we are faced with a major decision about our future, there is the image of the bridge that comes to mind. A bridge links our past to our future. When Jesus was preparing to enter Jerusalem, He was bridging the gap between His present realities to His future uncertainties.

The Scripture Reading for today is a tangible reminder that when we face a decision, we must celebrate our past triumphs and move forward to our uncertain future, knowing that “The Lord God is our help.”

Prayer Practice

Prayerfully read Isaiah 50:4-7.

Ponder specifically the verse of Isaiah 50:4, “The Lord God is my help; therefore, I am not disgraced.”

Ask yourself, “How has God been operative in my life and in the many decisions I have faced so far?”

Talk quietly to God about a decision you are facing in your future.

Be grateful to God for how God has bridged the gap from previous decisions and ask God with confidence to bridge the gap for your future decisions.

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

Then move forward with confidence as Jesus did.

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March 26, 2018

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. Psalm 23: 1-2

My favorite Psalm I learned while participating in my Presbyterian church's communicants class when I was in sixth grade. During this twelve-week class my group was required to memorize a number of psalms and bible passages. The class prepared us to make a profession of faith and informed us of the requirements of church membership.

This class was very important to me in building a foundation or bridge to the future of my faith and membership in my church.

Prayer Practice:

Remember and pray about your initial profession to your own faith. Was it more simplistic at the beginning; can you return to this less complicated simple bridge of your faith?

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March 27, 2018

Reclining at table with his disciples, Jesus was deeply troubled...

John 13: 21

It is Holy Week and we are called to be with Jesus in his suffering. Today as Jesus takes a meal with his disciples, his band of brothers and sisters that he loves, he is troubled. He knows he is going to be betrayed and by whom. What is the bridge that I must cross from a focus on my own suffering to Jesus', and ultimately the other's, suffering?

I have been studying empathy as taught by Roman Krznaric. I am learning that empathy is dangerous...that our brains are wired for empathy that counters our self-centeredness and that we can cultivate it. One of those ways is to take the imaginative leap. Ignatius also teaches that the path to know Christ is to walk with him through his time on earth and imagine ourselves in relationship with him.

In that same vein, Gandhi counsels: Whenever you are in doubt or the self is too much with you... recall the face of the poorest and weakest man (woman) whom you may have seen... Consider what you are going to do for him (her) and will it be of any use to him (her)... Then you will find your doubts and your self melt away... That is the crossing over and the risky place of empathy. One has left the ego behind and only "the other" matters.

So I begin by becoming aware of times of betrayal in my life and how I felt. I am no longer just a sympathetic observer of my Lord's suffering. I know something of his. And then I imagine what his thoughts and feelings are as I look deeply at his face and I consider what I can do for him and whether it will be of use. And I hear him ask me... can you wait with me?

Practice of the day:

Through this Passion week, take the imaginative leap and look into the face of Jesus as he suffers. Consider what you will do for him and will it be of use.

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March 28, 2018

He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me. Matthew 26: 14-25

This is Wednesday of Holy Week, a night in which we remember the betrayal of Jesus by a friend. The dreaded dipping! How many times have I betrayed in the same way, either by commission or omission?

Each year when I pull her little book about Lent off the shelf (*Lent: Reflections and Stories on the Daily Readings*) Megan McKenna reminds me that Lent is a time of losing. Her book is a time-honored classic for me. “What if every day we lost something of ourselves so that the Teller, the Word, might flow through us more surely and freely,” she asks. At the end of the forty days, what is left? Can we, can I, will we consent to the story? To the diminishment? To the loss? To the mystery of the ending? To total trust in the Word. Will I?

Megan refreshes my heart and resolve for Lent in the telling of the story. How can I be a stronger bridge builder in the telling? If I am diligent in my daily morning meditation, the guidelines emerge. Every day there will be an invitation by God to roll up my sleeves and get to work building the kingdom. Every day, I am reassured that even my smallest acts of love contain within themselves the splendor and glory of heaven, that the glory of God can be present in the most hidden and unlikely people and situations, and that God is there in the everyday rhythms of my life. Reminds me we are all part of the Divine economy. Reassures me that there is always a deeper level of life.

Prayer Practice:

Rehearse your own storytelling in the presence of the Divine Creator.

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March 29, 2018

Holy Thursday

I call you friends. The Father and I are one in our love for you.

I in you and you in me.

John13

Several years ago, when I was in my first burn-out episode from over work, I opened the bible at random (or was the Spirit guiding me) to John 13: Jesus was washing the feet of his disciples. I imagined myself as Peter, and heard Jesus saying: ‘Unless you let me wash your feet, you can’t do the work I have for you’.

This was the bridge to slowing me down and inviting me to cease being tempted to doing excessive good. I began to establish balance and wellbeing in spirit, soul, and body and relationships began to return.

Prayer Practice:

Listen to Jesus speaks to you as you read. Read John chapters 13 through 17.

If you want to go deeper and expand your awareness of God loving you and restoring you to wellbeing in spirit, soul, body and relationships, notice what word or phrase or image touches you, washes over you. Carry it with you throughout the day. Notice its impact and invitation.

Father Bill Petro. M.A.

Associate Spiritual Director

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March 30, 2018

Good Friday

Jesus is the way the truth and the life, John 14:6

Good Friday. Most of us like Friday as a symbol of the conclusion of the workweek. Good Friday, commemorating Jesus bridge building between broken humans and our Creator is GOOD. Good for us!

This is a somber day for Christians and one respected by all the Jews that I know. In fact, in my adult years, the reverence my Jewish friends have for this day, their awe, the hope they express for me to experience 'the Messiah' evokes a renewed appreciation of faith. They give me an example of bridge building to understand and appreciate another tradition.

He (Jesus) became like a dish that was broken, a worm-not-man, and a scapegoat. We use so many images that the pictures I found today of Jesus the bridge builder have summoned me to a refreshing admiration of this day 'Good Friday'.

Practice:

To be a bridge today to someone who is in need of a smile, a kind word, a nod of appreciation, a card of caring, a prayer of gratitude, Be a Christ Bridge.



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March 31, 2018
Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter
Transformation

O truly blessed night, when things of heaven are wed to those of earth, and divine to the human...we pray...this candle...may persevere undimmed to overcome the darkness of the night. (from the Exultet)

Scripture readings on this night are so full of meaning and contemplation that it was difficult to decide the one with which to pray. In the past, I remember the magnificent beauty as our chapel gradually came into light as the paschal candle was brought in and each small candle was lit from it...bringing darkness into the Light of Christ. This mystical-like event has always reminded me of my final vow day when the Bishop placed the plain gold ring on my finger of consecration to God, the Love of my life. Both to me symbolize the wedding of heaven to earth, the Bridge of God's love to me, the People of God on earth, and all creation; and the sharing of this light with one another. How gifted and graced are we!!!



PRAYER PRACTICE:

During my recent retreat, Sr. Carole Riley encouraged me to use a poem form called Cinquain as a way to express my feelings for a few of the pray experiences I was doing. Below is a sample. You may find it helpful to use this form to write your own.



Exultet

Light-bright
Transformed, changed, revealed
Dancing, singing, praising
Loved, amazed, glowing
Radiant Son



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WVIS FUTURE PROGRAM OFFERINGS

- March 10: Journey to Authenticity – Sr. Carole Riley
- March 23-24: Lenten Directed Retreat
- May 25-July 15 Almost Heaven Retreats
- September 22 Directing the Eight Day Retreat in Daily Life
- November 10 Silence and Self-Disclosure – Sr. Carole Riley
- January 17-20 Intensive Workshop: Methods of Directing the 19th Annotation Retreat in Everyday Life
- 2nd Tuesday: Charleston Chapter of the Thomas Merton Society 7:00 pm
- Wednesdays: 11th Step Contemplative Prayer 7:00 pm
- Thursdays: Contemplative Prayer 6:30 pm
- Thursdays: Women's AA Group 5:30 pm
- 1st Friday Soup and Silence 12 Noon

Call 304-345-0926 for more information on the above programs.

Almost Heaven Retreats
at
The West Virginia Institute for Spirituality

May 25, 2018 through July 15, 2018

This directed retreat is a silent time in which the retreatant is guided through a prayer experience by a personal spiritual director. The retreatant meets daily with the director to reflect upon the prayer experience and to discern in the light of the experience how to proceed. The material for prayer is Scripture. If you have never made a directed retreat, a Friday evening through Sunday morning is a recommended introduction. A weekend retreat is helpful in preparing retreatants to make longer retreats such as a 3 to 8 day retreat, or the thirty day experience.

To register click the link below or call WVIS at 304-345-0926.

<http://wvis.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/2018-WVIS-Almost-Heaven-Retreats.pdf>



**If you enjoyed these reflections
join us for
Easter Season Reflections
beginning
Easter Sunday
April 1, 2018**



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

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