

St James Presider's Guide 9 June 2013

Gathering

Gathering music

The gong is sounded 3 times

Come and pray with us

We gather on sacred ground

Come and pray with us

We are part of earth and heaven

Come and pray with us

We are open, we are found,

we are here to celebrate love, creation & unity.

J Shannon

The Worship/community candle is lit

We pray

Spirit of Truth,

You are the reward to the saints,

The comforter of souls,

Light in the darkness,

Riches to the poor

Treasure to lovers, food for the hungry,

Comfort for the wanderer;

To sum up,

You are the one in whom

all treasures are contained.

Saint Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi

Amen

So let us celebrate the richness and diversity of life in the presence of God

HYMN TIS 474 Here in this Place

The people stand as they are able

Welcome

Welcome everyone and a special welcome to new faces and those returning after a time away. Your presence here enriches us and we're glad you came. There is a visitor's book in the foyer – if you wouldn't mind signing it before you leave.

We still haven't escaped the cold mornings so I hope your tomatoes still have their little jackets on. Still, there is no doubt spring has sprung and we're all looking a little brighter for it.

As usual, we will stop in an hour or so for a cup of tea and some conversation. I hope you will stay and join us.

We're delighted to have Gwenda back leading us in the music today – although it reminds us of who is missing so let's send our healing wishes to Joan and others in our hearts.

Centring

A children's moment

A Poem from TS Elliot

“To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.
In order to arrive at what you do not know
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by the way of dispossession.
In order to arrive at what you are not
You must go through the way in which you are not.
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not.”

— [T.S. Eliot](#) East Coker III, from *Four Quartets*

Musical Interlude

Readings from our Biblical tradition by Marilyn Tandukar

The Road Not Taken – Robert Frost

Galatians 1:11-24 Luke 7:11-17

Contemporary word *It ain't over yet*

“Everything will be all right in the end. If it's not all right, it is not yet the end”..... Patel, Hotel Manager, The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel”

HYMN TIS 417 *Loving spirit*

The people stand as they are able

The peace

Our diversity and commonality is a sign of God's grace.

We are community and express this in hospitality and warmth

Let us welcome one another with...

Peace be with you ...

And also with you

May we greet one another and share the peace

Sharing our joys and sorrows

We are people of all ages who enter this space and bring with us our worries, our smiles, our concerns for the community and world around us – let us share our joys and sorrows as we model God's love.

Response

After each sharing, we will sing just the *first* line of **TIS 779** – *May the feet of God...*

May the feet of God walk with you and his hand hold you tight.

When sharing is complete, we will sing:

May the feet of God walk with you and his hand hold you tight.
May the eye of God rest on you and his ear hear your cry.
May the smile of God be for you and his breath give you life. May the child of God grow in you and his love bring you home.

The care candle is lit

We light this light from our community candle to embrace those in our thoughts and hearts. It shines for those not with us, those in need, those who celebrations we share. It is the hearth of home and the light of love.

Dear Lord

Embrace those in need

Include those forgotten

Light the way for those uncertain

Bless them in their humanness, delight and sorrow.

Amen

J Shannon

Great Spirit, God, Creator of All is

The Lord's prayer from a Native American Elder

Great Spirit, God, Creator of All

I welcome You into my heart, mind, body and soul

There is always room for You here.

Grant me the wisdom to heed my inner voice

And the strength to stay grounded while I sing my sacred song.

Guide me down my chosen path and give me the courage to pursue what is available to me.

I am thankful for the lessons and grateful for my struggles;

I have not forgotten what has brought me to where I am today.

Open my heart to the healing wholeness of nature;

We are all related, and through this I will find serenity.

Great Spirit, God, Creator of All

Cleanse my spirit and wash my soul.

There is always room for You here.

Amen

Offerings

Please stand as receive the offerings and remain standing for the Hymn

We give thanks for the generosity of spirit that allows us to maintain our community and reach out to others. We give thanks for the abundance we receive. May the Holy spirit uplift our hearts and hallow these gifts to share.

HYMN TIS 585 *I heard the voice of Jesus Say*

Scattering

Let us bless the imagination of the earth,
That knew early the patience
To harness the mind of time,
Waited for the seas to warm,
Ready to welcome the emergence
Of things dreaming of voyaging
Among the stillness of the land *From To bless the space between us J O'Donohoe*

Blessing

I am the unopened bud, and I am the blossom,
I am the life force gathering to a crest,
I am the still companion of the silence,
Men **I am the far flung seeker of the quest.**
Women **I am the daughter gather in wisdom,**
Men **I am the son whose questions never cease,**
Women **I am the dawn light searching out glad justice.**
ALL I am the centre where all souls find peace..

Caitlin Matthews

May all things move and be moved in you
And known and be known in you
May all creation dance for joy within you.

Adapted from the Chinook Psalter

May the Lord bless you and keep you and give you grace and understanding to take into your busy week. Amen

This week at St James

Notices

Birthdays

Anniversaries and significant events

Journey - there is a journey prayer

A Journey prayer

Creator, redeemer, protector and courage,
God bless the journey ahead.

Bless the travelling and the safe arrival and the welcome before and aft. Please take this candle as a symbol of our love so that you know while you are away, we keep you in our hearts.

Safe travel.

Amen JShannon

It ain't over yet

Or you could call it

“Everything will be all right in the end. If it’s not all right, it is not yet the end”…… Patel, Hotel Manager, The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel”

It is the Season after the Pentecost, seemingly endless Sundays of "Ordinary Time"....I once asked a very experienced minister whom I admire – how do you do it? How do you be brilliant every Sunday? And he said to me...there’s 28 ordinary Sundays for a reason – you can’t. That’s why it’s called ordinary time.

This Sunday is all about resurrection and Paul's humble surprise that he has been given authority and that people listen. He seems to imply, with his surprising past – anyone could be chosen and wind up travelling this very unexpected road – that made such a difference.

I kept circling the readings trying to zero in and there was no way getting around it, it Paul and Galatians because there has been a lot happening. I thought I might share some of my experiences and anxieties over the last month because like Paul, I am humbled and amazing I am standing here.

Bear with me, there is a structure and I’m going to base it on the 5 take-away messages I noted in my reflections from a weekend with Father Michael Whelan. This was as part of my continuing education.

For those who don’t know if him, Michael Whelan is a Marist priest and the Director of the Aquinas Institute in Sydney. He has written many books – not the least of which is *Without God All Things are Lawful* (1995).(You can see how *that* would get my attention)

These were my notes:

1. The human vocation is to find where God enters the world
2. The pain I do not transform I will transmit
3. Lazarus’ story (and today’s story about the widow’s son) tells us it is never too late
4. Religion without spirituality is dangerous – it becomes ideology

5. The cross without the empty tomb is just another execution

So here goes

Like Paul, I was born into a Jewish family. Like Paul, I heard the call but didn't believe it...so I waited. Like Paul, I thought if I just found out more, I might be sure...but the more I found out, the more I needed to know. As I grew in my knowledge – but necessarily trusting the call – I was asked to preach. I was afraid...very afraid that I would feel like a fraud. What did I know? I was also afraid of what my friends and family would say. I was afraid to face them. You wouldn't think that we live in a world where you have to hide your faith but we do. I hid my faith all my life.

And in my family – we don't talk about religion or politics...but we all have opinions.

My father was a progressive. He didn't want to brand us with the types of orthodoxies he was forced to swallow so rather than shackling us, he led us on an exploration of faith. Oh yes, we shared the Passover Seder with my uncle and aunt but he also read to us about Buddha's birthday and let me attend a Catholic school. It was the days when we said the Lord's prayer every morning in the classroom of every school and when people didn't marry 'out'. That is no intermarriage between Jews and anybody, Catholics and protestants. My sister died at 22 loving a man she believed she could never marry. It was not a time for innocence and his Bohemian views left all of us alienated from any formal religious association. It did not serve us well. It made us *all* outsiders and we assimilated it in different ways. One brother became a Jewish Chaplain in the Airforce, another sister became a Lutheran and later joined Unity Church.

Another brother is a member of AA. He sponsors others who want to get clean and sober. A good man. When I was in the states last month, he told me he called a local synagogue to see if he could join them but because he wasn't bar mitvahed (the equivalent to Baptism), they wouldn't let come – even to worship. Don't bother. He went to another synagogue and the Rabbi came out to talk to him. After a few moments, the rabbi left him and went into the Hall. Another man came out and said, can I help you? My brother said he was

talking to the Rabbi and he thought he was coming back. 'No he's not,' said the other man. My brother goes to a Baptist church. He doesn't believe in all their theology but in his country town, it's the best he can get – and he knows everyone there. We talked for hours asking each other questions like, 'Do you believe in the virgin birth?' He'd never had a free and honest conversation about his beliefs.

When I went to the first Common Dreams conference, I met 100s of people like my brother many of them Ministers.

But I do believe that the human vocation is to find where God enters the world – and my brother does that every day. All feeling like frauds and outsiders.

My eldest sister on the other hand – was very uncomfortable with my coming out. She sputtered out unanswerable questions blaming religion and specifically Christianity for everything bad that had ever happened in the history of human kind. She accused all Christians of ramming their beliefs down people's throats and I think, seriously, she was afraid of me. She is caught somewhere in no man's land, not believing in anything, not belonging anywhere but still angry at her exclusion. But my brother reaches out to others.

2. And it reminded me that the pain I do not transform I will transmit

But I have waited. I have been helped by many. One of the things we do in discernment is think and thank the people who have led us. I have had the gentle support of so many over a long time. People who never gave up. People who came back to get me. People who never pushed but held out their hands. Many are in this room.

3. Lazarus' story (and today's story about the widow's son) tells us it is never too late

And now I am going before the Candidates committee on 13 July who will discern whether I am fit for ordination and if so, what further formation and education might be needed. It is not a foregone conclusion. It is a gruelling day from 9:30-3:30 where they test, observe and question everything they think is

appropriate in any aspect of my life. Is it scary? Yes. Am I orthodox? You know the answer but am I confident of my faith – absolutely. Michael said, Religion without spirituality is dangerous – it becomes ideology – and so I will be honest, stay true to my faith and hope they have the wisdom to see there is room for a square peg – if you are open to having a few square holes.

And finally, As Kevin and Duncan have been working with St James, I have been helping other congregations go through the planning process that helps them confront a world that has changed and so impacted on those who haven't; uncomfortable futures, grieving for pasts. For many people, the future looks bleak. They think the 'church' is dying and they cannot imagine past closing doors. So I ran the whole morning stimulating imagination and near the end of discussion, one woman said to me, isn't sad about Reid? And I said Reid? That growing, thriving Korean congregation?! Look what grew out of Reid – aren't we glad? Isn't that who we are, welcoming? I do not see the death of a church – I see the resurrection of a community. While I could argue with Michael's statement on so many levels – now that I have sat with it for 2 weeks, I am beginning to agree.:

The cross without the empty tomb is just another execution

We are talking about transformation here – and if I do not focus on the living words – if I only on death, if I see it as the end of the story, then there is no future.

At the end of the planning session, I played the working party a song by Leonard Cohen and it goes like this:

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget about your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.
That's how the light gets in.

Paul, impetuous Paul, such a smart educated man, moved with his heart. Who else would leap from a boat and then think....OY! When he used his head he denied Jesus – that was a smart thing to do but when he spoke from his heart

he was forgiven...and so forgave himself...and transformed his pain...and look what he did!

It ain't over yet.

And so I'll finish with the words of David Adams and my friends from Revgalblogpals...

Pause in the Presence. "In the beginning God". This is how the Bible begins, and this is how prayer must begin. Words without the Presence remain just words, but we are not without the Presence. Let the Word become flesh and dwell among us that we may hold His Glory.

In the Beginning GOD

In the beginning of space
of time
of the universe, GOD.

In the beginning of creation
of life
of mankind, GOD.

In the beginning of individuals
of personalities
of me, GOD.

In the beginning of this year
of this week
of this hour, GOD.

In the beginning of each thought
of each word
of each deed, GOD.

Add to this any beginnings you feel are important to you this day. Know that He abides with you and surrounds you.

"As He was in the beginning, He is now and shall be forever, God." Amen.
Adams, David. *Borderlands: The Best of David Adams' Celtic Vision*. Franklin, Wisconsin: Sheed and Ward, 2000. 134-135.