

# Pacific Mountain Regional Council

## A Holy Week Pastoral Reflection from the President

April 9, 2020

Dear Friend,

I wonder when I stopped. I wonder when I stopped saying “goodbye”. About a week ago I noticed that at the end of phone calls or physically distant conversations with neighbours and grocery clerks, I was no longer saying “goodbye”. I wonder when I stopped saying “goodbye” and instead started saying “be safe”.

I carry with me the memory of experiencing the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake in Marin County California. I had moved there to do Doctor of Ministry studies. One day as I sat with a small group of people in my professor’s office, I had a peculiar, uncomfortable feeling and within seconds of the onset of that feeling, the building shook. The initial hit was bad enough but then the rolling started. I swear to this day that I heard the stones in the outer walls grind together.

Everyone dove for cover and then when the quake stopped, we ran outside. Several weeks passed before I realized that I had developed a new habit. After experiencing the earthquake, I stopped entering buildings without hesitation. Each time I entered a building I would pause in the doorway, look in and up and around, I would take a deep breath, and only then would I enter. I don’t remember when I stopped just waltzing into places with ease and instead entered with caution and care. I do remember the earthquake, every second of it. It changed me, well, for a while.

This Holy Week is not like any other we have lived through. One tiny virus has brought almost all of our systems and patterns of life to a halt. We have changed our habits not because we wanted to but because this crisis has shaken us. People are understandably afraid and troubled by the longing for this to end so that life can go back to “normal”. And so, we wait. We stay distant. We look around carefully to avoid getting into anyone else’s space and we say, “be safe.”

The stories of Holy Week stir in us our fear and our longings for things to be different, to be without fear, to be carefree. We hear of Jesus leaving the city at night probably in an effort to be safe. Though Jesus’ followers, well except for at least one, did not know that the meal we remember on Maundy Thursday would be their last meal together, they may well have been alert for their safety.

I wonder. Did they say to each other in their last days together, “be safe”? Probably. Did they look around with care as they moved around in that tense situation? Probably. Did they watch out for each other. Probably. Did they long for a “normal”, carefree existence. Probably.

Our Holy Week journey isn’t over yet and it will get harder, but we will come out on the other side of it with a renewed wonder and appreciation for life’s “simple” things and the remembrance of what is truly important. We will remember the courage, intelligence and generosity of many as well as the recklessness of a few.

And I wonder, will we allow these memories to change our habits for the good, to make us better people and nations? Will we re-make our systems to be more just and equitable? Will we prioritize healthcare for all and use sustainable practises in gleaning food and resources from this precious, wild earth? Will we re-shape our enterprises to make the products and services we need while creating meaningful, just employment? Will we appreciate one another treating one another with mutual respect? Will we rein in those who, for their own gain, would do harm to others or to the planet? Will we remember the courage, generosity and resourcefulness practised in these weeks? Will we allow ourselves to be made new, to be resurrected? We’ll see. We have to get through Good Friday yet.

Hang on friends. We cannot go around Good Friday. We can only go through it. What waits on the other side is the power of resurrection.

The peace of Christ is with us all especially this Holy Week.



The Rev. Jay Olson, President

