

Easter Sunday
March 31, 2024

Let us pray,
May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord of life, new life, renewed life, and meaningful life.
Amen.

*Lilacs bloom and make the air sweet then fade.
Apple blossoms come with the lilacs,
and the bees visit around among the apple trees.*

*Dandelion stems are full of milk,
clover heads are loaded with nectar,
the Frigidaire is full of ice-cold drinks.*

*Everywhere you look is life;
even the little ball of spit on the weed stalk,
if you poke it apart, has a green worm inside it.*

And on the underside of the leaf of the potato vine are the bright orange eggs of the potato bug.

*In the fields,
around the house, in the barn, in the woods,
in the swamp-
everywhere love and songs and nests and eggs.*

Everywhere love and songs and nests and eggs.

These are some passages from E.B. White's children's book, *Charlotte's Web*. This is a beautiful book about animals and nature and farm life, and friendship, a friendship between a spider and a pig. The pig, Wilbur, spends a lot of time in the book crying. He's an emotional pig. He cries about being lonely, he cries about being a spring pig and grappling with his own mortality as spring pigs on the farm normally don't make it until winter. Most of all, Wilbur cries when his best friend Charlotte the spider, uses all her energy to create an egg sack, and then dies. When Charlotte is gone, Wilbur lies on his tummy and sobs inconsolably into his manure pile.

But everything changes for him, when in the spring one by one miniscule spiders emerge from Charlotte's egg sack. Once a heap of sorrow and anguish, Wilbur is astonished, awestruck, to see 514 baby spiders make their way into the light of spring. And when one little baby spider waves at him, Wilbur the crying pig begins to squeal with happiness.

Charlotte's Web is a story of life and death, but it's also a story of **resurrection**. When Wilbur begins to meet the baby spiders, he realizes that his friendship is not really gone. Charlotte lives again in each of her 514 babies, and Wilbur's love for her, and hers for him continues in a new way. Where one spider dies, 514 new ones come. And isn't that a miracle?

In the gospel of John, that our Easter story is taken from this morning, Jesus says "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit." A single grain of wheat, when it dies, turns into hundreds and thousands more going on forever. Wheat and spiders and rabbits and ducklings and moss and mushrooms and trees. God's world is absolutely bursting with the story of life and the life after death - resurrection. In the world God made, resurrection is not just a one-time thing, it's the law.

Here at McClure, we have a covenant, a sacred promise to be in relationship with the people of Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Parish. On March 8th, 2020, this congregation, joined in a great celebration here in our worship center with the people of Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Parish to celebrate 20 years of life and ministry together.

Rev. Debra told me that after that service, she turned out the lights – for a year and a half. The pandemic changed our lives. It changed our churches. Over the past few years at McClure, we have been building up our ministries again, but our attention to the covenant with Holy Spirit was fading.

Committees were getting smaller. Holy Spirit Parish was going through the same thing. Taking care of the incredible needs of a community in transition. At my first board meeting with McClure, the question was raised *Is this covenant important to us?*

But on March 3rd, something happened. Fr. Bernard de Margerie, died. Fr. Bernard was a life-long inter-faith and ecumenical pioneer and helped establish the covenant between us and Holy Spirit Roman Catholic. He was our dear friend. He believed that no matter if we were United or Catholic or Jewish or Muslim, we could talk, we could be friends, *because we are all God's children*. At his funeral, even though it was a day to weep, friends and acquaintances gathered together in his honour. People from different denominations and traditions, from different places and churches. People on the left and on the right sang together, thought again about the dream of unity, felt the love of the one God, and the sacred responsibility of being siblings to one another. They thought about Fr. Bernard and what he had dedicated his life to.

I overheard voices in the office... *Wasn't that a nice service; All those people in their robes; And the hats!; The music!; What an honour; What fun*. Little signs were springing up. And this week Father Joseph, the priest at Holy Spirit, and Karen the office manager walked right into our offices here at McClure with baskets of chocolates, and Easter flowers. Fr. Joseph warmly greeted Rev. Debra as a friend and partner in ministry and plans were set for our ecumenical committees to meet again.

Father Bernard's death, and the damage to our communities caused by Covid, could not kill the hope for unity in this place. Fr. Bernard's dreams did not die with him. All the best things about him are remembered and live on in all of us who were his friends. Of course, Fr. Bernard is laughing with delight about this new thing springing up.

The gospel today is a resurrection story. Jesus has died. His friends and loved ones are experiencing acute grief, they are weeping, trying to take care of the arrangements that are always necessary and urgent when someone dies. Mary goes to the tomb alone and sees that it has been tampered with and runs to get the other disciples. And two of them come and see that Jesus' body is gone and go home. But Mary stays in the garden weeping.

John writes... *As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"*

She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!"

From a place of profound sorrow, from a person she does not recognize, Mary hears the voice of Jesus, her teacher- her Lord.

Could it be, that Jesus' life and ministry do not end with his death? Could it be that he is not dead? But alive somehow?

Over the next few weeks, we will read together the stories of people who will meet the risen Christ – some will *hear* him speak their name, like Mary; some will see him; some will *touch* him; some will *eat* together and understand that he is close. *Some will just hear about him.*

All will be surprised to learn that Jesus the Christ is not so easy to kill. *"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit."* Like a grain of wheat that dies and comes back many hundreds and thousands stronger, Jesus' death did not end, his revolution of love and forgiveness on earth, it actually expanded it, multiplied his teachings of love and life, gave birth to new believers and followers.

Jesus' commandment that we should love one another – that he gave on the night before he died- grows stronger generation by generation as we love and receive love and friendship in communities just like this one, thousands of years later on every continent.

In the universe God made, life always follows death, five hundred, a thousand, a million a billion times over. For the few in our world today waging war, many billions more of us are waging peace. There is hate in this world, but there is so much more love. Or in the words from the very first chapter of John's gospel that we read this morning,

*The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.*

Today, even though there will always be nights of weeping, we rejoice, because every morning, in ways that are small and in ways that are big we find new reasons to sing

Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!

Let us rejoice together in the miracle of God, this Easter morning. Let us rejoice in the power of the resurrection, not one thing that happened long ago, but the law of nature and heaven, a certainty, our hope. Because everywhere love and songs and nests and eggs.

Amen.

Rev. Emily Carr