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Dear Friends

Asked about missing Easter I have told some that when this period of sheltering in place is over and we return to a semblance of restored activity, when it is safe to gather in larger numbers and we resume communal worship that the time will come to celebrate Easter. Easter, after all, is a celebration that exists out-of-time, and is not calendar dependant.

When similarly asked if we will come back to Good Friday at a later date, when restrictions are lifted, I am inclined to say No! This year it seems to me, we don't need to observe Good Friday. Because this year, we are living out Good Friday every day.

Every day we are aware of the pain, the sorrow, the struggle.

Every day, we count how many are ill, how many have died, in Manitoba, in Canada, around the world. Every day, our consciousness is heightened about the fragility, brokenness, vulnerability of life that is made evident on the cross.

A pandemic causes us to live out Good Friday every day. But that doesn't mean it isn't worth reflecting upon. Recently I read a comment by Richard Rohr, the American Franciscan writer that seems to offer two essential reminders we need to hold onto. Writing about this particular crisis, Rohr said, "God doesn't cause everything, but God uses everything (to teach us about love). God doesn't cause all the pain and sorrow and violence of the Good Friday story any more than God causes the path of destruction wrought by a virus. Some things not-of-God are brought about by nature, human nature and the natural world. But even in this moment God is teaching us about love, the evidence of which we see daily in the heroic efforts of many. Health care workers and essential service providers, neighbours, family, and friends.

So listen to the old, old story once more. It is our story. A lesson in the miraculous power of love.

Reading

A reading from John chapters 18 and 19. You may find it here: [John 18 and 19](#)

Good Friday Prayer

At the foot of the cross we sit...we watch...we wait. At the foot of the cross we recognize that there are times when there is nothing we can do, times when death seems to have its way. At the foot of the cross we realize that pain and sorrow are inescapable and inevitable. But here too, we become aware that we are not alone, that you have created us to be a people in companionship with you and one another for the sake of enduring all that the cross reveals. And so we gather our hearts and collect our strength to bear witness to life in the shadow of death.

In a time when the power of the cross seems all too real, we remember that our prayers are welcomed when offered. To you O God we lift our soul and ask that you would remember all those of the human family who are living in fear, living in sorrow, living but challenged to gather a breath.

We pray for those whose courage is heralded, those who receive the ill, aged, and infirmed with care and commitment.

We pray for those whose calling is to serve, to provide, to transport. We pray for all who adjust to new ways of teaching, of learning, of creating community.

We pray for all those who isolate, who distance, who connect.

We pray for a creation groaning and for its rebirth as the garden which was intended.

We pray for ourselves, gathered beneath the shadow of the cross, asking you not abandon nor forsake, but continually remind us that the light a new day is coming, as certain as it has shone before. We shall be renewed.

Amen.

Peace be with you,

Michael