

MOTHER JANET'S COVID-19 PASTORAL UPDATE – WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK 2020



Dear Christ Church Members and Friends,

The crucifix you see hangs in the beautifully stark Monastery Chapel of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist (SSJE), a monastic order of the Episcopal Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In the early years of my Christian journey (I was baptized when I was 33), I went often from my home in New York City to the monastery for spiritual direction with Brother Tom Shaw, my earliest mentor, and for silent individual and group retreats.

I spent much time in that chapel attending the brothers' chanting of the daily offices and celebrations of the Eucharist. And I spent much quiet time alone in that holy space, generously made available to guests at all hours. That image of the crucified Christ carried me through all kinds of doubts and struggles as I began to explore what it meant to be a Christian, then to discern a call to the priesthood, and in the first challenging years of priestly ministry.

In recent days I've found myself recalled to that space where I was nourished by the brothers' hospitality and God's ever-present grace. Those times were deeply formative of the person and priest I am today.

As we begin the observance of the Triduum (the Three Days) tomorrow evening, this image of the crucified Christ speaks to me of God's deep distress at the struggle and sorrow and suffering of the present time. And it speaks to me of God's participation in that struggle and sorrow and suffering. For the God we have seen and known in Jesus is a God who is involved with God's creation, involved with us.

Gazing at the crucified Christ, we must acknowledge that the world is not as God intends it to be and that we are not as God intends us to be. But we also proclaim that through Christ's sacrificial self-offering the world is becoming what God will have it be and we are becoming who God will have us be. In the dying and rising of Christ there is a new creation.

The crucifix shows us God with us in struggle and sorrow and suffering. God in Christ abandoned, alone, powerless. Yet God, in and moving through the body of Christ, leading us in the way of self-offering, giving us power to bear with others their struggle and sorrow and suffering, calling us to stand against all that causes struggle and sorrow and suffering, and to alleviate pain and need wherever we can.

These three days and our worship will draw us close to the Christ who is always close to us. They are not the days we expected – our situation is not the situation we expected. But we love and are loved by the God who brings life out of death, and is always making things new. And we love and are loved by one another.

We each have our separate journeys through these days, even more so in this time when we cannot gather for worship. But still, our journey is communal. You will find on our website household worship for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, and for Easter Day – special services planned for us by Father Torvend to provide for us common prayer. In addition, we can attend the Cathedral's live-streamed liturgy of The Three Days. Times and links are on our website: christchurchtacoma.org

May our journey through these three days strengthen and sustain us, and remake us as God's own selfless selves who, with Christ, offer our selves for the life of God's struggling, sorrowing, suffering world. I am sad, I am hopeful, I am uncertain as to what the future will bring, I am confident in God's presence in that future. In these days, laughter is needed, smiles are welcome, tears are totally appropriate, and love is all.

With love for you in Christ,
Janet+

A FEW THINGS TO KNOW:

- As of today, our community seems to be moving through this time well, in good health, communicating with and caring for one another.
- I hope to do another round of Zoom Small Gatherings in Easter week and will be in touch with a schedule early next week.
- Please read the Weekly each Friday for more things you need to know. This week's will have a report on the activities of parish leadership to manage the challenges of the coronavirus.