



St. Paul's Journal

Lent & Holy Week 2022



Dear friends:

Not so long ago, in an earlier issue of *St. Paul's Journal*, I recalled a truth: "The chief day of the year for Christians has always been the Day of the Resurrection, known popularly in English as 'Easter' (a name, in fact, with pagan roots). It is not hard to see why early Christians seem to have felt that every Sunday should be a day of gathering that echoed the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the defeat of death."

Yet every year we find it essential to recollect the story of how our ancestors in the Faith 'got to Easter'—by getting to Easter ourselves through re-enacting the Gospel story in our St. Paul's Lent and Holy Week gatherings.

In this issue of *St. Paul's Journal* we'll get to Easter through the Lenten gatherings of our parish Women's Bible Study group, as recalled by the group co-ordinator; through the Good Friday 'Liturgy of the Cross' reflections of our Divinity Intern and our Youth Co-ordinator, offered right here on-site; and through the thoughts of our Chancel Guild Coordinator as she reflects on the experience of worship at St. Paul's,

in the final part of Holy Week: "Three Great Days" leading up to Easter, also known as the *sacred triduum*; and through the poetry of one of our parishioners.

But Anglicans, like all Christians, don't actually gather for liturgies (services of worship) in order to be esoteric, or elite, or secretive in the use of strange rites. This is very true of all of Holy Week, from Palm Sunday right up to the eve of Easter Day, the day 'we get to'. We gather because, as our ancestors discovered, taking part in public liturgy is how we practice together for the rest of life as a group of Christ's disciples. Lent, and especially Holy Week, prepare us for both the rigours and delights of the life we pass through following Jesus; for forgiving and being forgiven; for failures and disappointments as well as for successes and triumphs.

Getting to Easter and the hope of the resurrection by the way of Lent and Holy Week...how could life be more authentic, more healthy?

Paul Friesen+

The Beauty of Lent

Vincent Van Gogh and the Beauty of Lent! What a provocative angle for a Lenten Bible Study, but it proved to be one of the most interesting and rewarding studies the Women's Bible Study Group at St Paul's has undertaken. Through this Lenten devotional, published by SALT, we examined several Bible passages and juxtaposed them with several significant paintings as well as detailed personal letters of Van Gogh.



We began by learning a great deal about Van Gogh's life that is not so familiar. We learned that he was quite a complex person, who despite his well-known mental health issues, had a deeply spiritual life. He was raised in a minister's home; his father was a Dutch Reformed pastor. Early in his life, Van Gogh set out also to become a minister, and a missionary, but soon it became apparent he was not cut out for either vocation. But as he wrestled with his beliefs and convictions, he found in painting a way to preach not with words but with colour and light. Though he

only painted for just ten years, from age 27 to 37. During that brief period, he created almost 900 paintings and delved in a unique way into the beauty and complexity of nature and humanity.

Interestingly, the word "Lent" refers to the lengthening of the light as spring approaches. It is around this aspect of Lent where we could see the relevance of Van Gogh for a Lenten study, for in his painting he devoted himself to the effects of light. He painted about the light of creation, the light of painting, the light of God's grace – and the light in humanity, mind, body, and soul. For Van Gogh, painting was "a consolatory art for distressed hearts".

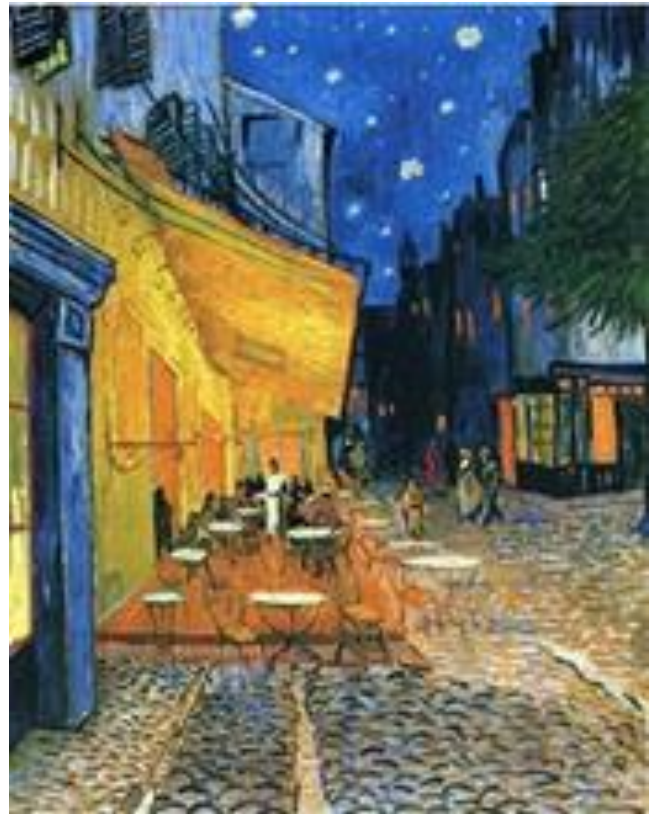
Our weekly sessions covered Ash Wednesday, the five Sundays of Lent, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. Each week we gathered via Zoom and focused on 1 or 2 paintings and excerpts from his many letters to his brother, Theo, an art dealer by profession who supported Van Gogh both financially and emotionally.



Through viewing and examining specific paintings, we found many creative ideas emerged and our discussions were lively and inspiring as we uncovered the many layers of his paintings in connection to Lenten ideas. We could see that Van Gogh steeped himself in the study of nature and human expression. For example: his paintings of the Sower in the field, his unique depictions of starry nights, magnificent sunflowers, and the poignant painting of the old man, entitled "At Eternity's Gate" all held many messages. He remarked in a letter comparing the similarities between his intent in his painting with Jesus' intent in his parables, both of which illuminate great truths through imagery from nature and agriculture.



After each session we had "homework" which consisted of some very interesting meditations and instructions to explore Van Gogh's devotion to colour and incorporate some of the themes of his paintings and of Lent. For example, we were to light a candle each week and say a prayer on a concept such as: humility, gratitude, creation, or beauty.



Our study culminated on May 12 with a group trip to the Halifax Exhibition Centre to see *Beyond van Gogh: The Immersive Experience*. There we basked in the gigantic projected illumination of Van Gogh's many famous paintings and as we were immersed marveled at his talent and the truths which these paintings had conveyed to us.



Van Gogh and the Beauty of Lent has been a great experience, and we wanted to highlight this so that others at St Paul's can know about our Bible Study group. And we would love to include more of you.

We meet every Thursday, at Isobel MacPherson's residence and/or by Zoom when necessary. We are a lively mix of women and include a wide range of ages and personalities. I think it is our diversity and curiosity, as well as a genuine interest in understanding more about what God wants to reveal to us through the Scriptures, that makes our sessions a weekly time of encouragement and learning. We extend to you an invitation to join us in a future study.

*Submitted by
Mary Dempster
St. Paul's Women's Bible Study Co-ordinator*



First Word, Luke 23: 26-34

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed." Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us"; and to the hills, "Cover us." For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?'

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [[Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.']] And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

Forgive us? We don't know what we're doing? We know exactly what we're doing... don't we? We're killing a man because he has not followed our laws. He's attacked our institutions. They call him the Son of God, and maybe this wouldn't be a problem if he were alone. I mean one person claiming to be the Son of God is barely noticed, but thousands call him the Son of God and he's performed miracles --- at least I've heard he's performed miracles. Either way he's a problem. He can't be saying the things he's saying and doing what he's doing without becoming a problem. Things would have to change if we leave him alone. What would Rome do to us? How can we have peace with Caesar if one greater than he had come? What is Canada to him? What is the West in the shadow of this man? No, Christ changed things for us and for our children. He'd change things for us again if we aren't careful.

Don't get me wrong, I don't so much mind that he's been supporting the poor and marginalized. They have it hard enough. What bothers me is that he can't leave the rest of us alone. It is one thing to support the poor, but what about all of my hard work? I've spent a life building property and prosperity. I work hard to give back to Canada and I expect my due. I expect to be treated with respect. We're building a better world. Yet, what is that to this man? I was the first at the vineyard, but he's going to flip the tables anyway. He'd bring my work, my worth, to nought. I deserve more than that. Indeed Jesus, the wood is green! It is green because of our order, our laws and our hard work. Who are you to say that we don't know what we are doing? We know exactly what we are doing and we intend to make the world a better place. What's more is that we know how to make the world a better place. Through hard work we have learned to be independent! We're not beholden to your land any more, or victims to your

creation. We're not going to lean on you as some sort of crutch. We're not going to give up our freedom to you! We know what we are doing, we've brought this cross to you in order to protect ourselves. We're going to keep the forest green even if that means using the power of death.

You know what, I'm not even sure if it matters that you are the Son of God. If you aren't, I can't erase your words, and I can't escape "the First will be Last and the Last First." What do you mean?

If you are the Son of God, well, then you are the biggest threat to our wood. I am a camel among a caravan of camels, and I don't want to do what you've asked me to do. I don't want to go through the eye of a needle. And you're the one who needs to forgive us? You forgive us for rejecting you? You think that we don't know what we are doing? Do we?

Why are you all mourning the death of this man? Did you not hear that the wood is green? There is nothing to worry about, indeed if the wood were dry, perhaps he would have a point. If the wood were dry maybe our neighbours would take from us for the sake of their children. If the wood were dry and there was little to be shared maybe everyone would be dangerous. But, the wood isn't dry and even those with small children must not worry. We don't take from small children around the world to benefit our own children... do we? We don't take from children unborn... do we?

No matter. If you're forgiving us, it is because of this horrid world where we have to worry about this. We live in a place where it is better not to know how the forest is green. And I don't see you doing anything about it! You're just going accept the Cross and we're going to kill you. What are you going to do about it? Die like all those whom don't have power. You're not the real power. This is the real power. It's the power Caesar, and, indeed the power of Kings of all sorts. Death is the only real power and what am I to do in the face of death.

Here you are about to die on the Cross. It is not like you can defeat death. Death will always be held over us. What would we do if the wood were dry? You're right, we'd be terrible to each other. We'd be terrible to each other and we'd steal from small children and we wouldn't trust our neighbours. Even in a green wood we are terrible to God. We are terrible because there is only one power, the power of death.

Wait...

Is that why we don't know what we're doing? We don't see that this day we pick death over life.

It is Spring and the wood is green, but I'd rather have winter so that my sins could be cloaked in snow. I have cut Christ rather than brave death.

*Blane Finnie
Divinity Intern*

The Second Word, Luke 23: 35-43

And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!' The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.'

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

We all carried different crosses here today. Some are small enough to hide in our pocket, or indeed to hide from our own eyes. Some are large enough to cripple us as we drag them along the ground. They might be coarse, they might be polished, they might be cherished or they might be suffered. They are, for each of us, our own responsibility. We call these crosses our baggage, because we can't leave them behind. They come with us wherever we go and they are here every Sunday. Sometimes, when we're brave, we offer them to God. Today we all came here with baggage, and today we will all leave here with baggage. God was killed, and perhaps God would be killed again if the opportunity arose.

This brings with it guilt, and to some extent, grief, but guilt and grief aren't really the point are they? Confession, guilt and grief don't resolve Good Friday. Only God can resolve Good Friday. The harsher story isn't our guilt as much as the fact that God would resolve Good Friday despite our sin. He offers himself, becomes the victim of sin and still

overcomes it for us. Are we worthy of this offering?

Worthy is a dangerous word. It is easier to wallow in our unworthiness than to take Christ's offering in full seriousness. We might be unworthy before our own eyes, but Christ has died for the conviction that we are worthy. We are worthy according to our Lord. We are worthy despite being part of a world that would kill God. We are worthy, despite being part of the problem that Christ is resolving. At our most sober, perhaps we can see that Christ is a kind of assault on this part of us. An assault on how we treat our baggage. Christ shines down like a blinding light on us. This baggage that we'd prefer not to look at, and would prefer our neighbours not to see, shines on Good Friday. Where do you see yourself this day? Killing Christ, hiding from those who do, mourning, looking on from the distance but doing nothing?

Every response to Good Friday is inadequate. Every response is the chance to live in our baggage. Every response is a chance to wait

for the cock to crow. Yet, Christ has decided we aren't our baggage. Our cross isn't us, we don't have to be the stories we tell about ourselves, or the stories told about us. We can meekly be like Christ before his Cross, not taking it as an enemy but as a glory. Our weaknesses, our Crosses are indeed where we can find our health. They are at the core of our vitality because the demons we understand are the demons we've lived with. The demons we've forgiven are the demons we are least likely to be a slave too. They are the demons we can most use in fighting.

The demon casting its shadow over us today is death. Everyone jeered Christ to save himself and had he saved himself it would have been a simple story. 'We tried to kill the Son of God and the strong hand of the Lord saved him.' Yet, it did not, and what would God have told us in such a story? That power is right and that we should fear the Lord because we fear death? As if to say that

death is more important than God, than love, than justice? Such a story would have left us worse slaves to death. Instead, Christ allowed us to kill him.

One of the criminals jeered Christ and asked him to save them both, but the other asked about justice. Did not the criminals have due reason to be there? Wasn't their lot appropriate, at least in their eyes, to the crimes they had committed? But the punishment was not worthy of Christ, nor did Christ see the punishment as worthy of the repentant

criminal. "Today you will be with me in Paradise." The criminal whom sees that justice is more important than death is the one whom will go to Paradise.

Whatever cross we carry today, we would do well to follow the advice of this criminal. Death does not have the final word.

*Blane Finnie
Divinity Intern*

The Third Word, John 19:25b-27

And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

"Woman behold your son."

Consider these words from the Song of Solomon (8:6-7):

Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm,
for love is strong as death,
jealousy is fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
the very flame of the Lord.
Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.
If a man offered for love
all the wealth of his house,
he would be utterly despised.
"Love is as strong as death."

And consider these words from earlier in St John's Gospel, which we read yesterday at Maundy Thursday: "When Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end."

"He loved them to the end." "Love is as strong as death."

When we meditate on Jesus' words from the cross, it is easy to imagine them as cries uttered into the void. We imagine the dark cross silhouetted against a grey sky, with Jesus lifted impossibly high, isolated in his suffering. But many of his final words initiate or

provoke an interaction with a bystander on the ground. Jesus forgives those who crucify him. Even when he cries out to God, giving voice to his sense of abandonment, he provokes jeers from those standing by.

Jesus' third word is also spoken to bystanders, but not those who crucify, and not those who jeer. It is a word first spoken to his mother, and then to his friend, "the disciple whom he loved." He speaks intimately. He speaks about family. He speaks to those who stand "near" him, as they always have done.

He speaks a word of provision. Although suffering, agony, violence, and scorn all fade into the background as intimacy momentarily comes into the foreground, death is still present. As the hands of death close around

him, Jesus provides a son for his mother to sustain her, and a mother for his friend to guide and comfort him.

Jesus' love is as strong as death, and he loves to the very end. Jesus leaves no unfinished business, no one abandoned by his early departure. Suffering can and will be endured until all the words which need to be spoken are spoken. Staring death in the face, Jesus doesn't balk or resign his intention to love his

own in the world. He does not make his suffering an excuse for lack of love. He does

not blame his persecutors for leaving his mother bereft, but does what he can, and speaks a final word of love to those most dear to him.

In our time, may we have the grace of a Christian death. And at this time, may we know the love of Christ which not only endures the approach of death, but embraces it for our sake, loving us to the end.

*Benjamin von Bredow
Youth Coordinator*

The Fourth Word, Matthew 27: 45 – 49

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'This man is calling for Elijah.' At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.'

The Roman legion marched on Posca, sour wine. Generally, it was mixed with water, and when done in the right ratio it is a good refreshment. It has electrolytes, and a tang to it that wakens the pallet. It's a drink to muster the spirit and to continue the battle. Not that this is what Christ was asking for. To continue the battle, to continue the torture of hanging on the cross. He was alone when they brought the sour wine to him. As alone as a human can get, hanging in doubt and facing the rawness of death. His disciples were not near him and his Father didn't answer his prayers. Here is Christ the human, Christ the human having to face the sheer violence of death. From his humanity, Christ called out. Out of the depths of his humanity he cried for help and humanity answered. We rushed to bring him sour wine and to help raise his spirits. Indeed, most of us were strangers more than followers, but we cared enough to aid this man suffering on the cross. Cared enough to make sure that we would let him stubbornly face death however he decided to. Our

refreshment is not the answer Christ wanted, but it was the answer he was offered. When his Father had forsaken him, humanity had not yet left him.

I doubt that at this point Christ wanted the battle to go on. At this hour of the crucifixion his pain likely eclipsed any spirit that remained. What would you muster at this point? Why would one want to muster themselves in the face of this kind of death? Yet, to those who heard him, it seemed like he was mustering something. By some trick of hearing or heart, people nearby thought he was calling for Elijah rather than God. He could have been calling for Elijah. It would make sense to call for Elijah. Perhaps this man was calling for strength so that he could make it until the prophet was sent to his aid. Surely the Lord wouldn't leave his only Son on the cross. Christ, the Son of God, could survive this ordeal couldn't he?

This could be merely an ordeal that he must go through. The violence of Rome can not be the final word. Christ being saved from death certainly is the preferable outcome to accepting the power of Roman law and the ultimate power of death. The power of death, even over the spirit. How much better would it be to think that Christ would hold out to be saved and that his spirit would out-last his body.

Somewhere in Christ he may have been living into this idea. After all, the crucifixion was a long affair, but Christ endured. He endured to the point of eventually crying out, "Why have you forsaken me?" Before this, Elijah was probably on his mind. Why Christ? Why did you hold on for so long? Did you indeed hope that Elijah would come, that your Father would rescue you from this cup? This is not ours to know. What we do know is that Christ seemed to be holding on to something up until this point. He wouldn't let go of life, or hope or humanity. I don't know what he wouldn't let go of, but he held on.

Christ wasn't calling for Elijah. He wasn't mustering strength to face death with a valiant fight. He didn't want sour wine to give him the spirit he needed to fight off mortality. He had come to the end of his fight and these were among his last words. They were words of doubt. He had accepted the cup his Father had given him to drink, and found that he couldn't find his Father when he drank from the cup. Christ no longer wanted the fight to go on, but us, the bystanders whom brought the wine, we weren't ready to let go.

*Blane Finnie
Divinity Intern*

Fifth Word, John 19:28-29

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.

"I Thirst". Psalm 69 says, "They gave me gall to eat, and when I was thirsty, they gave me vinegar to drink."

Jesus fulfills prophecy, as he intentionally does many times during his crucifixion, by asking for a drink, knowing that he will receive vinegar. We should not think that completing some action predicted in the past is the deepest level of what it means to "fulfill prophecy." By drinking vinegar on the cross, Jesus applies to himself a rich symbolic system in the Old Testament about the sour cup of God's wrath.

Psalm 75 says, "God is the judge; he putteth down one and setteth up another. In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full mixed, and he poureth out of the same. As for the dregs thereof, all the ungodly of the earth shall drink them and suck them out." On behalf of the ungodly, Jesus drinks the sour dregs of God's cup of righteous judgement.

Psalm 60 says, "Thou hast showed thy people heavy things: thou hast given us a drink of deadly wine." Jesus drinks the poisonous cup which the people, in their unfaithfulness to the covenant, have mixed for themselves.

The Prophet Isaiah refers twice to the "cup of God's wrath" and "the cup of staggering." Jeremiah calls it the "cup of the wine of

wrath" which the nations will drink who refuse to hear the prophetic voice. Jesus staggers as he drinks the cup of wrath prepared for all nations.

Jesus himself, when James and John ask for honourable positions in his kingdom, asks whether they are able to "drink the cup" that he is to drink (Matt 20:22). They don't know what he means, and say that they can. Jesus says that they will indeed drink the cup. In time, James would become the first apostolic martyr, and John would be sent into exile for his faith. Jesus' cup, which he shares with all the members of his body, is the cup of rejection and suffering.

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays, "Father, if this cup cannot pass from me unless I drink it, Your will be done" (Matt 26:42).

On the cross, Jesus drinks the cup. He not only drinks it, but he asks to drink it: "I thirst."

How do we understand the cross? There's a cup of vinegar on the table, and someone must drink it. So, Jesus says, "I will."

*Benjamin von Bredow
Youth Coordinator*

Sixth Word, John 19:28-30b

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

"It is Finished."

The opening words of Psalm 22 are well known: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Its final words are less well-known:

All the ends of the world shall remember,
and be turned unto the Lord;
and all the kindreds of the nations
shall worship before him.

For the kingdom is the Lord's,
and he is the Governor among the nations.

Surely to him
shall all the proud of the earth bow down;
and before him
shall kneel all that go down into the dust,
and he that cannot keep his soul alive.

Their posterity shall serve him;
it shall be told of the Lord
unto a generation yet to come.

And men shall declare his righteousness
unto a people that shall be born,
that he hath done it.

Christ says, "It is finished." One cannot but hear a note of triumph in those words. Something has been faced, some task has been undertaken and completed, and all is done. It is the same note of triumph on which Psalm 22 ends: "Men shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done it."

The crucifixion is a story about a death. But death is not the protagonist; death is not in

the driver's seat. Although the Lord's servant is for a moment forsaken by the Father, at the end, "All the ends of the world shall remember and be turned unto the Lord." Once death has done its worst, it can no longer make us forget that God is the Lord even of "all that go down into the dust, and he that cannot keep his soul alive."

What has Jesus finished? He has finished dying; he is about to give up his spirit. He has finished bearing the sins of the people. He has finished the work for which he came into the world. He has drunk the cup of wrath to the very bottom, and now he casts it away.

Although Jesus' death, descent from the cross, and burial remain occasions of lamentation for us who are still subject to death in this world, Jesus' sixth word from the cross hints at something that the disciples could not understand until after Easter Day: Jesus spends his time in the grave not as a victim, not as someone still engaged in a struggle with death, but as a conqueror, "preaching to the spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:19) about his defeat of sin and death, the old enemies of humanity. The Resurrection will show how completely Jesus has trampled down death by death.

"It is finished." Indeed!

Benjamin von Bredow
Youth Coordinator

The Seventh Word, Luke 23: 46–49

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, 'Certainly this man was innocent.' And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

And then Christ let himself go. Whatever stubborn reasons he had for holding on to this life, they were no longer worthy of his suffering. There was no longer a possible hope to be saved from death. There was no longer any hint of a call to Elijah. There was no longer doubt and loneliness. There was only the cup he had been given to drink and the final surrender, not to the cup, but to his Father. 'Into your hands, I commend my spirit.'

It puts me in mind of my baptism. If we live for Christ, then we have died with him on the cross. We will be on this Cross with him today, all day, whether we feel it or not. It is perhaps like a dull echo for us. On some level we are like his acquaintances of old, standing or sitting at some distance from these events. We've seen it all happen. We are witnesses. We've come to this Good Friday service to witness, not at the distance of a field, but at some considerable distance of time. Yet, we are still witnesses all the same, and if witnesses then we can find ourselves in this day, no matter how dull the echo sounds. We find the cross in our lives.

I very much hope that none of us will have to suffer torture before death and we don't need to face the full weight of our own crosses all at once. To die with *Christ on the Cross* doesn't mean that we have to face the full violence and apathy of our own death right now. Or that we have to be tortured in this life. We still suffer though, like any other person; and we

will still hold stubbornly onto these, our sufferings. They can be dull aches, sharp pains or long exhausting ordeals. They can be the product of our own public sins, or private sins or the sins of those closest to us. And we hold them tightly to our chest because they are ours to bare, and so, not things we want to make others carry. We don't want a Simon to carry our cross. We don't want to make our neighbours into pack mules of our pains. At least not our deep and private pains. I have been known to share my superficial aches, and be teased about those aches. These aches aren't what I find in the cross though, they aren't the burdens that Christ died for.

It is easy to share blessings. It is more difficult to share burdens. It is very difficult to share sins. No one wants to be a burden to others, and many burdens can be carried as secrets to

the grave. There is a sort kindness in this, but it is not honest. Making secrets of our sins does not respect love and certainly doesn't respect Christ's love. Our sins and the related sufferings are also Christ's. And so, they belong to the body of Christ. They belong to us, not to ourselves.

How easy is it for us to make the ownership of sin to be more important than the sin? That private possessing of vice can become more important than treatment and cure. Christ came here for my sins. Indeed, Christ came here for everyone's sins. He came to us because of sin, sin universal, all sin. Let us be careful not to take pride in our own cross. Let

us be careful to notice that Christ's cup is figuratively our cup. Christ died for our sins that we may die to sin. The sins we carry, the sins we receive and the little deaths that our sins make us face.

Dying with Christ means facing the cup He drank. Not simply that he died a difficult death, and that we are complicit in his struggle. Not simply that we too will someday die, and die in our sins, but rather that His death changes the power of sin. If we are going to die on the cross with Christ, if we are going to drink of the cup Christ drinks from, then we are going to have to let go as Christ does. We can't fix our cross. We can't destroy our cross or our neighbours' crosses. We can't

endure our cross such as to be ready for Elijah's arrival. We, like Christ, will die.

Death will swallow up whatever material vanities we have surrounded ourselves with and our cross will remain with us until the end. If we don't surrender with Christ, then we will be swallowed up in the shadow of our sins.

Sin is not for us to solve. It isn't even really for Christ to solve on his death. He surely fought on the cross. He held out until the moment of doubt, and indeed past the moment of doubt until he had only one thing left. 'Into your hands I commend my spirit.'

We are asked to offer the same, to both see and feel that whatever our sins are, they are not worthy of us. Enduring the cross does not end in a just punishment for crimes committed, but a demonstration that indeed there is no power in sin or death. That we don't deserve our sins, but we deserve a cure. And that we aren't to bare all of this, but to offer our whole self to Christ, even those difficult and hard parts we would prefer to hide.

*Blane Finnie
Divinity Intern*

Beyond the Chancel Steps

The Great Three Days and the Three-legged Stool Analogy



What a blessing it was to be able to participate in Holy Week and Easter at St. Paul's this year in person, even if masked and seated in every other pew. COVID was still with us!

Services this year included: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, and Easter Morning Eucharist. As plans were being established for duties to be covered by the Chancel Guild, I reflected upon why we do what we do to prepare for services on these special occasions. No doubt the catalyst for my reflection was having lived in a COVID environment since 2020 and frequently having to change practices. But then again, practices for Holy Week and Easter at St. Paul's have not been consistent over the years since I started worshiping at St. Paul's 40 years ago.

This led me to consider the sources of authority listed by the classic Anglican theologian Richard Hooker: scripture, tradition, and reason. Later, writers described these as a 'three-legged stool', albeit not a stool with legs of equal length. Scripture being the foundation of our faith. Tradition how we interpret scripture as it is laid out in Canon Law and in line with what is believed everywhere, always and by all. Drawing then

upon reason to guide how we apply scripture and tradition to contemporary experience.

Reflecting on our services at St. Paul's, the *three-legged stool* analogy provided a better understanding as to what we do and why.

Scripture is the foundation for what happens on Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter. Christians, ancient and modern, have evolved the tradition of: enacting Christ's Last Supper; reading the New Commandment, "*I give you a new commandment; that you love one another...*"; foot washing; and having a simple communal meal. Maundy Thursday marks the beginning of the 'Great Three Days'. This holiest of times may be emphasized in different ways. At St. Paul's this year, we had foot washing limited to 12 volunteers followed by a communal supper. The Gospel speaks of love and service and both the foot washing and catered meal were an opportunity for love and service to be expressed. The format for both were dictated by somewhat restrictive COVID protocols.

At the close of the Maundy Thursday service lights were turned off and the Chapel, Chancel and Sanctuary were stripped for Good Friday. In the quietness, paraments were removed and the main altar was stripped except for the Cross which was left and draped in black fabric. Draping the cross was possible this year. The shroud was only found three years ago, having been 'stored away' (lost) for several years.

In the Anglican Communion, Good Friday service as a liturgical observance based upon scripture has gone through various changes over the centuries. A 'Three-Hour Service' is common in North American churches with the *Seven Last Words from the Cross* being presented. At St. Paul's, we followed this tradition as well and observed the ritual of a draped cross and bare altar. In addition, the Rector carried a large wooden cross in the processional and positioned it against the altar. Then a life-sized drawing of Christ on the Cross, created several years ago by Ian MacKinnon, was placed on the wooden cross. A seasoned practice now at St. Paul's that has become very meaningful as well as emotional.

Good Friday, unlike Christmas and Easter, has not acquired numerous secular traditions and is not overlaid with secular customs and practices. Except maybe *hot cross buns* which do appear annually at St. Paul's to break our fast after our midday service. Made possible again this year with relaxed COVID requirements.

Saturday morning Chancel Guild members assembled to prepare for the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday. Flowers were placed on pedestals and the two altars. Unlike past years, silk lilies were arranged at the foot of the Paschal Candle to accommodate persons with scent sensitivities rather than not having any lilies.

This was agreed upon after considering the question, "What do lilies symbolize?" We know they are mentioned in scripture and have become meaningful to Christians. Relevant passages in Scripture such as:

"I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily..." (*Hosea 14.5*)

"Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these".
(*Luke 12:27*)

When faced with making the decision of whether to have silk lilies or no blooms at all, the meaning and symbolism imparted by lilies as well as the comfort afforded to persons with scent sensitivities dictated using silk lilies.

On Saturday morning, furnishings were also replaced in the Chancel, Sanctuary and Chapel. White paraments, linens, vessels, and elements were put out and the black veil on the Cross was removed. The stand, donated recently, was placed on the Chancel level to receive the Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil Saturday night.

The Easter Vigil commemorates the final day of Christ's death. Based on scripture, as reported in *Matthew 27:62-66*, it is associated with Christ's triumphant descent into hell; the day Jesus "rested" from bestowing redemption to mankind, and reposed in the tomb.

The Tradition at St. Paul's is to observe a *Fire Ceremony*. With all lights turned off to symbolize being in darkness, the congregation gathered, socially distanced and masked, at the entry doorway. This tradition inspires one to consider the world of darkness that would exist without the hope and redemption of Christ's resurrection. After the Paschal Candle was lit from the newly ignited fire in the 'fire pit', clergy and choir processed to the Chancel where the candle was placed in its stand; the congregation then dispersed to alternate pews. The readings and music proceeded with individuals lighting tapers off the Paschal Candle before the Gospel was read to symbolize light coming into the world through Christ's resurrection. With the tradition of focusing on light, Coptic Christians, symbolically, refer to Holy Saturday as the "the Saturday of Light".

Later in the Easter Vigil we repeated with renewed commitment, our baptismal vows and the officiant sprinkled all with Holy Water. A very moving experience and a reminder of the link between baptism and the death and resurrection of Christ. All in all, an experience of new life, and a passing from darkness to light which offered hope. The tradition of having an Easter Vigil marks the emptiness of Holy Saturday, and leads us into

the celebration of Easter. A meaningful way to prepare to celebrate Christ's resurrection.

Easter ceremonies continued Sunday morning with the service of Holy Communion, the tradition described in scripture introduced by Christ himself, and the final stage of our Easter celebrations. This year, however, COVID requirements found us replacing the "common cup" with individual glasses and receiving communion socially distanced at the Chancel steps.

White hangings, the Paschal Candle burning, several arrangements of memorial flowers, a few silk lilies, joyous uplifting music, (even without Bedford Brass being able to participate), and a thought-provoking Homily, all contributed to celebrating Easter with all the joy and splendor **scripture, tradition and reason** encourage. Masked and socially distanced, we were once again able to join together to say, "**Christ is risen, Alleluia**".

*Written by Margaret Bateman Ellison
Chancel Guild Co-Coordinator*



Father's Help

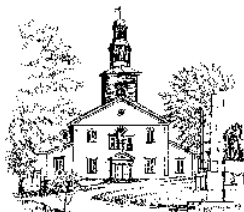
I love the man, some of you don't understand.
The deed has already been done.
It will be written by the children of Eden,
By the Holy Ghost who watches over the children.
The Father above ... to right from wrong.
History will repeat itself for another try.
All knowledge will surpass.
It has all been done before.
Everybody has their dues to pay.
I hope I can get enough of your love,
You are an Angel to me.

*Paul Fougere
Parishioner*

St. Paul's Church, Halifax **Sunday Liturgies & Readings**
Trinity Sunday—Thanksgiving Sunday (2022)

18 May 2022

12 June	Trinity Sunday <i>White</i>	10 am	Eucharist BCP SS Celebration & Pot Luck Lunch
	Proverbs 8.1-5; 22-31 Psalm 8		Romans 5.1-5 John 16.12-15
19 June	Pentecost 2 <i>Green</i>	10 am	Eucharist BAS
	I Kings 19.1-18 Psalm 42-43		Galatians 3.1-5; 21-29 Luke 8.26-39
26 June	Pentecost 3 <i>Green</i>	10 am	Eucharist BCP
	II Kings 2.1-14 Psalm 77		Galatians 5.1-25 Luke 9.51-62
3 July	Pentecost 4 <i>Green</i>	10 am	Eucharist BAS [Canada Day Long Weekend]
	II Kings 5.1-14 Psalm 30		Galatians 6.1-18 Luke 10.1-11; 16-20
10 July	Pentecost 5 <i>Green</i>	10 am	Eucharist BCP
	Amos 7.1-17 Psalm 82		Colossians 1.1-14 Luke 10.25-37
17 July	Pentecost 6 <i>Green</i>	10 am	Eucharist BAS
	Amos 8.1-12 Psalm 52		Colossians 1.15-28 Luke 10.38-42
24 July	Pentecost 7 <i>Green</i>	10 am	Eucharist BCP
	Hosea 1.1-11 Psalm 85		Colossians 2.6-23 Luke 11.1-13
31 July	Pentecost 8 <i>Green</i>	10 am	Eucharist BAS [Natal Day Weekend]
	Hosea 11.1-11 Psalm 107.1-16		Colossians 3.1-11 Luke 12.13-21
7 August	Transfig. Sunday <i>White</i>	10 am	Eucharist BCP
	Daniel 7.1-18 Psalm 99		II Peter 1.16-20 Luke 9.28-36
14 August	Pentecost 10 <i>Green</i>	10 am	Eucharist BAS
	Isaiah 5.1-7 Psalm 80		Hebrews 11.29-12.2 Luke 12.49-56
21 August	Pentecost 11 <i>Green</i>	10 am	Eucharist BCP
	Jeremiah 1.1-10 Psalm 71		Hebrews 12.18-29 Luke 13.10-17
28 August	Pentecost 12 <i>Green</i>	10 am	Eucharist BAS
	Jeremiah 2.4-13 Psalm 81		Hebrews 13.1-16 Luke 14.1,7-14
4 September	Pentecost 13 <i>Green</i>	10 am	Eucharist BCP [Labour Day Weekend]
	Jeremiah 18.1-11 Psalm 139.1-18		Philemon 1.1-21 Luke 14.25-33
11 September	Pentecost 14 <i>Green</i>	10 am	Eucharist BAS Welcome Back! Parish Lunch
	Jeremiah 4.11-28 Psalm 14		I Timothy 1.12-17 Luke 15.1-10
18 September	Pentecost 15 <i>Green</i>	10 am	Eucharist BCP
	Jeremiah 8.18-9.1 Psalm 79		I Timothy 2.1-7 Luke 16.1-13
25 September	Pentecost 16 <i>Green</i>	10 am	Eucharist BAS
	Jeremiah 32.1-3a, 6-15 Psalm 91		I Timothy 6.6-19 Luke 16.19-31
2 October	Pentecost 17 <i>Green</i>	10 am	Eucharist BCP
	Lamentations 1.1-7 Psalm 137		II Timothy 1.1-14 Luke 17.5-10
9 October	Harvest Thanksgiving <i>White</i>	10 am	Eucharist BAS [Thanksgiving Day Weekend]
	Deuteronomy 26:1-15 Psalm 100		Philippians 4:4-9 John 6:25-35



St. Paul's Church
An Historic Church
Serving the Living God since 1749

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Why not submit a spiritual reflection, prayer, poem, or a book review?

Please keep alert for the next issue of the St. Paul's Journal to be announced.