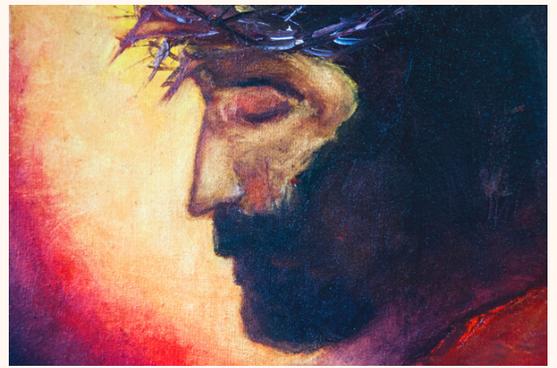


EASTER MEDITATIONS



From the desk of Rev Chris

With Holy Week now behind us, it's probably appropriate for our prayer life and reflections to grow beyond the themes that were present in lent, in order that we might now fully participate in the resurrection of our Lord. As I'm sure you would all agree, the season of Easter (which continues through to Pentecost) will give us the opportunity to search for those signs of renewal and rebirth in our lives that can lead us into a sustained period of growth and discovery.

With these lofty themes in mind, we move beyond our Lenten exploration of Dame Julian of Norwich, in order that we might now share some of the wisdom present within the writings of Joan Chittister.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with her writings, Joan is a well-respected member of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie - she has written a number of books on Christian spirituality, with a particular emphasis on spiritual direction and the grace of God, as we experience it in everyday life.

The themes for this Eastertide series of meditations are all taken from her book "For Everything A Season", which seems to be inspired in part by the wisdom of Ecclesiastes, which will be our starting point:

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace...

In her first chapter (The Seasons for Life), Joan draws a distinction between our perception of life as we sense it could be and our experience of life as it comes to us in the moment. For Joan, many live with the temptation to look beyond the present moment - to work and build and strive and plan for a future that will be both satisfying and complete.

"...whatever you are doing right now is a mirage. It is not really what you are doing at all. It only looks like it. Underneath the job, the marriage, the education, the responsibilities that consume the present moment lies the magnet that really draws us on... if we listen, we hear the sirens cry. They enchant us, seduce us, tempt us, promise us that there is more to life than what we now have. Most of all, they tell us over and over, the more is within our grasp. Each of us lives, then, striving for an invisible finish line, a sun-covered summit, a grail in life that, once we reach it

we are certain will bring with it not only present satisfaction but perpetual peace as well. We live wanting to get it right..."

In a way, Joan's description of the restless human spirit sheds light on the illusion of control that most of us continue to build over the course of a lifetime. Joan seems to recognise that our hunger for more is often tied to our perception - our perception of what is still missing or a desire to avoid discomfort. If this is the case (as a consequence) true happiness and lasting peace must also then begin with a new awareness - the awareness of what is fully present to us now (and in every season of life), along with the experiences that keep us feeling connected to those seasons.

In a way, this opportunity to explore our perceptions seems very appropriate for us, as we struggle to find meaning and purpose in these difficult days. As I'm sure you would all agree, the outbreak of the Covid 19 virus has prompted considerable discussion about the unwelcome changes in our lives that have now become part of our new reality.

In recent weeks, we have had an opportunity to think about what has been lost - we have talked about the economic cost of this virus on our finances, our nation and the wider world. We've given consideration to the social impact of this virus on our communities and those we love - we've talked about our frustrations and our fears. In a way, our meditation today reminds us that our concerns become terrible distractions if we become overly focused on what has been lost or what we need to build for the future (in order to experience lasting joy and peace). Joan reminds us that peace and joy are not dependent on what has been lost or what needs to be restored. She points instead to our awareness of the blessings in this present moment - she shows us that the experience of grace - the celebration of beauty and true thankfulness for our blessings give meaning to each day. Joan challenges us to accept the seasons of life as they come to us.

While it's prudent to plan for the todays that wait for us in the future, this first meditation calls us to give equal considerations to the opportunities that stand before us today - in this present moment. We are reminded that these treasures must not be overlooked.

Ecclesiastes invites us to see life as a mosaic made up of small pieces of human experience common to us all but lived uniquely by each of us. Ecclesiastes calls us to the universals of life so that we can understand it before we lose it, enjoy it before we miss it...

*My dearest brothers and sisters in Christ, let us be steadfast
in our faith even in trying times.*

