

(1) Where Are we now.....

This is the time to be slow,
lie low to the wall
until the bitter weather passes.

Try, as best you can, not to let
the wire brush of doubt
scrape from your heart
all sense of yourself
and your hesitant light.

If you remain generous,
time will come good;
and you will find your feet
again on fresh pastures of promise,
where the air will be kind
and blushed with beginning.

By: John O'Donoghue from his book, *To Bless the Space Between Us* (US) / *Benedictus* (Europe)

(2) In the big picture, what has been happening.....

1. The Covid 19 experience has brought us personally to new conversations about what it means to live and what it means to die. What are our values. What are we willing to commit to and what are we prepared to let go.
2. It has brought us to use different language: social distancing, bubbles, no touching, communicating with our eyes, sanitizing, isolation.
3. What we need to attend to: loneliness, mental health issues, grief, grief postponed, isolation.
4. It has brought the churches back to the basics. Raises questions: are we at a point where we are re-negotiating our relationship with the church.
5. Pope Francis as a beacon of light: the evening service of prayer for those ill and dying with the virus, the frontline workers.
6. What has your experience been? What one word would describe it? What was your low point? What gave you hope?

(3) The Road to Emmaus as a template for our journey through the Covid 19 Pandemic

Movement 1:

- Jesus walks by the side of the disciples and tactfully asks them what their problem is.
- He creates an atmosphere of openness and friendship before undertaking a dialogue.
- His method is to establish trust with the disciples, they in turn rediscover that trust allows them speak with honesty.

Movement 2:

- The disciples are open to questioning themselves as they walk along the road with Jesus.
- They reflect and share together and identify the cause of the problem.

- They re-examine their commitments and adjust them to the new need that they have identified.

Movement 3:

- Jesus reveals to the two disciples the hidden side of the events that only faith can perceive.
- The Word of God strengthens the faith of the disciples, renews their hope and warms their heart.
- They recognize Jesus in the “stranger”.
- They go back with a renewed confidence and a new purpose.

(4) Becoming urban hermits

A Prayer for the Morning

Blessed are you O God,
 who created the world with a word
 and who fashioned your people
 from the dust and from delight.
 In our waking, may we know you
 breathing in us,
 breathing through us,
 creating us anew
 with your longing and love.

A Prayer for the Evening

Blessed are you, O God,
 who dwells even in darkness
 and who restores your creation
 with the gift of rest.
 Deliver your people
 from the troubles of the night,
 and let your peacefulness and grace
 be upon each place.

From: The Jewish Prayer Book (Contemporary, 2018)

(5) A final thought.....

I am constantly surrounded by noise; TV, texts, the internet, music, meaningless small talk, my thinking. All of it blocks my consciousness, my ability to hear the **Me** that exists beneath the cacophony. I am my consciousness, my awareness of my new circumstances, my presence in every moment. So, I cultivate silence every morning. I sit in it, bask in it, wrap it around myself, and hear and feel me. Then, wherever the day takes me, the people I meet are the beneficiaries of my having taken that time – they get the real me, not someone shaped and altered by the noise around me. Silence is the stuff of life.

From: Richard Wagamese, **Embers**. (Ojibway writer born in northeastern Ontario)

Questions for reflection: What has happened on your journey during the time of pandemic? Who has walked beside you? What were your fears? What did you discover? What gave you joy and hope? If you were to tell a friend about your experience what do you want them to know.

A Concluding Prayer

The night is dark.
 Let our fears of the darkness of the world and our own lives rest in you.
 The night is quiet. Let the quietness of God’s peace enfold us all,
 all dear to us, and all who have no peace.

From: A New Zealand Prayer Book (Anglican Church of New Zealand, 1989-2020)