

**The SECOND SUNDAY of EASTER, 2020**  
*Virtual Grace*

Organ Prelude - 1 stanza, "O sons and daughters, let us sing." (Hymnal 1982, #203)

*ANNOUNCEMENTS*

Hello and welcome to "Virtual Grace"  
from Grace Episcopal Church in Honesdale, PA.  
I'm Fr. Ed, the rector of our wonderful parish.  
When things settle down and we're able to travel again,  
we hope you might visit us in person.

On this 2<sup>nd</sup> week of Easter we continue to celebrate: "Christ is risen! Alleluia!"  
And we will rise with him from the valley of the shadow of death.

Remember, if you are in any pastoral need at all, call me, 24/7.  
No matter the virus, I am ready to come to your spiritual aid.  
And if you are able, make your contributions - your offerings of sacrifice -  
to the continued ministries of Grace Church,  
through the mail or through your bank's electronic avenues.

Come now, and let us bless the Lord.  
In the name of God the Creator, ✚ God the Sustainer, God who Sanctifies. Amen.

*CONFESSION*

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor:

God of all mercy, we confess that we have sinned against you,  
opposing your will in our lives.  
We have denied your goodness in each other,  
in ourselves, and in the world you have created.  
We repent of the evil that enslaves us, the evil we have done,  
and the evil done on our behalf.  
Forgive, restore, and strengthen us through our Savior Jesus Christ,  
that we may abide in your love and serve only your will. Amen.

May Almighty God in mercy receive our confession of sorrow and of faith, strengthen us in all goodness, ☩ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, keep us in eternal life. Amen.

*COLLECT*

Let us pray:

God who brings victory over death, your Son revealed himself again and again to convince his followers of his glorious resurrection: Grant that we may know his risen presence... until we join the hosts of heaven in worshipping you and praising the one who is worthy of blessing and honor, glory and power, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

*Daily Prayer for all Seasons, p.113*

*CANTICLE* - The SONG of the REDEEMED

*Revelation 15: 3-4, BCP p.94*

O ruler of the universe, Lord God, great deeds are they that you have done, \*  
surpassing human understanding.

Your ways are ways of righteousness and truth, \*  
O King of all the ages.

Who can fail to do you homage, Lord, and sing the praises of your Name? \*  
for you only are the holy One.

All nations will draw near and fall down before you, \*  
because your just and holy works have been revealed.

Praise to the holy and undivided Trinity, one God:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

A reading from the First Letter of St. Peter to the Church:

*1 Peter 1: 3-9*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Because of his great mercy he gave us new life by raising Jesus Christ from death. This fills us with a living hope, and so we look forward to possessing the rich blessings that God keeps for his people. He keeps them for you in heaven, where they cannot decay or spoil or fade away. They are for you, who through faith are kept safe by God's power for the salvation which is ready to be revealed at the end of time.

Be glad about this, even though it may now be necessary for you to be sad for a while because of the many kinds of trials you suffer. Their purpose is to prove that your faith is genuine. Even gold, which can be destroyed, is tested by fire; and so your faith, which is much more precious than gold, must also be tested, so that it may endure. Then you will receive praise and glory and honor on the Day when Jesus Christ is revealed. You love him, although you have not seen him, and you believe in him, although you do not now see him. So you rejoice with a great and glorious joy which words cannot express, because you are receiving the salvation of your souls, which is the purpose of your faith in him.

The Word of God.

### *MEDITATION*

Pastor Adam and I disagree,

not because he's one party and I another.

Our multi-day hikes are often quiet on one side while the other goes on.

But that's not what I mean.

Just recently he and I disagreed about Paul Tillich,

the great Lutheran Existentialist theologian of the mid-20th century.

Funny thing is that Pastor Miguel just stood back and shook his head.

"Systematic Theology - the three volumes?" Adam asked

"Man," I answered, "that was easy compared to his smaller book, *Dynamics of Faith*."

"I still have problems getting through *The Courage to Be*," Adam countered.

And he went to Princeton seminary -

his theological academics are much higher than mine.

Maybe I'll deal with *The Courage to Be* in a later meditation.

But with Doubting Thomas in the familiar story of this week after Easter,  
I'm drawn to the *Dynamics of Doubt* -

my response to Tillich's *Dynamics of Faith*.

Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote:

*There lives more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds.*

The great author/theologian Flannery O'Connor wrote about faith:

"You arrive at enough certainty to be able to make your way,  
but it is making it in the darkness."

I'm currently reading preacher/priest Fleming Rutledge's book of sermons,

[Help my Unbelief](#).

Seems to be a theme, eh?

Mo. Rutledge often dealt with the struggles people in and out of the pews have.

(Just so you're keeping score, I've cited 4, 5, no 6 books for you to read locked-down.

Check the pdf file of the text for this video for the titles.)

The low down to Tillich's *Dynamics of Faith*, is that faith requires doubt,

yes, faith *requires* doubt to make it dynamic, living, moving, and growing.

Fleming Rutledge, notes that,

"it is a very comforting thing to me, in my own struggle to believe, to know that the relationship of doubt to faith is built into the Easter story. Mark, for instance, deliberately ends his Gospel on a note of doubt."

*"Doubting and Believing," 1994, quoted in [Help My Unbelief](#)*

Think about it.

Without doubt forcing the issue, faith remains faith-less.

It's static, un-moving;

it's not dying, because that would be a movement,

it doesn't even have that energy in it.

Faith, Thomas, requires doubt.

So go ahead and doubt.

Struggle with faith.

Work against the odds.

Question everything.

And believe.

In today's Gospel, Jesus pushes against us all beyond Thomas:

“Blessed are those who come to believe  
who have not placed their finger in my wounds and see that I live.”

Yet I say,

“Blessed are you who doubt, caring enough about faith to struggle with it.’

Someone recently told me that they didn't believe any more.

They were angry with God after the death of a loved one.

“You can't be angry with God and not believe.

Being angry with God *proves* you believe!”

Even the Disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith.

The father of an epileptic boy proclaims our theme:

“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.”

Acknowledging our doubt, our fear, is the first step.

Living into that reality is the next.

And that is both the *Dynamics of Faith*,

and as we might soon explore with Pastor Adam, *The Courage to Be.*”

AMEN.

(PS. Sorry Adam!)

*The CREED*

Let us now profess our communal faith in the words of our Baptismal Covenant with the Apostles' Creed, saying:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection ☩ of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

*PRAYERS*

*Form II, BCP p. 385*

In peace let us offer our prayer to God:

I ask your prayers for God's people throughout the world; for Justin the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael our Presiding Bishop and Kevin our Bishop; for the Diocesan staff; and for all ministers and people. I ask your prayers for this parish family, and for all who are isolated from their community of faith. Pray for the Church.

I ask your prayers for all who seek God, or a deeper knowledge of him. Pray that they may find and be found by him.

I ask your prayers for peace; for goodwill among nations; and for the well-being of all people. Pray for justice and peace.

I ask your prayers for the poor, for those who are on furlough or have lost their jobs; for the sick, especially Russ, Thomas, Keegan; the hungry; the oppressed, and anxious; and those in prison, especially Justin and Mitchell. Pray for those in any need or trouble.

I ask your prayers for those anticipating death. Pray for the dying.

I ask your prayers for the departed, especially Janet and Douglas, those who have died by violent acts, and complications of the coronavirus. Pray for those who have died.

I ask your thanksgiving for families with whom we live and love; for first responders, health-care workers and all who offer of themselves for the betterment of others. Pray for all for whom you care.

Praise God for those in every generation in whom Christ has been honored especially Thomas who we remember today. Pray that we may have grace to glorify Christ in our own day.

Let us now pray together in the words which Christ himself taught us, saying:

Our Father...

### *BLESSING*

May peace of God Almighty which far surpasses anything we can humanly understand, may that keep your hearts, your souls and your minds in the knowledge of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

And the blessing of God Almighty, who has Created us, ☩ God Almighty who has Redeemed us, and God the Almighty who continually Sanctifies us, be upon you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

Organ Postlude -                    1 stanza of “*Faith of our fathers*”                    (*Hymnal 1982, #558*)

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19 April 2020  
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*Bibliography:*

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