



MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER

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“UNLESS a GRAIN of WHEAT FALLS to the GROUND and DIES...”

By Sister Mary Beverly, HSM

“...it remains but a single grain with no life...”

One aspect of a single grain of wheat is its hiddenness. The life hidden inside the dry grain of wheat cannot be seen. The grain has to be planted, watered and germinated for the life to be fruitful and visible. In this well-known passage from Jesus’ teaching in the Gospel of John 12:24, I am meditating on the hiddenness of God.

I wrote about divine hiddenness in the December 2019 newsletter for Christmas. A newborn infant in the manger of Bethlehem, with his holy mother bending over him, is a beautiful scene. There is an attractiveness, a tenderness in the hiddenness of Almighty God in a human baby.

In this “strangest of Lents” 2020, God seems to be hidden in a way that does not attract us on the natural level. God is hidden in suffering, death, stay-at-home orders, family members isolated from each other, job losses, supply shortages, world-wide disruption, worries about today, and fear for the future. How often do we ourselves think or do we hear others say: “Where is God in all this?” Yes, God is hidden.

For faithful Catholics, not being able to attend Mass in person on Sundays or during Holy Week and Easter, not being able to receive communion or the other sacraments is a spiritual suffering like we have not before experienced! The Mass and the liturgy, the “source and summit” of our life as Catholics, is unavailable. When we need him the most, we cannot go to Jesus sacramentally. God is very hidden indeed!

I write this on Wednesday of Holy Week. This theme of the hiddenness of God seems to pervade the gospel accounts for the Triduum. Jesus in his agony in the garden: could his three closest friends, who saw him praying and sweating blood, really have seen the Son of God? After the scourging, crowning with thorns, being mocked with a military cloak, and being announced by Pilate: “Behold the man...” (Jn. 19:5) did the crowds see God? Probably the greatest irony

in the passion accounts is when the people watching the crucifixion jeered, “Let the ‘Messiah’, the ‘king of Israel’, come down from that cross here and now, so that we can see it and believe in him!” (Mk. 15:32)

Jesus was God, but he did not come down from the cross. He was living what he preached: **“Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains but a single grain with no life. But if it dies, it produces much fruit.”** The way Jesus would prove that he was God was to die in accord with the Scriptures and the Will of the Father, and bear much fruit for our sakes. We cannot tell God how to be God!

Today, Jesus is suffering and dying in many thousands of people in the world with this novel coronavirus. He, as God the Word, does not look down from some high heaven, but, on the contrary, has been planted like a “seed” in the deepest ground of pain and suffering, evil and death, and by so doing, like a pioneer, has opened the path to eternal life for us. Where he has gone, we hope to follow.

I anticipate that for me this Easter season will have new graces and fruits. I am waiting to hear news of my 97 year old father, Bob Greger, in San Antonio, TX, who is dying. My brother, Tom Greger, in Beaverton OR, is fighting for his life on several medical fronts. If ever my family and I



Chapel on Palm Sunday, April 5, 2020, at Marymount Hermitage, Mesa, Idaho.

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A GRAIN OF WHEAT...

needed the Resurrection, it is now!

I suspect each of you could say the same, given your own unique circumstances. I believe for all of us, our faith is being tested in an entirely new, deeper and unprecedented way. God is indeed hidden, but can we find him? I would suggest that even if you cannot personally sit in front of the tabernacle, where Jesus is sacramentally hidden, that you can spiritually place yourself in his Presence and ask him to reveal his divinity to you in new ways. What is Jesus teaching us about himself during these extraordinary days? What do we need to know and implement in our own lives?

I think we need to beware of discouragement. We can be encouraged by reading the gospel accounts of the people who encountered the risen Lord in the earliest hours after the resurrection and who did not know him. The women at dawn only saw an empty tomb. Mary Magdalen thought he was the “gardener”. The disciples walking to Emmaus saw him as a “stranger”. On the shore of the sea of Galilee, Jesus called the apostles to put their nets over the other side of the boat. It was only John who recognized him and cried out, “It is the Lord.” Let us ask God to open our eyes this Easter season and let us “see” him in faith, trust him with the reality in which we are immersed, and at a depth we have never before plumbed. “Lord, I do believe. Help my lack of trust!” (Mk. 9:24)

I close this meditation after only the first part. The second part is for you: consider yourself as the grain of wheat. What does it mean to be “planted” and “die” at this time? What is frightening about this? What are the obstacles for you in following the Lord Jesus? How can the good of new life come from your fruitful germination? Can this new life be for both you and your loved ones? Lastly, remember that the grain of wheat became the Bread of Life, the Eucharist. Let’s pray for each other during these holy Triduum days, Easter Sunday and into the 50-day season of Resurrected Life. God bless you!

COMMUNITY NEWS

By Sister Mary Beverly, HSM

Earthquake: On March 3 at 5:52 PM, I had been working on the computer and, to rest my eyes, I turned to look out the window and enjoy the spring scene. It was a bright sunny day and somewhat

breezy. Then suddenly everything began to shake and I thought it was a tornado. Reasoning that the weeds, bushes and trees were not moving violently, I realized that this was an earthquake. The movement seemed to come in three “waves”, the first one slow and easy, the second very violent and seemingly long, and the third wave also hard, but not as long. It felt like 5 minutes, but I later learned it was only 20-30 sec.! The earthquake measured 6.5, which is big. Then the aftershock measured 4.3. I experienced this all as one event, which is why I described it as successive waves and it seemed long. The seismograph distinguished between the earthquake and the immediate aftershock.

I have lived through earthquakes before, the last one being in 1983 when Sister Rebecca Mary and I were living in Boise. That earthquake measured 6.9. As it turns out, both earthquakes occurred in the same epicenter, 60 miles east/northeast of Boise, near the Stanley/Challis area. The shaking was so violent that I did momentarily wonder if my modular house would come apart, but it did not. Later, as I reflected on why I immediately thought this was a tornado, I realized it was because there was “the sound of a strong, driving wind”, to quote Acts 2:2. This is the first time that I heard a loud noise associated with an earthquake.

I received many calls and emails asking if I was okay. As far as I can tell, all the buildings are undamaged and the propane tanks did not get dislodged or start leaking. God is merciful! Idaho is almost never in the national news, but the next day we were actually there because our earthquake was the largest one that day throughout the world. When you are praying for me, you never know the good effects you are having.

COVID-19 News: As of March 25, Governor Brad Little gave Idahoans the “stay-at-home” order. Adams County where I live only had its first and non-fatal case of the COVID-19

recently. Many rural counties have none or only one in Idaho, OR and WA. Bishop Peter Christensen directed that Masses are no longer open to the public. I certainly keep in fervent prayer our beloved nation, the deceased victims, suffering patients and family members during this

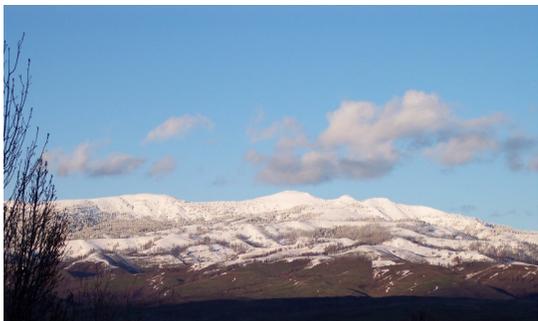


Flag over St. Isidore Catholic Worker Farm, Mesa, ID. (Photo by Ellen Piper)
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COMMUNITY NEWS (Cont. from pg. 2)

pandemic. I also pray for all those in authority, who make decisions for the common good. May the Holy Spirit guide and protect all doctors, nurses, medical professionals and first responders. I am doing my civic responsibility by staying at home, unless really necessary (groceries, gas or mail runs). Marymount currently is not hosting visitors or retreatants until our state is opened up. Some friends have been kind enough to come and leave food and household supplies for me to find in the chapel. God bless all of you for donations and gifts.



Weather: We have had wild spring weather, which has brought new snow and spring flowers.

Nature: Observing wildlife is always a thrill, but I think the beauty of spring has been more comforting to me this year because of all the tension and fear in the world. I was trying to nap one day and kept waking up hearing small, but unfamiliar sounds, outside my house. When I finally got up and looked out, it was a mature doe and her two yearling twins, bedded down for a siesta also. I snuck out the front door of chapel and took these photos of them, but, of course, they jumped up when they heard me nearby.



Local News: I want to include some comments from the last two issues of the paper from Council:

Indian Valley & Mesa News

“T. R. says that people living in rural American have been practicing social distancing way before it had a name. There is no public transportation and we all have a food supply for emergencies. It would be hard to have a crowd of ten or more in most of our neighborhoods.”

“J. D. watched the Governor’s press release when he told us all to stay home except for grocery shopping or to pick up medicines. [She] said that sounds like their routine anyway.” *

Council & New Meadows News

“K. B. says you realize how isolated you have been

when a world pandemic happens and you need to make almost zero changes to your life.”

Taken from The Record-Reporter; articles by Sharon Gagin; March 25, 2020 edition; * from April 1, 2020 edition

I got such a good laugh out of these comments because I was prepared to say the same things myself. It is not so much that I am a hermit, it is that I live the way people live in these remote places in the American West. I also include these published comments so that we can all remember that, along with praying and reaching out to others in whatever way we can, we also keep our sense of humor. It is a saving grace. The “dearest, freshness, deep down things*,” of nature and a good laugh are so healthy. (Quote* from the poem “God’s Grandeur” by Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.)

Reading: I am spending more time in prayer and reading. One current topic is studying the life and spirituality of St. Catherine of Siena. She was born in 1347 and died at the young age of 33. Catherine was a remarkable woman from a variety of very different perspectives. She was named the first female Doctor of the Church by Pope Paul VI. It is very poignant reading about her heroic nursing work among the many, who were sick from the plague which hit her city in 1375. A third of the population of Siena died. She personally buried many of her small nieces and nephews, but she also miraculously healed others, including a priest and doctor. Plagues are not new in the world nor in the experience of the saints. I am reading Lay Siege to Heaven by Louis de Wohl and have yet to read St. Catherine’s Dialogue and Letters.

Correspondence: April 1, 2020 “Dear Sister Beverly, Earlier this morning, I received an email from A. with your letter attached. I am sorry to learn of the heaviness on your heart for your father and for your brother. I am saddened that our current national and global pandemic prevents your travels to bring comfort to your father in his dying and your brother in his distress.

Your faith, expressed in your living as a woman consecrated to the Lord, inspires those of us who have met you and have been recipients of your hospitality. As you taught me during our introduction (on my first visit to and retreat at Marymount) that your welcome is only an expression of what Jesus would do and what Scripture teaches; that when you welcome another person, you welcome Jesus. Your hospitality in prayer and the place that Mercy House has for Catholics and non-Catholics alike is welcomed.

The power of prayer extends beyond walls, boundaries and disease; if the Risen Jesus entered the upper room where the doors were locked, Jesus will comfort your father and your brother, since you will not be able to be there personally to tell them. In my prayers, I will remember your father, your brother and you. May you be surrounded by the love of Jesus, the consolation of His Mother Mary, and the strength of the Holy Spirit, to sustain you when you grow weary of these burdens. God bless you, Sister.”

Father Philip Wells, Anderson, CA

(Retired priest of the Diocese of Sacramento)