A Walk in The Way

Holy Week
Year A, 2014

Terracotta Angel, c. 1896, Watts Chapel, Compton, England

~labyrinths.net
Receive our thanks for night and day,  
for food and shelter, rest and play.  
Be here our guest, and with us stay,  
saranam, saranam, saranam.

For this small earth of sea and land,  
for this small space on which we stand,  
for those we touch with heart and hand,  
saranam, saranam, saranam.

In the midst of foes I cry to Thee,  
from the ends of the earth, wherever I may be,  
My strength in helplessness, oh, answer me!  
saranam, saranam, saranam.

Make my heart to grow as great as Thine,  
so through my hurt Your love may shine,  
my love be Yours, Your love be mine,  
saranam, saranam, saranam.

For those who’ve gone, for those who stay,  
for those to come, following the Way,  
be guest and guide both night and day,  
saranam, saranam, saranam.

_Saranam means refuge._

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Terracotta Angel, c. 1896, Watts Chapel, Compton, England

Photography and Prayer Icons:
Palm Sunday — Methusala, popular-archeology.com/
Holy Monday — Microsoft Word Clipart; Anglican Rosary, Krisan Lamberti
Holy Tuesday — Living Water, Krisan Lamberti; Water Drop, Selina Lamberti; Coming to Shore, Selina Lamberti
Holy Wednesday — Microsoft Word, Cross with Bible, Tibetan Prayer Wheel; Life is..., Krisan Lamberti
Maundy Thursday — Chalice & Paten, Tibetan Signing Bowl, Krisan Lamberti; What Prayer Should Be, Krista Lamberti (Age 5)
Good Friday — Altar Frontal, Stations of the Cross @ Grace Episcopal Church, Krisan Lamberti
Holy Saturday — Microsoft Word Clipart; Computer drawing
Easter Vigil — New Fire, Fire, Krista Lamberti; Alleluia Bells, Krisan Lamberti
Easter — Sunrise over Haleakula, Dominic Lamberti; Resurrection Cross, Alleluia Bell, Krisan Lamberti

popular-archaeology.com/issue/09012013/article/ancient-date-palm-tree-flourishes-again, Photo Credit: The 2,000-year-old date palm as it appears today in its place at the kibbutz. Benjtheijneb, Wikimedia Commons

sacred-texts.com/etc/ml/ml12.htm#img_fig042, Poitiers Cathedral Labyrinth

If you have enjoyed this “Walk in the Way” we commend the books in the bibliography to assist you in its continuation.
Joining an EFM class is also an option you might wish to consider.

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labyrinthos.net/photo_library13.html
ABOUT THIS BOOK

For the past oh so many years the Monday evening Education for Ministry class has created a Holy Week meditation book for our church families and beyond. We look forward to the work, sometimes with a bit of trepidation, as you will discover within this book. The process of reading, meditating, re-reading, and eventually writing about a day in the last week of Jesus’ life and ministry is both challenging and enlightening. We invite you to take a few moments out of your day with God and we pray the scripture, reflections, meditations, prayers, and photos serve you well.

~Krisan Lamberti
EFM Mentor

Labyrinths

The labyrinth is a physical metaphor for journeying with God—a way to pray, in this case with your finger. Labyrinths have existed in many cultures for many millennia. It is not a maze, there are no wrong turns or traps. Simply put, the labyrinth represents a journey from the world into yourself, into an intentional place with God, and then a return along the same path back into the world. Begin at the opening and follow the path to the center; return along the path to the opening, and breathe the ruach (breath) of God.

Coloring

It is not just for children! Sometimes doing something in a physical manner can intensify that which you have just read and prayed. You are invited to stop and smell the crayon as part of your meditative experience. If viewing this guide on-line simply print the pages you desire or use a publishing tool to fill in the work.

Photos

The photos have been chosen as a way for our visual learners to delve deep into meditation, but they might just serve us all. Think about them with intention. Many thanks to the contributors for sharing their treasures.
**GOOD FRIDAY**

Isaiah 52:13-53:12  Psalm 22  
Hebrews 10:16-25 or  
Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9  
John 18:1-19:42

**Prayer**

Lord, as I read the psalms, let me hear you singing. As I read your words, let me hear you speaking. As I reflect on each page, let me see your image. And as I seek to put your precepts into practice, let my heart be filled with joy. Amen.

~Cappadocian Prayer,  
2000 Years of Prayer

Like a fresh, energizing breeze I have encountered the possibility that the name we have been presented all our lives, and is widely reflected in literature, is a very notorious case of *lost in translation*.

On a recent Monday evening as our mentor, Krisan, passed around a basket
containing little pieces of paper for each of us to pull, she informed us that each contained the suggested readings for a day in Holy Week. Our assignment: write a brief reflection on the reading(s) of our choice from that slip. As I unfolded the carefully cut piece of paper, a massive weight landed on my chest—Good Friday. Is not this the day on which Jesus was crucified? How could one call this good? Sure the significance and the results were indeed good, but who could possibly name that day good? It was not the moment to dwell on that thought given that we had to move onto our respective assignments and studies, but the idea stuck.

A few days later, after a wonderful invite for very early morning rowing out of the Key Biscayne Marine Stadium area (including an encounter with a dolphin pod), followed by a long work day, short nap, and then finally, with a clear head, it was time to revisit the idea and face the shocking event presented in the gospel of Good Friday. The weight did not get any lighter as I did some research and discovered that the day of Jesus’ suffering is also known as Great Friday. Great? Well, sometimes one has to keep digging when doing research—we attempt to find a more satisfactory answer, perhaps the correct one, more likely, one that is simply bearable.

Some variations on the English Good Friday include Holy Friday in Romance languages, *he hagia kai megale paraskeue* (the Holy and Great Friday) in the Greek Liturgy, and *Charfreitag* (Sorrowful Friday) in German. Also, from the German we have *Gottes Freitag* (God’s Friday) and *Gute Freitag* (Good Friday). The Anglo-Saxons gave us Long Friday which is still used in Denmark. Long Friday is a better fit for me than Good Friday.

In the 2004 book, *A Season for the Spirit* by Martin Smith, we are reminded that “the cross kills the old self that was based on the fiction that the others are the guilty.” Every year on Friday of Holy Week we return to the cross to be reminded that Jesus took upon himself ALL of the sins of humanity and achieved a miracle as he went from a state of sinlessness to an uber-concentrated mass of sins—past, present, and future. During this l-o-n-g, Holy Friday we are simultaneously reminded of Jesus’ physical suffering through trumped-up charges of a trial, to carrying his own cross of death, to the pain of being attached to the cross and jolted into the ground, then,
finally, feeling separated from God, from that which has always (since before creation) been. Physical suffering becomes emotional suffering; Jesus the man experienced it all.

Prior to this reading of these scriptures I had never grasped the manner in which Jesus set up a Way, a system, for us to be able to access God every Good (Long) Friday, every day, every moment. So, food for thought on this Gottes Freitag: assume the guilt of your sins, open the gates of reconciliation provided by the cross of Jesus the Christ.

~Alvaro Coraspe

newadvent.org/cathan/06643a.htm, Catholic Encyclopedia
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Invitation to Silence

Let us be at peace within ourselves.
  Silence
Let us accept that we are profoundly loved and need never be afraid.
  Silence
Let us be aware of the source of being that is common to us all
  and to all living creatures.
  Silence
Let us be filled with the presence of the great compassion towards ourselves
  and towards all living beings.
  Silence
Realizing that we are all nourished from the same source of life,
  may we so live that others be not deprived of air, food, water, shelter,
  or the chance to live.
  Silence
Let us pray that we ourselves cease to be a cause of suffering
  to one another.
  Silence
With humility let us pray for the establishment of peace in our hearts
  and on earth.
  Silence
May God kindle in us the fire of love to bring us alive and give warmth to the world.

*Silence*

~Midday Prayer, *New Zealand Book of Prayer*

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**Prayer of Awareness**

Lord, Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth; lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust; lead me from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our heart, our world, our universe. Amen.

~Midday Prayer, *New Zealand Book of Prayer*
Prayer

Lord, as I read the psalms, let me hear you singing. As I read your words, let me hear you speaking. As I reflect on each page, let me see your image. And as I seek to put your precepts into practice, let my heart be filled with joy. Amen.

~Cappadocian Prayer, 2000 Years of Prayer

'A mortal, born of woman, few of days and full of trouble, comes up like a flower and withers, flees like a shadow and does not last. Do you fix your eyes on such a one? Do you bring me into judgment with you? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one can. Since their days are determined, and the number of their months is known to you, and you have appointed the bounds that they cannot pass, look away from them, and desist, that they may enjoy, like laborers, their days.

'For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease. Though its root grows old in the earth, and its stump dies in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth branches like a young plant. But mortals die, and are laid low; humans expire, and where are they? As waters fail from a lake, and a river wastes away and dries up, so mortals lie down and do not rise again; until the heavens are no more, they will not awake or be roused out of their sleep. O that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath is past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me! If mortals die, will they live again? All the days of my service I would wait until my release should come.

~Job 14:1-14
Upon first reading this seemed like one of the rather drab portions of Job. Remember the full story? Job is a test case about faith between God and Satan. Job Chapter 1 lays the foundation that the heavenly beings have come before God, this includes Satan. Based on the way it is written we have human qualities placed on God as Satan seems to goad God into a wager, a test of Job’s faith. We do this a lot, transfer our thoughts and feelings onto God. This comes from our humanness and that concept in Genesis that “God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them”.

It is normal, we all do it, think of God in human terms. However, God is God, beyond our full comprehension. We say God is omnipotent yet we ask God to do things for us, as if the creator of all that is does not already know our needs. We say God is omnipresent yet ask God to be with us rather than stand in the knowledge that God is there. We say God is omniscient yet tell God what we or a family member or a friend needs instead of acknowledging God’s presence in that moment. Why? Because, our concept of God is limited.

I digress; back to the story of Job.

Job is a story of being tested. Due to that wager poor Job loses his wealth, his children. He is pestered by his wife while his friends badger him to admit his sinfulness instead of supporting her spouse and their friend, respectively. We can relate because we all find times of “test.” Times when things do not seem to be going well, whether that is work, finances, health, family changes….whatever. Here is a glimmer of hope: “For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease.” Your faith can be like this tree.

Even when there are hard times or unknown circumstances you can remember your prayers, acknowledge God’s presence, allow the flicker of light from within to grow, to gain hold and sprout anew. When you share the love of God with others you are planting a seed or a sprout. It is not for us
to know how that will grow but it is for us to do some planting. You might plant (or water, fertilize, etc.) by serving in adult classes, Sunday School, Godly Play, or Youth Group. But you can also plant by serving at the altar, feeding the homeless at church or out of your car window, as a member of the Altar Guild, working with The Prosperity Center or the AIDS Ministry, serving on the Vestry – the list is endless. You can plant the love of God by holding the hand of someone in need, giving a smile to a sad individual, being a listener. In essence, sharing the love of God with the world.

Think of scripture and worship as fertilizers, prayer as water. Allow your faith to be like the tree in this scripture; the sharing of Christ with others as a sprout of that tree. I encourage you to read the Psalm assigned for today and give it your own reflection.

About Job, he humbles himself before God, admits he is not so righteous, that he is but a human and God is creator and ruler of all. Being ruler of all, being a God of grace, the ultimate source of love, Job is restored; his steadfastness is rewarded with renewed wealth and a new family. Why? Because this story is about God’s faithfulness even when WE are not so faithful.

~Krisan Lamberti

_Invitation to Silence_

_In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me. Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me._

_You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name’s sake lead me and guide me, take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors._

_Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love._

~Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16
Prayer of Awareness

God, you never fail to dazzle us with your grace and mercy. We pray for the boldness to await the fulfillment of life that you promise, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

~October 9,
Common Prayer, A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals
Prayer

Lord, as I read the psalms, let me hear you singing. As I read your words, let me hear you speaking. As I reflect on each page, let me see your image. And as I seek to put your precepts into practice, let my heart be filled with joy. Amen.

~Cappadocian Prayer,
2000 Years of Prayer

I love the Lord, for he heard my voice;
he heard my cry for mercy.
Because he turned his ear to me,
I will call on him as long as I live.

~Psalm 116:1-2

Few verses in the Bible express more clearly that this person’s prayer is truly a meeting with the ever present-God, a conversation with God that flows both ways—“he heard my voice,” “he turned his ear to me.” God is always there, listening and waiting for me to open a conversation—to pour out my heart, to tell him what is on my mind, to give him praise, to seek his will in
those things to do with my life. Sometimes I feel that he has heard me, and
that I have heard him. Sometimes I am not sure of either. I know that when
I am not sure, it is not that God is not present and listening. It is that I am
not present, not spiritually focused on the meeting, on our conversation.
What to do then? Get my heart and mind right, and try again. As Paul says,
“pray without ceasing” because that is how I will keep growing in my
relationship with God. You cannot have a relationship with someone you do
not talk to. And a true relationship never ends. Because I know he is there
waiting, as Psalm 116 says, “I will call on him as long as I live.”

~ Randall Litten

What Prayer Should Be, Krista Lamberti, age 5
Invitation to Silence

I, Wisdom, am with you.
I am a light that will never grow dim.

Love me and you will see me.
Look for me and you will find me.

At the slightest indication of your desire for me,
I will make myself known to you.

Watch for me at the very start of what you are about,
and you will have no trouble.

You will find me, ever present, sitting at your table.
Even thinking about my presence will help you.

Be aware of my presence, my concern,
my willingness to inspire and to instruct you.

As you meet with each other, I will meet with each and all of you.

~The Wisdom Prayer
Wisdom 6:12-17, stpaulsmonastery.org

Prayer for Openness

1. Touch your fingertips to your forehead, saying:
   Open my mind to remember your presence.
2. Touch your fingertips to your mouth, saying:
   Open my mouth to speak your wisdom.
3. Touch your fingertips to your heart, saying:
   Open my heart to extend your love.
4. Hold both hands out, open, palms up, saying:
   Open my hands to serve you generously.
5. Holding arms wide open, saying:
   Open my whole being to you.

Bring hands together as in prayer near your heart.
Make a deep bow to the loving presence in you.

~ Open the Door, Joyce Rupp
Prayer

Lord, as I read the psalms, let me hear you singing. As I read your words, let me hear you speaking. As I reflect on each page, let me see your image. And as I seek to put your precepts into practice, let my heart be filled with joy. Amen.

~Cappadocian Prayer, 2000 Years of Prayer
In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, ‘Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.’ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, ‘Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.’ And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, ‘Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.’ And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.’ And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, ‘Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.’ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with
which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.' And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

~Genesis 1:1-2:4a
I love to read about the beginning of time, how God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh. One really needs to “believe” in their faith in order to understand how this occurred. From nothing God created everything: the sky, the ocean, the day, the night, the light, the dark, the sun, the moon, the stars, the sea life, the flying creatures, the two legged creatures, the four legged creatures, and humankind. He did this for ALL of us so that we could live together.

I also enjoy teaching the creation story to the younger children of our church because it gives them a feeling of belonging. Seeing them enjoy learning about how it all began is really awe inspiring. May the power of faith continue forever.

~Debbie Roncallo

alleluia bells, krisan lamberti

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever. O give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures for ever; who alone does great wonders, for his steadfast love endures for ever; who by understanding made the heavens, for his steadfast love endures for ever; who spread out the earth on the waters, for his steadfast love endures for ever; who made the great lights, for his steadfast love endures for ever; the sun to rule over the day, for his steadfast love endures for ever; the moon and stars to rule over the night, for his steadfast love endures for ever; It is he who remembered us in our low estate, for his steadfast love endures for ever; and rescued us from our foes, for his steadfast love endures for ever; who gives food to all flesh, for his steadfast love endures for ever. O give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures for ever.

~Psalm 136: 1-9, 23-26

I actually read the entire Psalm because I forgot to stop. However, as I read it over and over several times I found myself only reading the first line of
When I read it, I felt like I was reading a quickie version of the old testament. When I was done reading I truly felt God’s everlasting, steadfast love.

~Debbie Roncallo

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
O give thanks to the God of gods,
O give thanks to the Lord of lords,
who alone does great wonders,
who by understanding made the heavens,
who spread out the earth on the waters,
who made the great lights,
the sun to rule over the day,
the moon and stars to rule over the night,
It is he who remembered us in our low estate,
and rescued us from our foes,
who gives food to all flesh,
O give thanks to the God of heaven

~Psalm 136, 1st stanzas

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, “He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.” This is my message for you.’ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said,
'Greetings!' And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.' ~Matthew 28: 1-10

Whenever I see this part of Jesus' life in the movies, a play, or on television it makes me cry—tears of happiness that is, because I truly believe that Christ lived for us, died for us and was resurrected to be with us always. I feel his presence every day and I see it all around me. I see it in the faces of my Sunday school children when they learn new things and when they are happy with themselves for remembering what they have learned. I'm also happy because Christ's journey is not over; he is here with us and he will remain with us for always.

~Debbie Roncallo

Invitation to Silence

Be, Lord, within me to strengthen me, without me to preserve me, over me to shelter me, beneath me to support me, before me to divert me, behind me to bring me back, round about me to fortify me.

~Lancelot Andrewes, 2000 Years of Prayer

Prayer of Awareness

Jesus, our Master, meet us while we walk in the way, and long to reach the heavenly country; so that, following your light we may keep the way of righteousness, and never wander away into the darkness of the world’s night, while you, who are the Way, the Truth, and the Life, are shining within us, for your own name’s sake. Amen.

~The Mozarabic Sacramentary, 2000 Years of Prayer
EASTER
The Resurrection of Our Lord

Acts 10:34-43 or Jeremiah 31:1-6
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
Colossians 3:1-4 or Acts 10:34-43
John 20:1-18 or Matthew 28:1-10

Sunrise over Haleakala,
Dominic Lamberti

Prayer

Lord, as I read the psalms, let me hear you singing. As I read your words, let me hear you speaking. As I reflect on each page, let me see your image. And as I seek to put your precepts into practice, let my heart be filled with joy. Amen.

~Cappadocian Prayer,
2000 Years of Prayer

~Resurrection Cross, Krisan Lamberti

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, “He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.” This
is my message for you.’ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, ‘Greetings!’ And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’

~ Matthew 28:1-10

Alleluia Bells,
Krisan Lamberti

Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing ye heavens and earth reply, Alleluia!*

Today we celebrate the empty tomb. We celebrate Christ’s victory over death. We celebrate Christ’s promise that because he lived, we shall also live. Today we celebrate the promise of new life.

The empty tomb is the foundation of our faith. It is proof of God’s love for us, as Paul says, “that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.” But the story does not end there. The tomb is empty because Jesus rose from the dead and lived again. He lives still and we await his coming in glory. We are the recipients of the holy sacrifice. We are an Easter people.

Today, as we rejoice in Christ’s resurrection, we must remember that the tomb came first. We have our own “tombs”—those times when things are extremely difficult, when there are major challenges in life, the loss of something held dear, or the death of a loved one. We need to take some time out of this busy day to reflect on what the empty tomb means to us. What were your “tombs” this past year? Give them to Christ. Bury them. Where is the resurrection from your tomb? Who will “appear” to assist you in this “new life”?

All of Jesus’ life and ministry led to the cross, the tomb, the resurrection. If we live our lives in faithfulness to Christ’s teachings, there will be a resurrection for us as well. The tomb is not the end of the story.
Lives again our glorious king, Alleluia!

Where o death is now thy sting? Alleluia!

Once he died our souls to save, Alleluia!

Where’s thy victory, boasting grave? Alleluia!*

~Kay Seibert,
Krisan Lamberti

*Charles Wesley, 1707-1788

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Invitation to Silence

Troubled?
Then stay with me, for I am not.

Lonely?
A thousand naked amorous ones dwell in ancient caves beneath my eyelids.

Riches?
Here’s a pick,
my whole body is an emerald that begs,
“Take me.”

Write all that worries you on a piece of parchment;
offer it to God.
Even from the distance of a millennium

I can lean the flame in my heart into your life

and turn
all that frightens you into holy incense
ash.

~Hafiz,
“TROUBLED?”

Love Poems from God: Twelve Sacred Voices from the East and West
Prayer of Awareness

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise, that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ’s body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us; as we and all your children shall be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name. Amen.

Prayer After Communion
~New Zealand Book of Prayer

Ely, England
www.labyrinthos.net/photo_library13.html
Grace to you and Peace from your servant, Paul. I pray that this letter finds you well; that you continue to know the presence of our Lord, Jesus Christ. I have been asked to write a synopsis of my spiritual journey. I have agreed to do this not for personal praise but for your edification and deeper knowledge in the faithfulness of God. It is by God’s grace only I have lived this life of service to Him. It is by God’s grace alone that I can write these words to you. May you feel that same grace in your own lives.

I was born and raised a member of the people of Israel, from the tribe of Benjamin. I was named Saul and later became known by my Greek name Paul. I was taught by my family and community to observe the law and the prophets. I grew to love the Lord and became a student of the law. And in all that I did I had always striven to obey the law and in the eyes of men I could claim to be blameless.

Then along came these followers of a man named Jesus. They claimed he was the Christ, the Messiah that was foretold in the Scriptures. As a faithful observant of Judaism, what they were proclaiming was clearly blasphemy and should be punished under the Law. And with zeal this became my objective: to weed out these heretics, imprison and, if necessary, torture them and make them refute their claims. And some were so convinced of their beliefs that they went to their deaths. I witnessed many such occasions as I felt it was my duty to do. Death by stoning was a proper punishment for the crimes they committed. I must admit that I was—at moments—moved by the conviction of those who would not recant their beliefs. I often heard them exclaim that they saw the heavens open and this Jesus was standing at the right hand of God waiting for them, supporting them in that moment of shame, distress and death. I admired their integrity although I thought, at the time, that it was misguided. And at that moment I was certain of their blasphemy and that the punishment fit their crime.

So certain was I of my own righteousness, I set out to further weed out these traitors of the faith. I and a group of men determined to journey to Damascus for this very purpose. It was on that road that my life changed forever. I was stopped in my tracks by a blazing light from heaven and I fell on my face. And while I could not see, I heard a voice asking me, “Saul, Saul! Why do you persecute me?” And I asked, “Who is this speaking?” And the reply echoes in my ears to this very day. The voice said, “It is I, Jesus,
the one you are persecuting! Now go, get up and go to the city. Wait and you will be told what to do.” I was left blind, and yet I tell you at that moment I could see, feel and hear as if for the first time! In the tradition of my people, this Jesus spoke to me. I knew then that he is truly the son of God, for only God, my God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob spoke to his people in this way! Abraham himself heard God, as did Moses and even the young Saul, for whom I was named, received the word of God and each was forever changed. The men who were traveling with me were also amazed at what had just occurred. Seeing that I was blind, they helped me to the city. For three days I could not eat, drink or sleep! My mind was reeling! How could this happen? What can this mean for me? What will Jesus do to me, the man who had seen to the persecution and death of so many of his followers? What will my reception be in Damascus? What will these followers do to me? Certainly, they would feel in their right to put me to death! Yet, I was a man of faith, following the Law that God had ordained! I remembered those who had chosen to go to their death rather than betray their faith in Jesus. Jesus had spoken to me and I knew at that moment that I too would sooner die than betray him. I could feel the new life bubbling inside me and could hardly contain my excitement! I longed to share my experience with other believers. I will say, “Look at the wonderful power and mind of our God! He took me, me his most zealous persecutor, to become one of his own! All for his glory so more will know his truth and his saving Grace!” Finally, we got to the city where we were greeted by a man, Ananias, whom I had set off to imprison for blasphemy yet he came to me because God too had spoken to him. God said, “Go to Saul, I have chosen him to bring me to the Gentiles, and to kings and to the people of Israel.” And so I was called to a new life, a life reborn into the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. By the grace of God the scales of my old life fell from my eyes and the world was made new! In no time I was sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with the same zeal that I had had in my old life. Only by the Grace of God could my life have taken such a turn. Those who had been my enemies were now my friends, my community. Does this mean that I forsook the life and teachings of my past life? Hell No!!!!! My knowledge and love of the Law is something that the Lord has used in me to make me the bridge between the old and new. I have spent
the rest of my life helping to build that bridge. I have absolute conviction that the Lord called me to be a light to the Gentiles. I see no conflict with this mission and the faith of my people. In fact it is in the story of my people that I find the evidence that this has always been a part of God’s plan. I thank God that he has chosen me to be an instrument in achieving his plan. And with this plan both the people of Israel and the Gentiles shall be saved. The Gentiles have been grafted to the tree and draw life from the roots. Now the importance of the relationship between faith and the law is quite complicated and not fitting for the purpose of this essay. Suffice to say that I know there is no conflict and I shall spend the rest of my life explaining it and I imagine others will do the same for many years after.

I have been blessed to travel to many places to spread the Good News of Jesus. And I am blessed to see the beauty of these growing communities. I have been called to minister to these communities. It can be a challenge! As we wrestle with the merging of so many cultures, with slave and free, and with the overlapping of the people of Israel with the Gentiles conflicts are bond to occur! And yet when we come back to Jesus and to the Great Commandment, to love one another as we love ourselves, we find the middle way. We talk and we pray and we listen to each other and for the whispers of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes discernment comes with a flash of light! Other times it is slow in coming. At times I am quite sure that what I say has come from God. But, the truth is, that sometimes I do the best I can. I rely on my knowledge of scripture and its interpretation and my own common sense when the word is not clearly spoken in my ear. It is all done with faithfulness. And I trust that in the places where I have erred God will make it right, as my life’s work is to bring people closer to the knowledge of the Love of God.

There have been many trials—imprisonment and torture. Trust me, it is not lost on me that I have been on the receiving end of what I once dished out! Yet through the example of Jesus and the saints that have gone before me, I persevere. And at times I can even rejoice in this suffering! For Jesus suffered the indignity of the cross and many saints have lost their life for His sake. I too shall do what I am called to do, even to death, but I’d much rather live!

And so, that is my journey! Look what God has done in this one life! Through
your trials remember Jesus, read the Scriptures and listen for the Holy Spirit. You never know when you might find yourself on your own road to Damascus!

May you live more and more fully into the new life God has made for you. May you clearly hear when God calls you. May you respond to that call with all your abilities. May you never falter in your action and when you do falter, know that through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection you have been saved and all things can be transformed through him!

Blessings and Peace, your servant, Paul.

~Laura Collins

I am
a hole in a flute
that the Christ’s breath moves through—
listen to this
music.

~Hafiz,

THE CHRIST’S BREATH,

Love Poems from God: Twelve Sacred Voices from the East and West
~Poitiers Cathedral,
sacred-texts.com/etc/ml/ml12.htm#img_fig042