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**Second Sunday of Epiphany
Morning Prayer Rite Two
Sunday, January 17, 2021**

PRELUDE

Air for Organ

William B. Cooper

OPENING SENTENCE

From the rising of the sun to its setting my Name shall be great among the nations, and in every place incense shall be offered to my Name, and a pure offering; for my Name shall be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. *Malachi 1:11*

CONFESSION OF SIN

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. *Amen.*

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

VERSICLE

Officiant Lord, open our lips.

People And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Officiant and People

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

ANTIPHON

Officiant The Lord has shown forth his glory: Come let us adore him.

People The Lord has shown forth his glory: Come let us adore him.

PSALM: Psalm 139:1-5, 12-17

Domine, probasti

¹ GOD, you have searched me out and known me; *
you know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.

² You trace my journeys and my resting-places *
and are acquainted with all my ways.

³ Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, *
but you, O GOD, know it altogether.

⁴ You press upon me behind and before *
and lay your hand upon me.

⁵ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; *
it is so high that I cannot attain to it.

¹² For you yourself created my inmost parts; *
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹³ I will thank you because I am marvelously made; *
your works are wonderful, and I know it well.

¹⁴ My body was not hidden from you, *
while I was being made in secret
and woven in the depths of the earth.

¹⁵ Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb;
all of them were written in your book; *
they were fashioned day by day,
when as yet there was none of them.

¹⁶ How deep I find your thoughts, O God! *
how great is the sum of them!

¹⁷ If I were to count them, they would be more in number than the
sand; *
to count them all, my life span would need to be like yours.

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

The Lord has shown forth his glory: Come let us adore him.

The Lessons

FIRST READING: 1 Samuel 3:1-10

A Reading from the first book of Samuel.

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

FIRST CANTICLE

Canticle 18 (EOW): A Song to the Lamb *Dignus es*
Revelation 4:11; 5:9-10, 13

Splendor and honor and royal power *
 are yours by right, O God Most High,
For you created everything that is, *
 and by your will they were created and have their being;
And yours by right, O Lamb that was slain, *
 for with your blood you have redeemed for God,
From every family, language, people, and nation, *
 a royal priesthood to serve our God.
And so, to the One who sits upon the throne, *
 and to Christ the Lamb,
Be worship and praise, dominion and splendor, *
 for ever and for evermore.

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

A Reading from the Paul's first letter to the Church in Corinth.

“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,” and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two shall be one flesh.” But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

Reader The Word of the Lord.
People Thanks be to God.

SECOND CANTICLE

Canticle D (EOW): A Song of the Wilderness
Isaiah 35:1-7, 10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, *
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
It shall blossom abundantly, *
and rejoice with joy and singing.
They shall see the glory of the Lord, *
the majesty of our God.
Strengthen the weary hands, *
and make firm the feeble knees.
Say to the anxious, "Be strong, do not fear! *
Here is your God, coming with judgment to save you."
Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, *
and the ears of the deaf be unstopped.
Then shall the lame leap like a deer, *
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness *
and streams in the desert;
The burning sand shall become a pool *
and the thirsty ground, springs of water.
The ransomed of God shall return with singing, *
with everlasting joy upon their heads.
Joy and gladness shall be theirs, *
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

SEQUENCE HYMN *Precious Lord, Take My Hand*

Words & music by **Thomas Dorsey**

Presented by **Julie Pendegraft, soprano**

1. Pre - cious Lord, take my hand, Lead me on, let me
2. When my way grows— drear, pre - cious Lord, lin - ger
3. When the dark - ness ap - pears and the night draws—

1. stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
2. near, When my life is al - most gone;
3. near, And the day is past and gone;

1. — Through the storm, through the night, Lead me on to the
2. — Hear my cry, hear my call, Hold my hand, lest I
3. — At the riv - er I stand, Guide my feet, hold my

1. light, Take my hand, pre-cious Lord, Lead me on.
2. fall, Take my hand, pre-cious Lord, Lead me on.
3. hand, Take my hand, pre-cious Lord, Lead me on.

THIRD READING: John 1:43-51

A Reading from John.

Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

SERMON

Reverend Benedict Varnum

THE APOSTLES' CREED

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.

Officiant The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Officiant Let us pray.

The Prayers

SALUTATION

Officiant The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Officiant Let us pray.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy Name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
 and the power, and the glory,
 forever and ever. Amen.

Officiant Show us your mercy, O Lord;

People And grant us your salvation.

Officiant Clothe your ministers with righteousness;

People Let your people sing with joy.

Officiant Give peace, O Lord, in all the world;

People For only in you can we live in safety.

Officiant Lord, keep this nation under your care;
People And guide us in the way of justice and truth.

Officiant Let your way be known upon earth;
People Your saving health among all nations.

Officiant Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten;
People Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

For those in our hearts, especially Connie, Jamie, Kobe, Hayden, Dick, Pat G., Pat S., Amy, Paige, Nancy, Bailey, Norma, Byron, Sharon, JoEY, Helen, Jim, Danielle, Susan, Devon, Bill, Harold, Heather, Amelia, Melissa, David, Karen, Ellie, Tom, Maggie, Sandra, Logan, Jean, Heidi, Mark, Abby, Paul, Carolyn, Ginny, Linda, Joe, Shirley, Sharon, Norm, Joey, Bob, Tom, Massouda, Nazeer and Lorraine. Are there any others who need our prayers?

We ask your prayers for all those who have died, especially Jim, father of Rhonda Vest, in the hope of the resurrection and their families.

Officiant Create in us clean hearts, O God;
People And sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

LITANY

Thank you, Lord for taking care of your children.

O God, our rock in times of trial, thank you for being with us all as we face the difficulties that the coronavirus has brought. We feel your presence and are comforted.

You are there with those who are disappointed at not having the joyful celebrations of weddings, family gatherings, graduations and celebrations of life at birth and death. You provide joy to us in other ways, if we just pay attention.

God, hear our Prayer.

You are there with those of us quarantined at home, when we want to be saying words of comfort to those who are far from us. You take our words and whisper them to our loved ones for us.

God, hear our Prayer.

You are there, holding the hand of the sick or dying when their family cannot be with them.

God, hear our Prayer.

You are there protecting and guiding all on the front lines of medical care, vaccine development, police and firefighters and those in the supply chain to provide us food from farmers to truckers to grocery store workers.

God, hear our Prayer.

You are with our clergy who are doing your work under stressful circumstances and providing them with your words of comfort and caring to share with us.

God, hear our Prayer.

Let us never forget that wherever we are, you are there also with us, every step of the way.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

COLLECTS

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen*

O God, the King eternal, whose light divides the day from the night and turns the shadow of death into the morning: Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to keep your law, and guide our feet into the way of peace; that, having done your will with cheerfulness during the day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

PRAYER FOR MISSION

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

THE GENERAL THANKSGIVING

Almighty God, Author of all mercies,
we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks
for all your goodness and loving-kindness
to us and to all whom you have made.
We bless you for our creation, preservation,
and all the blessings of this life;
but above all for your immeasurable love
in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ;
for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.
And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies,
that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise,
not only with our lips, but in our lives,
by giving up our selves to your service,
and by walking before you

in holiness and righteousness all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Birthdays: Rebecca Smith, Rileigh Heller, Reese Everett, Tanner Pickett, Janis Stephenson, Melinda Hill and Charles Horine-Sedlacek

Anniversaries:

O God, our times are in your hand: Look with favor, we pray, on your servants as they begin another year. Grant that they may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen their trust in your goodness all the days of their life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A PRAYER OF ST. CHRYSOSTOM

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. *Amen.*

CONCLUDING VERSICLE

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CONCLUDING SENTENCE

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to God from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Ephesians 3:20, 21

POSTLUDE

What Does the Lord Require?



1 What does the Lord re - quire for praise and of - fer - ing?
2 Ru - lers of earth, give ear! Should you not jus - tice show?
3 Still down the a - ges ring the pro - phet's stern com-mands.
4 How shall my soul ful - fill God's law so hard and high?



What sac - ri - fice de - sire, or trib - ute bid you bring?
Will God your plead - ing hear, while crime and cruel - ty grow?
To mer - chant, work - er, king he brings God's high de - mands.
Let Christ en - due our will with grace to for - ti - fy.



Do just - ly; love mer - cy; walk hum - bly with your God.
Do just - ly; love mer - cy; walk hum - bly with your God.
Do just - ly; love mer - cy; walk hum - bly with your God.
Then just - ly; in mer - cy we'll (hum-bly walk with God.)



hum - bly walk with God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Music to honor Martin Luther King Jr.

Music at today's Morning Prayer Service honors the birthday of the great civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr. "*Precious Lord, Take My Hand*" was MLK's favorite gospel song and was the source of inspiration for the civil rights movement. He requested Mahalia Jackson sing it at several civil rights rallies. She also sang it at King's funeral in 1968. The Rev. Thomas Dorsey wrote the lyrics and tune in response to the tragic death of his wife in childbirth and death of his infant son in 1932.

The hymn "*What does the Lord Require*" (Hymnal #605) reflects the theme of Christian responsibility; "Do justly; love mercy; walk humbly with your God." Verse 1 addresses sacrifices Christians make; Verse 2 asks rulers of earth to show justice.

"*Air for Organ*" is a solo organ piece written by African American composer, William B. Cooper (1923-1993). He holds a Doctorate of Sacred Music from Christ Theological Seminary in Younkers, New York and has earned many honors for his compositions. He served on faculties of several colleges and also was Minister of Music at historic St. Phillip's Episcopal Church and St Martin's Episcopal Church in Harlem. The hymn tune "Doryce" is dedicated to his wife.

Online Coffee Fellowship

Join members of the St. A's family on Zoom **Today at 11:30 am (following this service)** for an interactive online social hour.

Elaine Randall Book Club

January's book is **Love is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Time** by Bishop Michael Curry. Books may be purchased online.

Have a Video Drone?

Do you have a video drone that could take occasional videos of our construction project as we go? Please let Fr Ben know, we'd love to connect about getting even more "progress updates" up for people to see!

Instructed Eucharist and Drive-Up Communion on Jan 24th!

During the winter months, we won't have outdoor services, so Fr Ben will be repeating the "drive up" distribution of communion on certain Sundays – we'll get a full calendar of these dates out next week!

Our first date will be **Sunday, January 24th**, and Fr Ben will also lead an "instructed Eucharist" on that day. We do these every year or two to help new members and youth hear about how each piece of our worship service fits together. This is a good opportunity for people of all ages who want to know why we do different pieces of the church service, and if you have questions, you are welcome to send them to Fr Ben ahead of time at rector@sainta.net and he'll try to work in answers during the instructed part. You can simply plan to watch online at 10:30 on Sunday, Jan 24th, and then from 11:15 to noon after the service, Fr Ben will be out in front of the church distributing communion in our west parking lot.

Sister, Brother, Let Us Serve You

We now have many volunteers for parish members who request them for our new service ministry of "Acts of Love". All we need now is people to sign up for assistance. Do you need tutoring for your school age child, a cooked meal, to be driven to an appointment or ??? Please **CLICK HERE** to see the full list of possible ways volunteers can assist you.

If you see a few ways we could make your life a little easier, please mark them along with a preferred way to contact you and the best day and time. If there is something you need that is *not* listed, fill it in and we will do our best to find a volunteer with that skill.

If you have questions, email Barb Hall at barbhall_18301@yahoo.com

Zoom Valentine Party

Ladies! You are invited to a Zoom Valentine Party with the Daughters of the King. The Naomi and Ruth Chapter at St. Augustine's is a sisterhood dedicated to prayer, study & service. We are excited to have you gather with us and check out what Daughters of the King is all about. We have actively maintained our connections through the pandemic, & would love to share our joy! Save the date for Saturday, February 13th from 10:30 a.m. to noon (or as your schedule allows!) Email Pam Wright wrightpamelaj@gmail.com with questions and/or to RSVP for the party! Nothing to lose and much to gain! Join us for some fun!!

See Old Friends—Make New Friends Chat

Several members of the parish think we need more conversation to get through the winter! Please join us on Saturday mornings at 10:30 a.m. for an hour to just talk about whatever is on your mind.

We are calling it: See Old Friends—Make New Friends.

Anyone you think might like to get on to chat is eligible—men or women, Episcopalians or not, just come, visit, meet new people, and enjoy an hour of conversation on Zoom. The link can be found [here](#).

Trouble, contact Sandra Squires at sksquires@cox.net or Carol Ott at cdianneott@icloud.com.

Nominations for St A's Leadership

Each year at our January Annual Meeting, we elect some of our parish officers. In the coming weeks, **Lynette Kautz** (lfkautz1@cox.net) will be serving as our lay chairperson of nominations, and you can e-mail her to nominate yourself or someone else in our parish (if you've asked them to consider it!). **The Annual Meeting will take place on Sunday, January 31st, time and venue TBD.** Here are the roles that we will elect:

- **Parish Vestry**, 3 seats. This is our formal parish board. It meets monthly to review large project goals, reports from ministries or committees, and our monthly financials. This is a three-year term from Jan 2021 to Jan 2024, and represents a steady commitment to

leadership. Our Vestry must be formal parish members and givers of record (Fr Ben or our administrator, Jay Hammond, can help with questions around this!). The meetings are on Sunday afternoons for approximately 90 minutes, and this commitment of leadership helps guide much of what we do together! This is a great role for someone who feels called to prayerfully helping make our formal decisions for the parish.

- **Legacy Society Director**, 1 seat. This is a board that practices longer-range financial planning and stewardship. They use our brief planned giving policies to help guide the planning for, receiving of, and disbursement of estate gifts. This is a three-year term with quarterly meetings to review the status of our invested funds and any new gifts or expenditures. The committee is chaired by its senior member, with one seat rotating each year, so our directors are constantly helping train one another. This is a great ministry for someone who wants to put some thoughtful time in every few months to help keep an eye on some long-term goals and hopes for St A's.
- **Annual Council Delegate**, 3 seats. Each year our parish sends a delegation to the Annual Council of the Diocese of Nebraska, where clergy and laypeople gather, pray together, hear from our bishop and often a keynote speaker, and take up some of the business of the diocese. This is a rich time of sharing about ministries, bringing ideas home, and meeting Episcopalians from around the state of Nebraska, and is planned to involve a Friday/Saturday event in October that will take place in Hastings, Nebraska, this coming year. This is a good ministry for someone who loves to learn and share, pray with others, and help our diocese consider and confirm some of its plans for the coming year.
- **Questions? Please feel free to reach out to Fr Ben** (rector@sainta.net) or **Lynette Kautz** (lfkautz1@cox.net), and we can talk more about these parish roles!

Annual Meeting January 31 at Noon

Our St. Augustine's Annual Meeting will take place online this year over zoom. Because the format is a bit limiting, our meeting will be a bit more basic than in other years and will focus largely on our parish "business" as well as comments from Fr. Ben, which will include an update about our Capital Campaign project and build.

If you have questions regarding this format, please contact Fr. Ben or Kate Kielion, our director of ministries. This [link](#) will take you directly to the meeting on Sunday, January 31 at Noon. We anticipate the meeting will take about 1 hour, but have blocked on open ended session in case our work takes a bit longer.

Office Hours

We are now without water and the restrooms are blocked off for construction. Due to this, we are not able to hold gatherings in the church any longer and office staff will be mostly remote.

Please email Jay at parish@sainta.net before you head to church for any reason to be sure she will be there. As always, if you need anything from Fr. Ben or Kate, feel free to email or call.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Warming to the Task

Fairly simple and encouraging updates this week. MCL, our construction partner, has been able to use these warm days to push ahead into some concrete work. The foundation and footings for the building have been poured and checked, and over the past week or so, plumbers and electricians have put in their basic infrastructure, which was then filled back in with earth that was removed by the digs. They are cautiously optimistic that they'll be able to complete a major concrete pour for our interior flooring this coming week, which will represent a really good negotiation of the possible impacts the weather might have had on our project. This means that they may be able to have building framing up as early as the end of February. Winter months are a bit more expensive in general, and we began a bit later than we'd hoped to after a lengthy permit approval process through the Fall, but this is an encouraging start.

Meanwhile, an older septic tank along the north side of our parking lot will be removed, and earth will be used to create some small grading and a slab site for moving Morgan Hall (our garden shed) out of the way of our improved septic system for bathrooms. The physical site is busy, these days, with lots of earth movers – great time to bring kids by to look through the fence at all the activity: just remember to stay safely outside the work zone itself!

Indoors, the parish took directly over one aspect of the project, which is the Audio/Visual components. This includes some networking features, parts of the electronic “nervous system” of the new building, and a number of monitor screens and their hookups in the parish hall and classrooms. We took it on because we wanted to add some sanctuary upgrades at the same time, and have a single contractor efficiently program the entire building at the same time.

This week, we signed with that contractor (ECCO) after a review by MCL, RDG, and our Finance Committee and Vestry. The sanctuary work can begin immediately, while the capital improvement portions have some time to them

as the physical structure is built, which gives us and that vendor some time to watch for good deals or pricing changes at various electronic shows along the way. Meanwhile, this means that we can advance even farther on our weekly worship streaming quality, and as we get our permanent tools in place for that, we can also begin training more people to take on the truly modern service of being “A/V lay ministers of the Gospel of Jesus” ... better name pending?

Stay tuned for more updates as they come!

Please feel free to send on any questions to Father Ben at rector@sainta.net!

Rector's Reflection

Thursday, January 14, 2021

Keeping Vigil

This past week has had some major ups and downs for me, and I'm sure for you. I have a hard time not regularly checking the news. It feels that we're in a time of watching and waiting to see what will happen next – a time pointed in some portion at least at the presidential inauguration on January 20th, and the open question of whether our country will experience a second round of attacks like those of January 6th.

I don't have much to add to what you can see on the news: arrests are being steadily made as members of the attack last week are identified. Many of them are suffering additional professional consequences as employers terminate them or clients drop them. Reports about the exact nature of the attack are still coming forth, with accounts from the banality of wanderers-in to the chilling prospect that some members of the attack coordinated with people within the capitol building's security and leadership infrastructure, and came with very specific, coordinated plans for violence.

What prayer can we make in the face of such events, beyond praying that the investigations uncover the truth and that our justice system can truly serve to provide somber consequences for terrible acts and deter those who might try this again? As is commonly said when we seek reconciliation, repentance must come first, and where the violent are unrepentant, it is part of the yet-unperfected nature of creation under human stewardship that we must have consequences and restraint for those who would harm their neighbor instead of loving them.

For most of us, though, this is a time of heavy waiting. In the church, we talk of vigils – a time of expectant waiting that still includes an element of the unknown. Some of them are holy rhythms that have been patterned for generations on ancient traditions: the Easter Vigil is a time of beholding mystery before the sun rises on Easter Sunday, with an outcome both known and steeped in the not-yet-seen of God's living Spirit continuing to transform

our creation. Holding vigil can be an incredibly powerful spiritual experience.

The vigil we keep now has a different character, at least in part: we await things truly not known. Though some of these groups have promised further violence, we don't know yet if this is bravado, or if they will blink before the presence of a prepared National Guard. We don't know if they will be pushed from rage back to mere anger or sadness by the consequences they see applied to those who made that first attack. We don't know if some of the conspiracies will finally fail in the face of the banality of a peaceful transition of governance. We are in waiting.

Prayer is a good companion in a vigil.

Some of prayer is simply giving voice to our yearning, and doing it before God, who is with us. We pray that there will not be violence. We pray that hearts can return to peace. We pray that God's living and loving Spirit can help every human person see again a beloved neighbor in the face of those they fear or hate, and that God can help us find our way back out of our prodigality and back to relationship with one another. We pray these things not as if commanding wishes, but because God has promised that these things are possible for us as a human family that God has called beloved children. And knowing that God has made it possible, we give voice to our hope in those promises again, in part to orient us back to the life of prayer and discipleship that leads to the fulfillment of those promises.

That transformation of self is the other profoundly important piece of prayer. We don't pray for God to transform the toads around us into princes: we pray instead that God help us let go of the toadiness of our own quick judgments and harsh reactions, that we can become neighbors to others again, too. It's an easy enough moment for me to say "*I didn't violently attack police officers and break into a government building*" ... but I've certainly had moments where I let snappishness and cynicism lead my comments (especially on the internet).

I could add to that confession other moments, where it was easy for me to tease someone who was falling short of the kind of respectability in politics

or conversation that people like to wrap around our American traditions. Or moments where I've pointed out how stupid an idea was, without acknowledging the real need or pain giving rise to the hope that such a solution might help. Mind you, I haven't been a politician, and most of the time in my "meat space" relationships I'm on my better behavior ... but I've got things to confess that have been a piece of the worst demons of our political conversation over the past decade or two, even if I haven't ever planned or celebrated a violent crime as a part of it.

Prayer should transform me. Bearing witness to what terrible violence emerges when we divide ourselves should transform me. We should all recognize from this the reality that we need to actively seek to become more like the Jesus who gathers and heals the needy and sick and poor, and less like the Satan who tempts him in the wilderness with promises of earthly ease and power and safety. The work of Jesus is big work, and it takes all of us. Shame on me for the moments I fell short of helping.

Vigil is a good time to make such confessions, and to find within them the real grace and forgiveness that God gives us, that Jesus calls for from the Cross, and that the Spirit breathes forth in Creation every second of every day. Vigil is a good moment to feel that God's hand is on our shoulders, stern but steady, true but forgiving, and ready to embrace us as we turn back and commit again to a different kind of world.

Vigil's unknowns, in other words, don't simply belong to those who might try to surprise the world with violence. In waiting there is also the chance to find God. In waiting there is also the chance to be reborn by the love of Jesus and the grace of the Spirit. In waiting we can remember who we were made to be before the world fell into the sins of divided peoples and nations. In waiting we can be caught up and lifted again into the breath of God's Holy Spirit at work in this world. In waiting we can be transformed.

That means that we can be spiritually ready. The violences of this world might still rage, and be met by those defenders of peace and order who must still have their work in this unperfected world. But to those who have truly found our way to the Cross of Christ, and found our forgiveness there, and been restored to love God and love our neighbor, we will be able to look upon the world that is coming with compassion and empathy, rather than

terror. With sadness, rather than fear. And beyond that, with hope and belief in the world that God can bring about instead, and the work we can take up to help build it.

Amen.

Ben
In Christ,

Ben +

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