

March 19, 2020

Greetings. And peace.

It's Thursday, March 19th, as I write this. The first day of Spring. A day promising new birth, new possibilities, new life. I love springtime. Warmer days, brighter evenings. Waiting for the first tulip, the first crocus, the first bud on the tree. Hearing the birds. Seeing neighbours tumble out of their homes like bears waking from hibernation. It's nice.

It's also a mess. What was once freshly fallen snow is now just a pile of dirty unwanted ice. And as it melts it reveals trash and "gifts" on the lawn left by passing people and dogs. And why didn't I rake the leaves in the Fall? And mud. Lots of mud.

It's perfect, though. Creation in all of its beautiful imperfection. Bringing new life into being is messy.

It's so appropriate that we experience Lent together during this time of year. In this spiritual season we talk about getting ready for new life. We prepare ourselves for Easter; not just remembering something that happened once, but getting our beings ready for resurrection to happen in us now. Bringing new life in a new way. And so we talk about Lent being a bit tough. We stop singing Hallelujahs, we give things up, we begin the journey in ashes, we repent-reflect-recharge. Like spring cleaning in our homes, Lent is a time of spiritual spring cleaning... and it's sometimes a bit messy.

Well, it has been a long time since we have shared a Lenten season that has been this messy. These are difficult times. It can be frightening, overwhelming, and certainly frustrating. I feel as if all I've done for days is cancel things. And it's hard not to get swallowed up in fear and panic.

But I look out the window again and think, "There is new life in all of this mess." All of the inconvenience, all of the difficult choices, all those moments when there seem to be no Hallelujahs...

This is Lent. This is about letting go, about doing new things, about reflecting on what's most important, and making choices that let Life happen.

I hate not having Church services and other gatherings. I miss you. But, in a way, it is a spiritual exercise... a Lenten thing: giving something up for life to happen. And in this case, literally perhaps. Making wise choices to help stop the spread of this illness. So when I'm feeling overwhelmed and frustrated, I breathe, say a prayer, and let it go. Our focus is to do everything that we can to take care of each other. That's life. And life is happening.

This Sunday is the fourth week of Lent. Traditionally it is called Laetare Sunday. It comes from the words used at the beginning of the Latin Mass for this week; words from Isaiah 66:10... "Rejoice, O Jerusalem." Laetare is Latin for rejoice. It is meant to be a bit of a break from the severity of Lent. A time to relax a bit. The "have mercy on me" prayer gets replaced with a shout, "Rejoice!"

There is a steep hill in the center of town in Ste. Adele in the Laurentians. Little restaurants and shops line the hill. But it's a bit of a climb. Well, halfway up that hill there is a little wooden bench (or at least there used to be) designed to give weary hill climbers a chance to sit and rest. Some clever person painted the word "oomph" on the bench. Oomph. I need to sit. Rest for a bit. I think of that little bench every year on this Sunday. Laetare. Rejoice. Oomph. I need to rest. Breathe. Take in the sights. Remember why I'm on this journey. Remind myself that I can do this.

This Sunday take a little oomph time. Rejoice. Rest your spirit by doing something that recharges you. And remember that together we will make it. God is with us. There is life happening. Journey on. Call friends. Check in on neighbours. Find ways to take care of yourself and others. There is new life happening in the mess.

God bless you all. And, please, if there is anything that you need, let me know.

See you soon.

Rev. Steve