

Eastertide

In addition to being a single day, Easter is also a season in the Christian year called Eastertide that lasts for fifty days, concluding on Pentecost Sunday. Perhaps it is the most important season of the liturgical year. Everything that comes before it, points to it and everything after, results from it. During Eastertide the question that comes into all our hearts is, "What does Jesus' resurrection mean for our lives in the here and now of this world?" The consistent themes of this season are peace, caring for others, and love.



One of the most memorable stories that comes early in Eastertide is the recounting of the appearance of the resurrected Christ to his disciples. It begins like this...

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

- John 20:19-22

Like the disciples locked in that room full of fear and uncertainty, we have just begun recovering from Holy Week. In a week's time we experienced the lowest of lows and the highest of highs on the spectrum of human emotions. Holy Week began with shouts of hosanna and the hope that the promised Messiah had arrived. It continued with conspiring political and religious powers, a betrayal, and a midnight prayer. It concluded with Jesus' final breath, a stone that had been rolled away, and God's final victory over death.

After so many of the ups and downs of Holy Week we need to pause, calm our souls, and enter into an Eastertide time of peace...peace for our minds and peace for our hearts. Holy Week has been stressful and we need to find a way to bring it to a close and begin again to live out its calling. And, that's what the disciples needed as well if they were to get on with the mission of Jesus to heal the sick, bring good news to the poor, love as Christ loved them, and witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus to the world.

So, Christ appeared to his frightened friends and said, "Peace be with you." Stephanie Duncan Smith in her work, Even After Everything says, "After everything, these are the four words that hold the world. Peace is the only power capable of breaking the brutal hold of fight, flight, freeze. Peace is the bear hug, the belly laugh, the huge, sweeping exhale capable of ushering our bodies from shock into divine shelter."

In Eastertide Jesus says to us as well, "Peace be with you." Time to come off of the high of Holy Week, take a deep breath, and relax into the joy of the resurrection. Holy Week might be a time to inhale the uncertainty, the stress of the passion, the images of violence, the disaster of power gone wild...and the earthquake and the darkness and the sound of a sealed tomb. But, Eastertide is when we are to exhale and receive the peace of Christ so that we too might be able to celebrate the resurrection for fifty days surrounded by and saturated with the peace of Christ.

What kind of peace does Christ offer us today. Once again let's hear from Stephanie Duncan Smith..."the peace of Christ is a peace that will never overpromise, a peace we can trust with

the full weight of our being. This peace is a person whose voice has cracked, whose memory holds complex trauma, and whose body bears scars, and his promise is not safety, but presence." Now, may the peace of Christ be with you this Eastertide and forevermore!

Peace,
Pastor Paul

Even After Everything

https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/736981/even-after-everything-by-stephanie-duncan-smith/?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

PRACTICE

Here's a wonderful practice guide from Christine Valters Painter on breath prayer that can be integrated into today's gospel reading and Paul's Ponderings:

We begin just sitting quietly, savoring a few moments of stillness in your day.

This might be first thing in the morning or at the end of day.

Choose a time when you won't be interrupted for ten minutes....

As you inhale, you whisper to yourself: *I breathe in peace.*

As you exhale, you say softly: *I breathe out love.*

Imagine inviting God's peace into your heart each time you inhale and love filling the world each time you exhale.

PLEASE READ Christine's entire post on this practice at her [Abbey of the Arts website HERE.](#)

Breathe in the breath of God - Breathe out your cares and concerns

Breathe in the love of God - Breathe out your tension and turmoil

Breath in the life of God - Breathe out your frustration and fear

Sit quietly in the presence of the one who calms the storm

Sit patiently in the presence of the one who renews our strength

Sit at peace in the presence of the one who restores our soul