Mes bien-aimés dans le Christ,

Jamais auparavant, n'avons-nous connu une fête de Pâques comme celle-ci.

La plupart d’entre nous ne se retrouveront pas autour d’une table pour partager un festin de Pâques avec les membres de nos familles et nos amis parce que la plupart d’entre nous sommes confinés chez nous, d’autres sont atteints de la COVID-19. Les bûches de Pâques ne trouveront pas d’acheteurs et les chasses aux œufs de Pâques n’auront pas lieu. Nous ne nous rassemblerons pas dans nos églises pour célébrer la résurrection de Jésus-Christ. De bien des manières, Pâques, cette année, ressemblera plutôt à une prolongation non invitée et non bienvenue de la période du Carême.

Nous vivons présentement un moment déterminant de l’histoire de l’humanité. Cette pandémie met à l’épreuve nos préconceptions individuelles et collectives, notre détermination et nos capacités. Pour certains d’entre nous, c’est peut-être aussi un test de notre foi.

La foi des disciples de Jésus a elle aussi été mise à l’épreuve lorsqu’ils ont été témoins de la mort cruelle et injuste de leur ami, qui, à la fin, est mort seul. Jésus n’a pas blâmé ses amis pour leur très humain manque de foi, mais a plutôt réussi à le restaurer par sa victoire de la vie sur la mort.

La résurrection de Jésus est le moment déterminant de l’histoire de l’humanité. Par la résurrection, Dieu, à travers le Christ, proclame que la mort n’est pas la fin des fins divines dans le monde que Dieu aime.

Il peut être difficile de percevoir des signes de rédemption alors que nous vivons à travers un tel fléau. Les disciples de Jésus ont, eux aussi, eu de la difficulté à reconnaître Jésus ressuscité après la catastrophe de sa mise à mort. Mais l’amour rédempteur de Dieu est toujours là, même si les circonstances font qu’il est difficile pour nous de le discerner.

C’est pourquoi, à travers les mots d’un hymne ancien souvent chanté ou déclamé pendant les funérailles chrétiennes, « mais des profondeurs de la tombe monte notre chant : Alléluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. » C’est pourquoi, pendant une Pâques qui ressemble plus à un Carême, nous proclamons encore avec confiance « Alleluia! Le Christ est ressuscité ! »

Et c’est pourquoi, alors que nous vivons dans l’angoisse et l’incertitude pendant cette pandémie, nous répondons avec une espérance confiante et assurée: « Le Seigneur est vraiment ressuscité! Alleluia! »

+Bruce

Bruce Myers OGS

COVID-19

The Diocese of Quebec will continue to gather on Facebook Live and through telephone conferencing until the COVID-19 pandemic has eased and health authorities report that it is safe to gather.

Join us every Sunday at 10:30 a.m. ET in the weeks ahead as we build our faith, seek God, and comfort one another in these trying times.

To join by Facebook Live (no Facebook account needed), visit https://bit.ly/2JQ5vyG

To join by phone, call 647-736-0299. The PIN (PIN code) that you will be asked for is 343 395 677#. Long-distance charges may apply.

De l’Évêque

Lettre pastorale de Pâques

Quebec, Pâques 2020

Beloved in Christ,

This is an Easter like none other we have ever experienced.

Most of us won’t be gathering around tables for traditional Easter feasts with family and friends because most of us are in isolation, some because we are ill with COVID-19. Easter lilies will go unpurchased and Easter eggs unhunted. None of us will be gathering in our churches to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In many ways, Easter this year will simply feel like an unwelcomed and unwanted extension of Lent.

We are living through a defining moment in human history. This pandemic is testing our individual and collective assumptions, resolve, and capacities.

For some of us, it may also be testing our faith.

The faith of Jesus’ disciples was tested as they witnessed the painful and unjust death of their friend, who in the end died in isolation. Jesus didn’t admonish his friends’ very human lack of faith, but restored it with his victory of life over death.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the defining moment in human history. Through the resurrection, God in Christ declares that death is not the end of our story and that all things will be redeemed.

Our Easter hope is that even as we journey together through this valley of the shadow of death, God travels with us, and is even now helping redeem this calamity for God’s good purposes in the world God loves.

Seeing signs of redemption when we’re in the midst of disaster can be difficult. The disciples had trouble recognizing the resurrected Jesus after the disaster that was his execution. But God’s redeeming love is still at work, even if our troubles make it difficult for us to see.

This is why, in the words of an ancient hymn often sung or said at Christian funerals, “even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.” This is why, even in the midst of an Easter tide that still outwardly feels like Lent, we still proclaim with confidence: “Alleluia! Christ is risen!” This is why, even in the midst of the fear and uncertainty of this pandemic, we reply with sure and certain hope: “The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!”

FROM THE BISHOP

Easter pastoral letter

Quebec City, Easter 2020

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

Thank you for my dog

By Louisa Blair
Columnist

I always thought I was quite a brave person. Now I know I’m not. Because of terror, I can’t concentrate on my work. I’m not as greedy as usual, a sure sign something is amiss. Instead of feeding my face, I feed my terror by checking the latest horrors in the papers or on Facebook or Twitter every few minutes. I’m trying to go on a diet.

My prayer life, however, thanks to craven fear, has suddenly taken a massive leap forward. My praying goes like this: Save me, save my mum, save my family, save my friends [frantically try to name them all, and worry that I’m forgetting someone important and so God will too], save the migrant workers in India. Put your strength into the middle of me, instead of fear.

If I stay at it long enough, it sometimes unaccountably turns into gratitude. Then it goes like this: Thank you for my dog whom I can hug. Thank you for my family whom I can talk to, thank you for the internet [first time I ever prayed that]. Thank you that we have enough to eat today. Thank you for Bach. Thank you for you. Thank you for all the good things that will come out of this that we don’t even know about yet.

Wait a minute, that last bit sounds suspiciously like trusting, something that I don’t have, so who on earth is doing that praying?

My Bible reading has taken a Great Leap Forward, too. Perhaps there will be consolation here, I think to myself, in the wisdom of our ancestors in the faith. And there is. The Bible suddenly seems to be written by people who all felt like me, terrified, threatened by a strong and merciless enemy, facing sickness or defeat or death, begging God for help. God is still saying what God has always said, but my defences are down. I can hear it.

A friend of mine who has the grim responsibility of running a residence for old people says we are being given a Sabbath time to stop and re-evaluate. “When it is over, will it be business as usual?” he asks. “If so, then there will only have been resuscitation, and people will die again. We must not just pray for resuscitation (an end to the virus), but for resurrection.” Already we are learning from each other what resurrection could look like.

If we were wondering what happened to the Holy Spirit in this godless society, we have our answer now. The Spirit is alive in the kindness that has sprung up among the regions of the diocese, with special emphasis on regional activities and matters of concern for both laity and clergy. It shall provide an opportunity for the bishop to address the people of the diocese directly and seek to cover items from outside the diocese that bear on its corporate life. The Gazette shall provide a channel for information and a forum for discussion, shall be encouraged to express a wide range of opinion within the diocese, and shall enjoy editorial independence. (Canon 22 of the Synod of the Diocese of Quebec)

Editorial and advertising enquiries, as well as letters to the editor, should be directed to: communications@quebec.anglican.ca

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September issue deadline: July 29, 2020
Reflections on confinement: Witnesses on forest walks

By the Rev. Cynthia Patterson
The Parish of Gaspé, Holy Trinity (Grosse Isle) and All Saints Memorial (Entry Island)

CONFINEMENT. The term used traditionally for the time before and during childbirth when women withdrew from society.

As I write, in France we enter our 19th day of “confinement,” the term used here.

It is Palm Sunday. I tried to find a church that would be open for private worship for just two people. But the one near us, and therefore within the range of travel permitted, is inside the grounds and behind the walls permitted, is inside the grounds and behind the walls of Chateau Montréal, a classified historic, semi-public site and therefore closed. We shall celebrate here, outside, with pine branches rather than palms, birdsong as our music, the forest creatures our shy parishioners.

Palm Sunday. A pivotal time, when joy and tragedy, life and death stand side by side, bleeding into one another.

The woods slope to meadows, tell-tale signs of ancient water-courses, then roll up to ridges where Atlantic pines pierce the heavens. I am not confined to an apartment or a house or even the 2km permitted to walk oneself or one’s dog. I can walk as far as I am able without running into anyone. What a blessing, to be confined with silence, solitude, and the land. All of which nurture me.

As I walk, I am surrounded by clouds of witnesses. They are not noisy. Their presence is soft like summer rain. My family. My parishioners. Friends and colleagues. The clouds of witnesses do not sift through the landscape. The only growth to be found in the obituary columns.

Another witness has recently joined the walk. His is a heavy presence with which I struggle. Bernard Mandeville, a Dutch-Anglo medical doctor, philosopher, political economist and a writer, mainly of a satirical bent. He lived from 1670 to 1733, managing frequently to offend polite society with his pamphlets and books. He strode along the trail with the firm step of a man confident his time has come.

Has it? Could Mandeville be right? Or at least partly? The world is in turmoil. Yet beneath the concrete of lonely deaths and exhausted care-givers, surprising shoots and blossoms are pushing through. How can this be?

The so-called ‘Forest’ of the Bees is a long, broad stretch of land and World War I, William Butler Yeats wrote in 1920 “The Second Coming.” He concludes his poem about the tumultuous, disorderly times, when “the centre will not hold,” by asking: “And what rough beast, its hour come round at last, Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?”

We are the rough beast. We are the waiting cradle. We are the clouds of witnesses. People of faith and hope.

The term used traditionally for the time before and during childbirth when women withdrew from society.

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We are the rough beast. We are the waiting cradle. We are the clouds of witnesses. People of faith and hope.

What will be born out of our confinement?
The precedent of pandemics—and history’s lessons

By Meb Reisner Wright
Diocesan Historian

In the midst of what seems like unprecedented disruption to life and health by COVID-19, it may be comforting to learn that people of the Diocese of Quebec have faced and withstood a pandemic before.

It was a long time ago—long before the founding of the Gazette—188 years in fact. It started in June of 1832 with the arrival of ships up the St. Lawrence River, and it came from the British Isles. In the early days of the pandemic, the origins of the disease were across the ocean and far to the east.

In Quebec, the clergy—especially those in the remote parishes—were shrouded in the distant future.

As now, when the disease hit, healthcare systems struggled valiantly to meet the challenge as best they could. As now, public resources and the devotion of individuals were tested to the limit.

The disease was cholera. Since 1817, what was known as the Asiatic Cholera (originating in Bengal) had been spreading through Asia and Europe leaving tens of thousands dead.

In Quebec, the daily toll climbed past 70 and into the 90s to peak at over 100 on 16 June. The daily toll exceeded 100 before beginning to decline. In Montreal the number of deaths mounted daily, passing 100 on 17 June and reaching a peak of 149 on 19 June. The next day showed a sharp drop to below 100 and for weeks after that the deaths ranged between 10 and 40 per day.

Many fled from the cities to stay with friends or relatives in the countryside. The Montreal Gazette, in an issue reduced to half a sheet because many of the paper’s workers were absent, appealed for calm.

In Quebec, the clergy—especially those in the region of the city—were constantly called upon to visit the sick, relieve the destitute, minister to the dying and bury the dead in great numbers.

Finally the terrible year drew to a close. On Sunday, December 30, George Jehoshaphat Mountain (future bishop, but then archdeacon of Quebec) preached a sermon in the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, later published as A Retrospect of the Summer and Autumn of 1832. Reading it in light of present-day events, some of his descriptions seem eerily familiar.

He recalls...

...the stillness which reigned in scenes of traffic and places of concourse, the suspension of business,—The interruption of labour,—the closing of houses whose inhabitants fled to the country; [the closing] of shops from the death of the dealer, or the cessation of all demand for his articles of trade,—the indiscriminately...