

“The Gardener”  
Stouffville United Church  
Sunday, April 1, 2018  
Easter Sunday

For decades now I have experienced my Easter through triumphantly sung Alleluias and trumpets. Yet for some reason, Easter is showing up differently for me this year, and it doesn't involve sung Alleluias, or trumpet fanfares. It is quietly opening up to me.

Case in point, your bulletin cover. Last week, Peggy Kugler, our Administrator showed me what was on the bulletin paper shelf for today's service and I was disappointed – it was quiet.

There were no Easter lilies with their flowers trumpeting their presence the cover; there were no blazing trumpets or Big Letter Alleluias screaming across the page.

No. There are the soft, tender, palest pink blossoms hinting at their unfolding. And in a rather pretty font, the words, Alleluia, Alleluia.

And it followed that almost any book I picked up this Holy Week, turned to a page that lifted up the gift of the world's 'quiet'.

Thomas Merton, a trappist monk and author, beloved by spirituality seeking readers like myself, writes about this silence, this quiet.

“The loud plane seems for a moment to deny the reality of the clouds and of the sky, by its direction, its noise, and its pretended strength. The silence of the sky remains when the plane has gone. It is the silence of the world that is real.

Whether the plane passes by tonight or tomorrow, whether there be cars on the winding road or no cars, whether men speak in the field, whether there be a radio in the hour or not, the tree brings forth her blossoms in silence.

Whether the house be empty or full of children, whether the men go off to town or work with tractors in the fields, whether the liner enters the harbor full of tourists or full of soldiers, the almond tree brings forth her fruit in silence.”<sup>1</sup>

The next book I picked up, ‘God in Unexpected Places’ read,

“Do all our chants, our hymns and dirges merge and form one harmonious never-ending Hosanna? Do the stars and galaxies vibrate to the rhythm of our sacred dance or is it the other way around? ...

All of this cannot bring us closer to you – or you to us – than when we simply whisper, “Abba”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A Thomas Merton Reader, p. 458

Last week I spoke about how Holy Week makes me feel small because of how big it is in our Christian story. On Easter Sunday, I feel even smaller. How does one comprehend the enormity of the resurrection?

In the Gospel of John, Mary has come to the tomb. The stone is rolled away. And she weeps at the side of the tomb's entrance. Two angels speak with her. She turns around to leave.

The Gardener stands there, mere feet away from the rolled stone. Mary's heart leads her to speak to this stranger. It only takes one word to change her world, and realize that the one she loved more than anything in this world is alive, standing before her.

She says to Jesus, whom she now recognizes, 'Rabbouni', or 'teacher'.

And we follow her lead, saying in our own voice the name that opens our heart to the Divine: Jesus, Abba, Father, God, Holy One.

Just as the tree brings forth her blossoms in silence,

so does Easter enter our hearts,

in a resurrection that happened

in the stillness of the earth,

overseen by the silence of the sky,

which announced itself

in the silence of the sunrise.

Blessings on your Easter experience.

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<sup>2</sup> God in Unexpected Places: Reflections on Faith and Life, Joseph R. Veneroso, p. 63-64