



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I'm mindful of each of you as we prepare to enter into Holy Week. These years are such full times – full of hope, and occasionally, full of frustration and despair. We hold all of it together, with God's help.

During Lent, we at St. Bartholomew's have taken time to contemplate this grand spectrum. In the contexts of Black History and Women's History months, we have both grieved sinful oppression and rejoiced in hopeful liberation. Most importantly, we have shared our stories with one another, been courageous enough to speak with vulnerability, and deepened our connections.

This week, we will enter even more deeply into our stories – stories of faith, of sacrifice, of loss and of resurrection. It seems that nearly every day this week, we will re-tell the story of Jesus' life, his passion, and his death. My daughter noticed this today and asked me with her usual frankness, "Mom, how many times did Jesus die?" I acknowledged her point, but reassured her that Jesus only died *once*, and for all of us. Then I explained that, during each liturgy of Holy Week, we focus on a particular *part* of the story: on Maundy Thursday, we embody the disciples' last supper with our Lord, and their mutual love for one another; on Good Friday, we mourn Jesus' suffering and the loss we still feel; on Easter Vigil we journey through the dark night by telling our oldest stories of faith, reminding ourselves that light will dawn come morning.

Before I became a priest, I performed and taught in theater arts. The Golden Age of Greece especially interested me, since our Christian faith was born out of a Greco-Roman society that valued theater as a means of communicating deep truths. The philosopher Aristotle proposed that in witnessing the story of a great tragedy, the *catharsis* of emotion one experienced help to heal them. In a similar way, I believe, participating in each of the liturgies of Holy Week – the foot washing and agape meal on Thursday; the stations of the cross on Friday; the nighttime vigil and storytelling on Saturday – helps to heal our own wounds of sorrow, loss and disappointment, and makes us more ready to welcome the resurrected Christ on Easter Morning.

With this letter, I invite you all to join us this week on this most wondrous of journeys. The power of sacred story and holy sacrament is sure to revive your soul. Even if you are not able to be with us, please keep us, and all the community of God, in your prayers.

May you be blessed with Easter transformation.

In his love,

Joyce+