

From the Pews, Marcella Frese

We have so much to be grateful for this week...

For two weeks I have stared at that phrase, searching for peace and guidance as to what should come next. Motivation ... inspiration ... pick your word ... all were, and are, hard to come by right now. For me, being ripped away from a vibrant and interactive music department office and forced to work from home in the astonishing silence of total solitude has drained my peace meter. Quiet does not equal peace. Friends with children are struggling to swim in this storm, to make this life that is not the least bit normal seem normal in order to give their children peace of mind. For me, somewhere along the way I forgot to say thank you – and to look up.

Until last Sunday. We had an extraordinary event Sunday afternoon – a rehearsal – together with people and instruments. Real music – not digital composites on Facebook, but live musicians doing what they do best: performing together for the glory of God. Sitting a healthy distance from each other, with sanitization plans in place for cleaning up those brass spit-valve puddles, we recorded brass, timpani, and organ music for the online Easter Sunday service, just in case we could not be in the church on that day. Because, what is Easter without lifting Alleluias to God in music?

Wait – it's Easter?

Palm Sunday commemorates the peaceful and joyous arrival of the King of Kings into the city of Jerusalem. The path was dusty and dirty, so the throngs lined the road with palm fronds, branches, and cloaks to honor Jesus. Only he knew that his humble ride was not the conclusion of a journey to the big city, but the start of his journey to the cross. He was there to bring peace to the children of God – in their mind, heart, and soul, even if they did not know how badly they needed it. For Christians, this begins a week that holds both joy and grief, much like what is happening around us right now.

Look up. Start with just one thank you. Then another. He'll help you find your happy place, again. Now, go, find a palm frond, or a branch, or a towel – and wave it in celebration. Look up beyond the grief and turmoil. Easter is coming!!



Poem of Preparation

On the outskirts of Jerusalem
the donkey waited.
Not especially brave, or filled with understanding,
he stood and waited...

I hope, finally, he felt brave.
I hope, finally, he loved the man who rode so lightly upon him,
as he lifted one dusty hoof and stepped, as he had to, forward.

from "The Poet Thinks of the Donkey," Mary Oliver

Gathering and Preparing for God's Word

Prelude, "Improvisation for Palm Sunday" Guilmant

Welcome & Announcements
Organ Voluntary, "The Palms" Jean Baptiste Faure

Sentences of Scripture

Litany of Confession
God of all life,
We come before you today,
ready to own who we are and what we struggle with in this moment.
We admit that we are scared.
O God, **we confess to you.**

Our days are spent in isolation, even when we are with family.
O God, **we confess to you.**

We wonder why you are taking your sweet time to come and save us.
O God, **we confess to you.**

We crouch behind the stones of fear and worry
that cover the opening of our hearts,
purposely staying in the shadows.
O God, **we confess to you.**

God of new life,
As people created in your image
and redeemed in your love,
help us to remember the promises we know to be true.
You keep our very lives, guiding us by day and comforting us by night.
O Lord, **we rejoice in the good news.**

You abide with us each and every day.
O Lord, **we rejoice in the good news.**

You have come to us and promise to come again
in the person of Jesus Christ.
O Lord, **we rejoice in the good news.**

Your power rolls away even the heaviest stones
and seemingly insurmountable burdens.
O Lord, **we rejoice in the good news.**

Even in the face of turmoil, the news is still good news,
and so may we trust, believe, hope, and live as your people. **Amen.**

Hearing God's Word

Prayer for Illumination
Old Testament Lesson, *Psalms 121*
New Testament Lesson, *Matthew 21:1-11*
Homily, "In Times of Turmoil"

Responding to God's Word

Affirmation of Faith, excerpts from *A Brief Statement of Faith*
We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God.
Jesus proclaimed the reign of God: preaching good news to the poor
and release to the captives, teaching by word and deed
and blessing the children, healing the sick
and binding up the brokenhearted, eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.
Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,
Jesus was crucified, suffering the depths of human pain
and giving his life for the sins of the world.
God raised this Jesus from the dead,
vindicating his sinless life,
breaking the power of sin and evil,
delivering us from death to life eternal.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.**

Response, "Ride on! Ride on in Majesty!"
Charge and Benediction

ST DROSTANE