

“You don’t have to wear your mask”. I can hardly wait to hear that said by our Prime Minister. We just heard President Biden tell his people that **IF** they are fully vaccinated, **IF** they are outside and **IF** they are not in a large crowd, that it is now safe to take off the mask. I must admit, I am a bit envious! I do hope at least by summer that perhaps we too will be **completely unmasked**—at least outdoors.

In the meantime, **what is it that sustains us?** My friend, Myla often says, “I feel grounded”. She means she is not afraid and knows-- “ I can face tomorrow”.

Often, in this Easter time we sing:

Because He Lives

God sent His son, they called Him Jesus;  
He came to love, heal and forgive;  
He lived and died to buy my pardon,  
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives!

Chorus

**Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,  
Because He lives, all fear is gone;  
Because I know He holds the future,  
And life is worth the living,  
Just because He lives!**

How sweet to hold a newborn baby,  
And feel the pride and joy he gives;  
But greater still the calm assurance:  
This child can face uncertain days because He Lives!

Chorus

**Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,  
Because He lives, all fear is gone;  
Because I know He holds the future,  
And life is worth the living,  
Just because He lives!**

And then one day, I'll cross the river,  
I'll fight life's final war with pain;  
And then, as death gives way to victory,  
I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He lives!

Most of us, know the chorus by heart--& we feel God’s comfort and love. This is exactly what we need during this Pandemic! The scriptures this week help us so much with our spiritual & mental health.

**READ the page with 1 John 4:7-21 and John 15: 1-8.**

How true it is that if we stay connected to the vine—connected to the sacred as we find in Jesus, the Christ, we will be nourished, **stay strong** and bear fruit that can sustain ourselves and others to have the abundant life that Jesus proclaims for us.

**“I have come that you have life --& have it abundantly.”** (John 10:10).

## **We are the branches and Jesus is the vine.**

How DO we stay connected to the sacred vine?

Today, I'm focusing on 4 ways:

SABBATH SCRIPTURE PRAYER DEEDS of COMPASSION

1. **The Sabbath**—keep the Sabbath. It is just like brushing your teeth—Sunday is a holy day—we remember this by getting together in G's house. Now in COVID, we remember by downloading 4 attachments & taking the time to read them. (Or we sit quietly & read what has come to us through Canada Post.) Always there will be something to empower you for the week—it might be the sermon--& it might be a hymn—or the line in a prayer—something in the bulletin—or maybe something someone of our faith community—something they said or did for you. And the other side of the coin—almost every Sabbath, you are challenged. Jesus says, “Feed my sheep”—**how can you give**—what thought or action are you inspired to do?

Marcus Borg says, The single most important practice is to be part of a congregation that nourishes you even as it stretches you. “I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord.”

**Stay connected to the vine.** This week Shelley sent a text to say how she appreciates your prayers for her and how important the Faith Community is for her in this time of waiting.

2. **Scriptures:** the second way for good spiritual health is to read & meditate over the scriptures. It is so great that many of you are using the Upper Room--& other devotions too. If you have not yet got the MAY/JUNE copy, text or phone me 519 365 5511 & we'll deliver to you! **Stay connected.**

- 3.. **Prayer** I think when I was younger, I didn't realize how important prayer is.

Tom Harpur has a whole book devoted to understanding prayer—does it really give great intimacy with God? **How does it help us stay connected to the vine?**

The Lord's Prayer is probably the most perfect prayer. Often if you don't know what to pray—it is always a good one. Say it every day—that way, you won't forget it. My neighbour was dying of cancer—15 yr ago now. She said, “Would you pray with me?” We said the Lord's Prayer together. It was very powerful—comforting—helped both of us.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Ps is also a powerful prayer. When my Mom was blind, couldn't feed herself, couldn't walk—she asked that we say that together. It gave strength. God was with us & we knew it.

Of course the short prayer, “Help me, O God.” That's a good one too. And we mustn't forget that other short one, “Thank you, O God, thank you!”

Tom Harpur says prayer's like gravity. Few can explain how it works. They have never seen it or touched it, But, they know that it works, from its influence and results around us. “O taste & see that the Lord is good”. (Psalm 34) His suggestion is to take PS 23 & work with it for a month—

4. **Practice deeds of compassion:**

In the Heart Of Christianity—Marcus Borg's recent book, he talks about pluralism—there are many religions now—especially in the US (& Canada is similar in many ways)—the earth is much smaller than it used to be. –6 mil. Muslims in the US; 4 mil Buddhists 300,000 Sikhs. What we have discovered is that all of these religions extol Compassion as their primary virtue of life. Be compassionate as G is compassionate. **Love one another as I have loved you.**

And so we **stay connected to the vine**—by keeping Sabbath—the holy Day;

by scripture—meditating, reflecting often with others; by prayer each day & by acts of compassion—giving & receiving. Even if we do one or 2 of these it strengthens the branches that are connected to the life-giving vine.

Let us pray:

Holy One, you are the vine grower. We are the branches. Help us abide in Jesus the Christ, your true vine, so that we may bear much fruit. Grant that we may faithfully proclaim the good news until all are welcomed into the new life you so generously give. Amen.

## THE MERRY HEART

**“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine  
And a broken spirit drieth the bones.”** Proverbs 17:22

1. “I’d like to be nice to him,” muttered Jane. “But he is just such a pain in the neck!”

**“Perhaps”, said May “he’d be less of a pain in the neck if you were nice to him.”**

“Aye, but why should I make allowances for his bad attitude? Surely he should change first. Oh, I don’t know. Where does it begin?”

**“It begins my dear with the one willing to make the sacrifice.”**

2. A boy and a girl, both with long hair, were walking to school on a windy day. The boy kept turning his face away from the wind, with the result that he got a faceful of flapping hair.

**It didn’t add to his day, or his view!**

The girl, however, kept her face turned towards the wind and her hair was swept out behind her.

**Life. It’s like having long hair on a windy day. How you face it makes all the difference!**

3. Beth: My Mom has the worst memory.

**Melissa: She forgets everything?**

Beth: No, she remembers everything!

Have a great week!

Take care.

Stay safe.

Be at Peace.

Shalom, Annalee