



Rolling the Rock Away, Rather Than Piling More On

Dear Parish Family,

When John-Michael Tebelak, the creator of *Godspell*, attended an Easter Vigil service at an Episcopal cathedral in Pennsylvania, he was disappointed by the lack of joy in the liturgy, especially since he felt joy bursting out from the pages of the Gospels. He said, "I left with the feeling that, rather than rolling the rock away from the Tomb, they were piling more on." He then went home and wrote the entire play *Godspell* that night!

I am sure that if John-Michael Tebelak attended Easter Vigil at Christ Church Eureka, he would have been completely blown away by the overwhelming joy that erupts in our sanctuary, especially when we throw the Alleluia cards in the air like confetti, proclaiming, "Alleluia! Christ is risen! and singing, "Glory to God in the Highest!" He would have likely been inspired to write more musicals about Jesus not in order to compensate for the church's lack of joy, but rather in celebration of the holy excitement that he felt the church stir up within him.

I believe that same joyful excitement we feel on Easter Sunday is the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. And every year, I look forward to being drenched in that Holy Spirit with you on our great feast of the resurrection. I have been especially eager to celebrate Easter with you this year since it is our 150th year and I was planning to "pull out all the stops." However, the best way to make God laugh is to tell him your plans; and my plan to "pull out all the stops" has been pulled to a nearly complete stop by forces beyond my control, specifically COVID-19. And I have a suspicion that the Holy Spirit is up to something very good in the midst of all this. (In the words of Bishop Moreland, as the Spanish Flu pandemic was spreading throughout this diocese one hundred years ago, "We may be sure God is working out...a solemn and beneficent purpose.")

Although I know John-Michael Tebelak would have loved our Easter Vigil service, I have been feeling especially convicted by his words: "*Rather than rolling the rock away from*

the Tomb, they were piling more on." This year, I feel the Holy Spirit asking us, "How can we roll the rock away from the tomb this Holy Week, rather than keep piling more on?"

I am honestly astonished by how much we have accomplished this year, especially when I reflect on our brilliant monthly guests (Don & Carol Anne Brown, Suzanne Guthrie, Dan & Karen Price, Mark Anschutz to name a few), our campus projects (steeple cross installation, repainting of prayer labyrinth, renovation of Pierson Room, completion of Fr. Doug Library, new chairs, etc.) and our special worship services (celebration of past clergy, renewal of wedding vows and more). I become even more amazed when I consider the profound challenges we have faced this year: a fire at our front door, long-term power outages, behavioral issues with visitors, and now a global pandemic! When the 150th Anniversary Planning Committee decided upon the theme of "Steadfast and Growing Since 1870," I had no idea how much those qualities would be tested in us throughout this sesquicentennial year.

I am proud to say that we have indeed remained steadfast this year; and we have grown. And I am convinced that we will continue to grow this year, but apparently not by piling on more and more activities and special events, because right now, the Holy Spirit is inviting us to discover what it means to "roll the rock away from the tomb," rather than piling more on.

How do we open ourselves to receive the special gifts God has in store for us this Holy Week, which will be like no other? How will God continue to work through the Holy Week liturgies when we are forced to engage with them in radically new (and perhaps uncomfortable) ways? How do we remain a church outside of our lovely church building? Furthermore, how do we remain a church without actually gathering together as the children of God? How in the world can we worship together using Facebook, YouTube, Zoom, or other programs (especially when some parishioners don't have access to computers or internet)? How can we fulfill our mission more fully by actually doing considerably less? All of these questions and more have been haunting my prayer life and they all seem deeply connected to that initial question: *How do we roll the rock away from the tomb without piling more on?*

We are currently attempting to "roll the rock away" by continuing to offer Holy Week services online. However, after much thought and prayer, the worship committee has

decided to no longer stream services from the church. Although it is heartbreaking, we need to all remain physically isolated at this time, out of love and concern for the most vulnerable among us and for each other. On Maundy Thursday, Christ gave us a new commandment (a *mandatum*): to love one another, even when it requires significant sacrifice. It is therefore only appropriate to celebrate Maundy Thursday by staying home, an expression of sacrificial love. I will be conducting worship services throughout Holy Week from the Transfiguration House. I will be including other clergy and lay leaders in the worship services through zoom, which will be live-streamed on YouTube.

It's important to remember that the services of Holy Week are not requirements we are obligated to fulfill but divine invitations to enter more fully into the most passionate love story of all time and all eternity. In those words that John-Michael Tebelak helped popularize in *Godspell*, the Holy Week liturgies are invitations to "see God more clearly, to love God more dearly, and to follow Christ more nearly," as we walk together in the Way of the Cross.

Please know that I am holding you all in my prayers as we walk through this challenging season together, knowing that Christ will ultimately lead us to that new, bright morning of reunion, refreshment, and glorious resurrection!

In His Love,
All Shall Be Well,



Daniel +



Holy Week Live-Streamed at Christ Church

<https://www.youtube.com/user/ChristChurchEureka>

worship bulletins available at

<https://christchurcheureka.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/ChristChurchEureka/>

Palm Sunday 10:30 AM April 5



Compline on Holy Tuesday 7 PM April 7

Maundy Thursday at Home April 9

Good Friday Stations of the Cross at 12 PM April 10

Stations of the Cross available at

<https://christchurcheureka.org/stations-of-the-cross/>

Good Friday Solemn Liturgy 7 PM April 10

Easter Sunday 10:30 AM April 12

