

DAY ELEVEN OF LENT

*“Give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name;
make his deeds known to all people!”*

Psalm 105.1 CEB

There is a place in Southern Illinois where the Holy Spirit of God dances. The music to which She moves is in the songs of saints whose lives have faithfully stewarded Creation’s Holy Habitation there. These generations of servants have invested sweat equity in sacred trails, opening them to others who would follow in their footsteps in



search for, and in service of, God. Their witness was not in powerful homilies or lectionary-based liturgies, rather they announced Authority and Grace in the buildings and cabins they built for fellow pilgrims on their way Home. They made their good witness in the docks and swimming shores they established that would later serve thousands of God’s children throughout the summertime of their youth.

They knelt down in the fashion of Wise Men before their Savior as they split timbers for fences, cleared trees for pastures and sowed acreage for hay. They rested on the hillside listening to Jesus, even being filled to overflowing with loaves and fishes, as He guided their quest in faith and measured their steps in justice. They stand in the crowds which welcome Him as carloads of eager campers make their way to Registration and Check-In, patiently checking every name, every form and every parent’s worries at the door. They stay as those alongside Jesus in Golgotha, long after the dust has settled and others have gone home, still providing assurance and care to the members of His Body whose initial eagerness to be in camp has been quelled by the quiet and apartness of this place. They celebrate the surprise of Life when those who thought they had been sent to the end of the world suddenly realize they are in the middle of it – and are becoming a part of the Spirit’s delightful dance.

There is a place in Southern Illinois where the Holy Spirit of God dances – and Her dance is upon the floor of faith spread out for her upon the nooks and crannies, the ponds and lakes, the woods and plains of DuBois Center by those who love Her most deeply. This Lenten journey, take time to dance with the Spirit, to listen to Her music, to see where She sets her feet in Holy Joy. Come to DuBois Center and, there, see the face of God and give thanks.

Something to ponder on the Lenten journey, a gift of DuBois Center.

Prayer: Lord, let me join in the Spirit’s dance as I make my witness for You each day. Amen.



DAY TWELVE OF LENT

***“Remember the wondrous works he has done, all his marvelous works,
and the justice he declared . . .”***

Psalm 105.5 CEB

There is nothing quite like the smell of newly fallen rain or the sight of the sun shining through after the storm or the awe in blooms, once closed before the wind, now reopening in praise of God’s marvelous works.

In such things I am reminded that God does not depend on my sense of justice to determine God’s sense of being Just. It rains on the just and unjust alike (Matthew 5:45), the sun shines on the just and unjust alike and God’s blooms send forth their beauty for both the just and unjust alike. In practicing God’s justice in our living we are not qualifying for special treatment along the way. We are, in some small manner, attempting to live the faith as Christ teaches because that is Whose we are in Baptism, not because of what we want to achieve over others.

God is God, always. When we cry out for justice and mercy, God hears and responds. Sometimes, though, I have to confess that God’s justice and what I was asking for are not always the same. I am me-centered, God is God-centered – and God loves all of creation and is a God of multiple chances for all God’s children. So, if I want rain for our farm, the rain for which I pray is for everyone, not just me.

As it is with rain, so it is with God’s salvation. It is for the just and unjust alike. That is God for you. Thanks be to God!

Something to ponder on the Lenten journey, a gift of DuBois Center.

Prayer: Let your Justice be declared in my life, my heart, my soul and my living, O God, that your Name be forever glorified. Amen.

DAY THIRTEEN OF LENT

“The Lord – he is our God. His justice is everywhere throughout the whole world.”

Psalm 105.7 CEB

It is a standoff at the OK Corral. Upon a blossom of God’s goodness rests the butterfly seeking sustenance, when suddenly there appears a wasp in search of dinner. One eyes the other, each considers the other, while the blossom serves as an impromptu stage for what may come next. Yet, what comes next we will never know, for this is a picture of a moment in time as Nature behaves as only Nature might and we are afforded a glimpse, a peak of what goes on twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year at DuBois Center.



‘Green DuBois’ is a new initiative celebrating the unique biodiversity of this wonderful sanctuary in God’s world which is DuBois Center. Master Gardeners, Botanists, Astronomers, Ornithologists, Entomologists, Herpetologists, Malacologists, Mammalogists, Ichthyologists and scores of other scientists, not to mention the average person in the pew who simply loves to observe God’s Creation at work, are all invited to come to DuBois Center and enter into the labors of identifying the species of plants, insects, animals, fish, snails, clams, reptiles and amphibians which call DuBois Center ‘home’. Additionally, migratory patterns through and over the grounds and lakes of DuBois Center, along with the heavens themselves, call out for our attention, our observant heart and our patient willingness to be sentinels in the current age inviting others to bear witness with us that God is Just and God is at work in Creation, all the time.

Our Lenten journey is, perhaps, the very best time to open up ourselves to God’s ongoing work of Creation, for sometimes in life we are the blossom, sometimes we are the butterfly and sometimes we are the wasp, yet always we are God’s – and always God’s justice prevails. The integrity of the environment depends upon it as none other, so do we – and now is the time to become a part of that understanding through Green DuBois.

Something to ponder on the Lenten journey, a gift of DuBois Center.

Prayer: God, we may study, and sometimes we are studied, but forever remind us we are yours. Amen.

DAY FOURTEEN OF LENT

*“God! My God! It’s you –
I search for you! My whole being thirsts for you!
My body desires you in a dry and tired land, no water anywhere.”*

Psalm 63.1

There are just some days when the love of God, the quenching Baptismal waters of the Spirit and the salvation of Jesus all seem so very far away.

Our journey becomes dry, the daily grind feels harsh, no one has ears to listen to our complaints, the eyes of others avert from us as we pass, the water fountain at work quits functioning, our partner is self-absorbed in projects currently deemed as more important, prayers seem unanswered, angels songs seem far away, no star of Bethlehem offers to light the path and religious leaders seem not to care. Ministry is for the minister, religion is for the religious, faith is for the faithful and understanding is for the understood yet, for me this day, for you this day . . . there are just some days when the love of God, the quenching Baptismal waters of the Spirit and the salvation of Jesus all seem so very far away.



The Psalmist captures our cries, our anguish, our dismay and even our disbelief, “God! My God! It’s you – I search for you! My whole being thirsts for you!” The songs of the Israelites in Egypt, the Chosen in exile, the marginalized in

every age, the invisible and forgotten in all the lands become a part of our own moaning, our own singing, our own lamentations.

As though God could ever forget or forgo the beauty God places in life itself, in your life, in my life, our voices rise from the dust and ashes of our own sinfulness and self-centered ways seeking deliverance. Still, God loves. Still, God comes to save. Still, God forgives. Still, God . . . and we are heard, lifted up and given New Life.

Something to ponder on the Lenten journey, a gift of DuBois Center.

Prayer: Ever-Present God, forgive our uncertainty to trust you along the way. Still, give us a song to sing when all we have are tears and dust, that the world would see You. Amen.

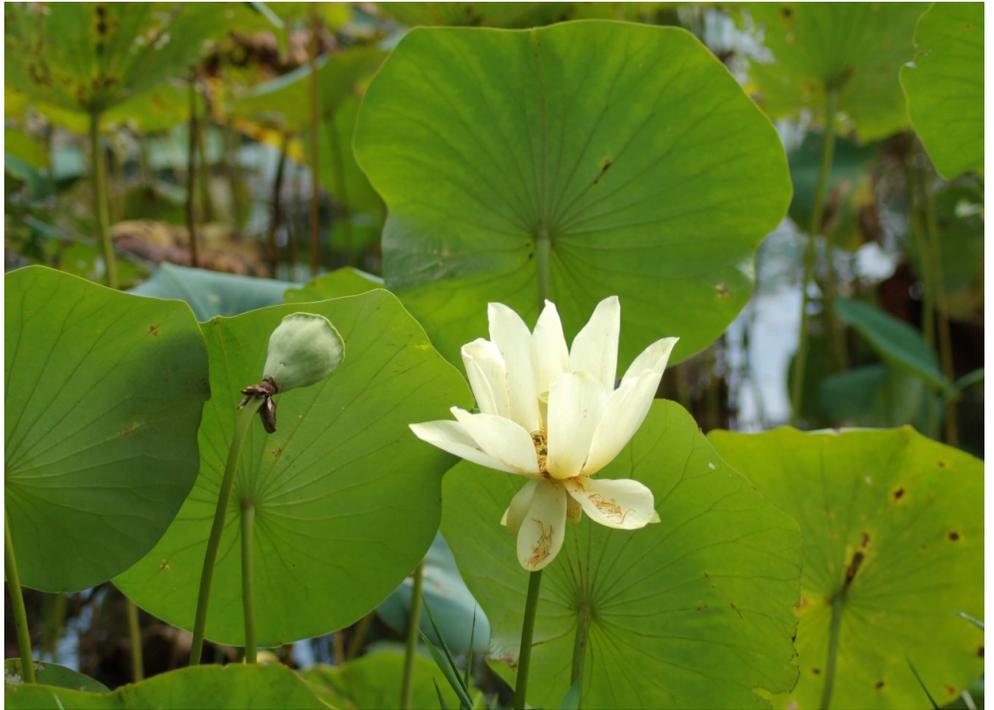
DAY FIFTEEN OF LENT

*“Yes, I’ve seen you in the sanctuary;
I’ve seen your power and glory.”*

Psalm 63.2 CEB

When I was young ‘church’ was the place our family attended when gathering in worship. As the years passed I began to understand ‘church’ as the body of Christ’s people gathered in worship and the place where we gathered was our sanctuary, our place of safety, in the midst of the world.

Today my faith continues to form and be shaped by God’s gentle nudging and revealing along the way. God’s Sanctuary will not be limited to boards, blocks, bricks or buildings. God’s Sanctuary, where God makes all things known, is the fullness of creation itself, tended to by the heavens, warmed by the sun, cooled by the breezes, crafted in wonder and beauty by the plants and animals along the paths and streams, stewarded by the nations and peoples and set for worship by the Spirit. The Authority and Grace of Jesus announces the liturgy, evokes the response and articulates the Missio Dei, the Mission of God, to be lived along life’s shores and pathways.



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DuBois Center is one setting of God’s Sanctuary among us, one expression of God’s design and imagination, one gathering place of God’s people to rejoice, pray, lament, hope, sing, pour out, take in and find a place of quiet before the One who is Lord of all. With the Psalmist this day, we say of DuBois Center and all such places throughout God’s cosmos, “Yes, I’ve seen you in the sanctuary; I’ve seen your power and glory.” Thanks be to God!

Something to ponder on the Lenten journey, a gift of DuBois Center.

Prayer: God of unexpected Sanctuary spaces, open our eyes to see You where You are. Evoke in us a sense of worship, a devotion to the sacred and a heart for service in the Home of Your Being. Amen.

DAY SIXTEEN OF LENT

*“ . . . whenever I ponder you on my bed,
whenever I meditate on you in the middle of the night-”*

Psalm 63.6 CEB



Restless and sleepless nights are often the result of worried living. New expectations have been placed upon you at work, the kids have a lot of activities which require your presence, your spouse has announced a change in vocational direction, the congregation has need of more volunteers and the pastor looked directly at you when announcing it, money has gotten tight, the

economy is not managing well with the challenges in Congress, your parents require more of your time and energy, the diagnosis from the doctor troubles you, the cars need repairs, and the list goes on and on. Every little thing sneaks into your thoughts as you lie down and every endless details preys upon your attentions as you try to close your eyes. The proverbial molehill quickly becomes the mountain before you, denying any peace until; finally, you stop, slow your breathing and, in absolute submission, give it over to God.

Odd, how frequently, even when finding quiet in the most out of the way, rough places, rest becomes your companion, rather than your goal, when you ponder God more than the troubles which claim your attention. Why does it take us reaching the deepest depths of despair before we are willing to admit that there is nothing going on in our life which is outside of the love of God? Why do we cling so tightly to the illusion of control that the mere thought of losing control causes our fists to clench and our muscles to ache? Why do we stress our hearts with worry over that which cannot add a moment of life to our living?

Today the Psalmist invites us to ponder God, when we lie down and in the middle of the night, remembering with joy that, in Christ, we are never alone . . . and that is just enough.

Something to ponder on the Lenten journey, a gift of DuBois Center.

Prayer: Center my thoughts in You, Lord God, in my lying down and in my rising up, in my going out and my coming in, in my breathing in and exhaling out. Be my Peace along the way with Jesus. Amen.



THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

*“My whole being
clings to you;
your strong hand
upholds me.”*

Psalm 63.8 CEB

Sabbath Peace be with you.

In the midst of the forty day Lenten journey are the Sundays of continuing Easter celebration. Sabbath is God’s respite at the door of the empty tomb, reminding us

that our homage paid to poor choices and other cultural idiosyncrasies is to be abandoned for the Joy waiting in the Risen Christ.

God has got this. Do not despair. “Woman, why are you crying?” asks Jesus of Mary. The strong hand of Christ lifts her, and all of us, up from our ashes and sackcloth. “Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them, ‘I’m going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” And she left and went to the disciples and said, “I’ve seen the Lord.” (John 20.15-18 paraphrased)

In the truest sense of the word, Mary is the first Apostle for she is the first one sent, the first one to go, the first one to declare the Good News. She is the first one lifted up, the first one holding on and the first one to let go that she might go out and tell others. She is Sabbath reimagined.

Have you ever wondered when a young salamander first discovered it could walk on the sides of a building or up the bark on the trunk of a tree? Could it be that such a discovery was never really necessary because the inherent genetics of a salamander instinctively causes such behavior?

So it could be for you and me – and for the entirety of the Christian community: When the ingrained behavior of the faith community is such that we hold on to Risen Jesus from little on up, and practice that each Sabbath, then go out and tell others Who we have seen and heard and why it excites us, could it be that our children and their children after them for generations to come will all grow up ready to do the same? Or are we so busy rationalizing that we have lost the instinctual gift of a faith which will carry us on every surface we dare to try?

It is something to ponder on the Lenten journey, a gift of DuBois Center.

Prayer: Holy God, Parent of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, all praise be unto You! Thank You for giving us Joy which lifts us up, a Hand to steady us, and a Heart to go out and tell others. Amen.