

# The Master's Message

## The Newsletter of the Church of the Master

### March, 2024

Virtual Adult Bible Study  
Wednesday, 7:00 PM  
Saturday, 12:00

2783 Lafayette Avenue  
Bronx, N.Y. 10465  
718-597-6298

Sunday Worship  
Sunday 11:00 am

[cotm47@verizon.net](mailto:cotm47@verizon.net)

[WWW.COTMBRONX.ORG](http://WWW.COTMBRONX.ORG)

Rev. Dr. Melva J. Hayden, Pastor

#### Pastor's EASTER MESSAGE

\*Reprinted from March 2022 Newsletter

"Pray without ceasing" (1Thess. 5:17). The Bible makes it abundantly clear that believers and followers of Jesus Christ are to always pray. But what is prayer? Why is prayer necessary? Why should we develop a prayer life? Or even, why is prayer essential to a Christian's life? These are questions that many unbelievers, believers and Christians have pondered at one time or another. I invite you to read the following article. I found it simple yet profound in addressing what prayer is and answering some of the key questions many people have about prayer.

As you read the article, I invite you to join our Church of the Master "Hour of Prayer Power." Now on each Friday at 7:00 PM, we come together and pray. Through our collective prayers, supplications, and petitions we unleash the power of prayer. We pray for all of those on the Church's Prayer List and their respective needs and requests for prayer. At Church of the Master, we also pray when we come together to study God's Word in our Bible Study! We invite you to also join us for our Zoom Bible Study each Wednesday evening at 7:00 PM and each Saturday at 12:00 PM. We hope to encourage all who desire to join us to take up the Word of God and go through the Bible with us, or in your own time at your own pace. You may find information to access all of these ministries and make prayer requests on our Facebook page, website [cotmbronx.org](http://cotmbronx.org), and our Church bulletins and Newsletter.

This February we entered into the Liturgical Season of Lent that lasts for 40 days and concludes this month in March. Prayer, fasting, and studying the Word of God are spiritual activities that strengthen our faith walk and help us to reflect on our sinful natures, human frailties, repentance, and God's grace and mercy. During Lent we prepare for Easter Resurrection Sunday by taking stock of our mortality and remembering that we are created from the dust and must return to the dust. Ash Wednesday and Lent also bring us to Holy Week and Christ's atoning work and shed blood on the cross for our sins and the sins of the world to reconcile sinful humanity back to God. But, the sorrow and somber nature of Holy Week brings us from the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky and the hope of the Resurrection! In the words of Barbara Johnson, "we are Easter people living in a Good Friday world!" Enjoy the article and prepare to draw closer to God through prayer!

Shalom to you now,

Rev. Dr. Melva J. Hayden

(Article on pages 5+6)



## SPECIAL DATES\*

- World Day of Prayer, March 1<sup>st</sup>
- Third Sunday in Lent, March 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 10<sup>th</sup>
- Daylight-Saving Time begins, March 10<sup>th</sup>
- Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 17<sup>th</sup>
- St. Patrick's Day, March 17<sup>th</sup>
- First Day of Spring, March 20<sup>th</sup>
- Palm Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup>
- Holy Thursday, March 28<sup>th</sup>
- Good Friday, March 29<sup>th</sup>
- Easter Sunday, March 31<sup>st</sup>

## \*News From the Pews\*



### Prayer Requests

Continue praying for:  
Ellen McCullough,  
Allen Ford, Carole Mahon,  
Loretta Byrd, Alice & Alex Rivera

Everyone is invited to join our virtual "**Hour of Prayer Power**" every Friday at 7:00 PM. The conference call-in number is 605-475-4860, code: 371231#

Our **Online Bible Study** meets  
Wednesday at 7:00 PM and Saturday at 12:00.  
Contact Ron Rivera (917-716-8273)  
for information on joining



## Maundy Thursday

The day before Good Friday is called Maundy Thursday. The word "Maundy" comes from the Latin word *mandatum*, which means "commandment." In the gospel of John, Jesus makes this statement during the Last Supper: "I am with you only a little longer. ... I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:33-35, NRSV).

Maundy Thursday should always be a time of sharing with others, showing loving concern for one another, and partaking of Holy Communion. That is what the Lord asked of his disciples and asks of us.

## \*CHURCH CHUCKLES\*

A man survives a shipwreck and finds his way to a small deserted island. He is able to survive there for more than three years until he is finally discovered. His rescuers are amazed at not only how well he survived but also at the small structures he was able to construct.

"What are those three little buildings?" they asked him.

"The one in the middle is my house," he replied, "and the one to the west is my church. The one on the east is the church I used to go to."

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Dear Pastor:

I know God loves everybody, but he never met my sister.

Arnold, age 7

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## CHURCH NEWS

- Mr. Bradford was elected and has accepted the office of head deacon. We could not get a better man.
- There will be a rummage sale next Saturday. Ladies, please leave your clothes in the basement.
- Visitors of all abominations are invited to take communion and to join us in the Fellowship Hall for coffee and donuts.

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## Confronting the status quo

The Wright brothers did what the status quo deemed "impossible": build a vehicle heavier than air and then fly it. A problem-solving technique they used, called "mind warping," has been described as thinking outside the box without forgetting about the box. As Jay Dennis writes in *The Jesus Habits* (B&H Books): "Christians are people God has called to think outside the box, without abandoning our core beliefs."

Jesus continually urged people to think "outside the box" in their understanding of God — announcing forgiveness outside the temple? touching lepers and dead people? welcoming children, women, Samaritans, tax collectors, sinners? — while at the same time, never abandoning the ancient core of the faith: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself" (see Luke 10:27).

God calls people to think not just outside the box but outside the tomb. When unconditional love and eternal life confront the status quo of sin and death, anything is possible.



## Spiritual Nutrition

Imagine you discover that a friend is severely malnourished. They look extremely, almost skeletally, thin. They are weak, barely able to perform the simplest physical task. If they do not reverse the trend, they will die. You would never ignore the seriousness of their state and walk away. You would do everything you could to steer them in the right direction of healing and health by getting into their body the nutrition they so desperately need.

As Christians, physical food isn't our only needed nutrition. Jesus reminded the devil himself of that fact by quoting Scripture:

Matthew 4:4

4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

This, of course, was from Deuteronomy 8:3

He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

The signs of this spiritual malnutrition may vary according to the person but you can be pretty sure symptoms include both language and behavior unbecoming of an ambassador for Jesus Christ. Personally, if I start to fall away from daily Bible reading and prayer, I can sense all-too-familiar patterns of thought returning to my mind.

So we have a duty. A duty to ourselves and to our brothers and sisters in The Lord. If we see something, we should say something. A Christian without a steady diet of God's Word is not a healthy one. We need to encourage, even sometimes admonish, when we see such malnutrition.

Ed Bungert



## Where was I?

Our young son often asks where he was when something significant happened before he was born. "Where was I when you two got married?" "Where was I when Nana died?" And even "Where was I before I was inside your body?"

My response is always "You were in God's heart." God said as much to Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jeremiah 1:5, NRSV).

A Good Friday spiritual asks plaintively, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" Clearly none of us was present when Jesus died. Yet as we worship on Good Friday, we place ourselves at the cross, where Jesus bore our sins.

"Where was I," we might ask our heavenly Father, "when they crucified Jesus?" I'm confident that God's tender answer is "You were in my heart." Indeed, only because of our place there did Jesus go willingly to the cross — and rise to assure us of everlasting life.

—Heidi Mann



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## Roadblock

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"We can depend on God to fulfill his promise, even when all the roads leading to it are closed," wrote Bible commentator Matthew Henry about 300 years ago.

For the disciples on Good Friday, all the roads had closed and the gates were barred shut. Jesus was dead — and with him, their hope. In fear and grief, they locked themselves in an upper room.

But soon they discovered the tomb was empty. The grave wasn't the end. Even death wasn't strong enough to thwart God's plans. Easter is proof that no situation is hopeless. God offers a way through every type of roadblock.

—Kari Myers



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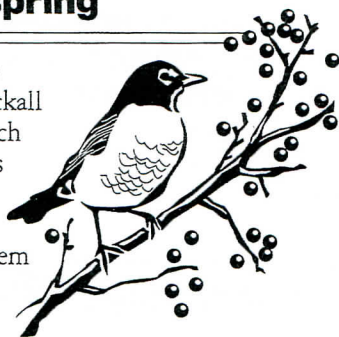
## A sign of spring

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In *The Story of the Easter Robin* (Zonderkidz), Dandi Daley Mackall retells an old Pennsylvania Dutch tale of the robin's compassion as he witnessed Jesus' death.

On Good Friday, a plain brown robin flying over Jerusalem was curious about the "nest" atop Jesus' head. When the bird realized it was a crown of thorns, he tried to dislodge it. As the robin pulled out a long thorn from Jesus' forehead, a drop of blood landed on the bird's breast, staining it red. Now the robin's red breast is a symbol of Jesus' loving sacrifice, and the robin's early-spring song is a reminder of Jesus' joyful resurrection.



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## A modern-day parable

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My friend had a large hydrangea bush in her yard. Each year for a decade, she found only one or two blooms. "Cut it down!" she told her husband in frustration. But he, a very patient man, urged, "Let's give it one more year. I'll water it and fertilize it with coffee grounds. If it still doesn't bloom, I'll chop it down."

The next year, as the couple anticipated carrying out the death sentence, the bush not only bloomed but bloomed in abundance — and in multiple colors that amazed my friend, an avid gardener. "It's the barren fig tree all over again!" she exclaimed.

Indeed, sometimes God replicates his miracles, perhaps because we need a refresher course in patiently waiting for his glorious blessings.

—Heidi Mann





## **Draw closer to God through prayer**

By David Yarborough

Local religion columnist Sep 12, 2020

Do you pray? Have you found yourself praying more during this season of COVID-19? Do you ever wonder what prayer is really all about? We talk about prayer, ask for prayer, tell others we will pray for them. I find many more Christ followers talk more about prayer than actually praying.

Prayer is actually quite simple and easy, but also really difficult. I know it seems I contradicted myself, but let me explain. Prayer is nothing more than a conversation with our Heavenly Father for the purpose of deepening our relationship with Him and seeking His help and blessing for our lives. I like to think of prayer as seeking God's face and His hand.

Seeking God's face means that we are seeking greater intimacy with God. The greatest gift of prayer is actually the gift of God himself. In prayer, we can foster a greater sense of relationship with our God. We can talk to Him, share our heart with Him and even learn to listen for his voice.

Seeking God's hand is about petitioning God for his provision and help. The Lord wants us to come to him and ask for what we want and need, however he doesn't want us to view him as a heavenly vending machine. If you just seek God's hand, you will not often see great results in prayer. Those who learn to seek his face will often see God's mighty hand of power revealed in their life. We have an amazing privilege to come to the Lord in prayer.

For many years, championship sports teams would visit the White House to be congratulated by the president. One year, the Green Bay Packers won the Super Bowl and made their visit. One team member forgot his driver's license (ID). Do you know you can win a Super Bowl, but the secret service still will not let you in to the White House with your teammates if you forget your identification? So one teammate had to wait outside 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. while the rest of the team got the moment of honor with the president. Well thankfully, Jesus has given us access to the throne room of heaven at any moment. If we know Jesus, we will never be denied. Prayer is easy. It is simple. It is a conversation with God to seek His face and to seek His hand.

Prayer is also super difficult. It can be a fierce struggle at moment and feel so hard to do. It is because of our flesh, the part of us souls that is still a hold over of the sinful nature. Our flesh can be lazy and self-sufficient. Our flesh at times resists God, longing to control our own lives and find answers. Proud and self-sufficient people will never really learn to pray. As long as we want to stay in control, we will never become a person of deep prayer. Only the people who recognize their sin and their desperate need will humbly embrace prayer and their need of God's daily grace and daily bread.

I also believe that Satan will do anything to distract us and keep us from prayer. The enemy knows the power of prayer. He knows it is the secret weapon for which he has no defense. Prayer

scares “the hell out of the devil himself.” He will do all in his power to distract and discourage us from prayer. He is fine if we go to church seven nights a weeks, as long as we do not learn to really become intimate with God in prayer.

So often prayer can feel like a mystery, a bore or a chore. All of these are designs of the enemy to keep you from the power of your knees. I tell you that there is nothing more wonderful and powerful than a deep and connected prayer life. It is the hardest simple thing you will discover.

Oh the discovery though. In prayer, your faith will move you from the realm of religion into a true relationship with God. There is no other habit like prayer than can really transform your walk with God into a deep personal sense of fellowship with Him.

Prayer will also energize your heart and spirit through the power of the Holy Spirit. Prayer will become the place to meet with God and be filled by His love, grace and Holy Spirit. So, do you pray? It is easy and yet I know how hard it is. May you find grace to go deeper with God in prayer. And that’s the Word.

\* Rev. David Yarborough is also pastor of St. Simons Community Church, in St. Simons, GA. Contact him at david@sscommunitychurch.com.



## The undercover man

While greeting people after the Easter service, a pastor was surprised to see a member who rarely attended worship. He asked the man to wait for him until everyone had left.

When they were alone, the preacher said to the man, “John, I’m so glad to see you today. Listen, I have a request to make of you. I want you, beginning today, to join the army of the Lord.”

The man smiled and said, “Pastor, I’m already in the army of the Lord.”

“Now, John,” protested the pastor, “how can you say that? I only see you at Easter and Christmas.”

John leaned close to the pastor and whispered, “I’m in the Secret Service.”

