May 1, 2023

TO: Friends of Melrose

FROM: Rev. Sonia Ireson

Greetings in the name of the One who loves us and holds us dear.

The big news for us this week is that St. Joe’s Transplant Team have confirmed that they have a specific donor for Scott. He went for blood tests Thursday and will go for an ultrasound today (Monday). We have no idea who it is. The relief and gratitude are overwhelming. The team tell him that it should take place within two months. While I am guarded in my delight, knowing we are not out of the woods yet, this is a tremendous burst of hope, especially given that he was unable to complete his dialysis on Thursday due to severe head ache and vomiting. This can’t happen soon enough for all of us, given his precarious state of health.

Sarah came over by herself to spend the evening with us on Thursday and we made her favourite dinner for her, while Scott’s mother took him to the appointments and dialysis. It was the first time she has had an outing on her own since October and it was a precious family time with laughter and shared memories. She visited with her cat, Bandit/Tess, who remembered her and went right to her.

Tess continues to settle in and meets me at the door every time I come home. She crawls right up under my chin to be petted, and purrs up a storm.

Another highlight for our family – Carolin, Sarah, Emi and I attended the Appleby High Tea, Saturday afternoon. Its theme was the Roaring twenties. About 110 people sat at 11 round tables and were treated to a three-course sandwich and dessert meal (cost $30) served by men from the congregation in black pants, white shirts and black bow ties. The best hats were judged from each table. It was a fun time and would be a great undertaking for Melrose, although it is quite labour intensive.

This week, I came across a reference to a 2016, Reality TV series, filmed out of Toronto airport that mimicked other international airport sites already in production, called **Hello Goodbye.** It was a thirty-minute interview with a designated person at the Arrivals lounge of the airport, detailing very personal stories about their connections with incoming passengers.

I think about the numbers of hellos/goodbyes that we encounter in our life-times and how profoundly they affect us. Hellos and goodbyes begin from our first breath, to our last breath and everything in-between. They add to our experiences of joy and they can be the cause of our greatest heartache.

We await with anticipation the birth of our first child, or any number of children, for that matter, and that first glimpse of their little face brings us indescribable joy. I am remembering a six-week trip to PEI that my aunt and my mother undertook with our two children when they were seven and eight. The goodbyes were not only felt on the day of departure, they were also painful at the end of each phone call. The homecoming was a source of immense joy.

The stories unearthed in the airport arrivals and departure lounges tell extremely personal stories of reasons for the travel. A passenger could be flying to another province to donate an organ; they could be travelling to another country to go to school, start a new life, or get married. They could be returning home after having been away from their family for an extended period of time. Recently, Vince’s granddaughter from his first marriage travelled to Paris, France for a language exchange, for three months – excitement and anticipation, yet anxiety and apprehension were part of this fifteen-year-old shy girl’s emotions, at her first time away from her family.

People wait with signs at the airport – signs that say, “Will you marry me?” Signs that announce themselves to relatives they have never met. At age fifteen, I arrived at the Zurich airport to the welcome of two elderly aunts and an uncle who were meeting me for the first time. My father had left Geneva, Switzerland in 1938, never to return. He died two years before I was to visit his homeland and family.

I think of the goodbyes associated with medically assisted suicides, the gathering of the loved ones and friends, to celebrate the last moments of life for someone who has had untold suffering and pain and have chosen to end their ordeal; the answering the door to police, who bring the news of a fatal crash or accident; and those at the bedside for long periods of time, of their loved ones who are slipping away. There are many ways to say goodbye and some never get to say it.

Friends grow up together then leave to go off to college; some remain in their new locations where their lives take a different turn than their peers. After the war years, brides emigrated from their homes and their families, following their military husbands, for a new life in a new country. Occasionally, people leave their partners devastated, quietly departing without saying goodbye.

There are all manners of hellos and goodbyes. The hellos usually are the highlight that lift our spirits, whereas, the goodbyes more often cause anguish and long-term sadness. Life changes with each hello and goodbye. Someone new comes into your life and in specific cases your life is altered as you no longer remain just “I” you now become part of “we.” Friends enrich our lives. They sometimes come to us when we are very young, and if we are fortunate, they remain with us for life. I am blessed to have Sharon in my life since I was 13. She has been with me at my lowest and at my best. Then, we also have friends that come in and out of our lives for short periods of time, before moving on. Sometimes that brings us sadness at the ending, and we fail to see that it was intended in our continuing story, as part of our growth.

Hellos and goodbyes may sometimes bring regret. In looking back, we understand that there were toxic relationships and people who entered into our lives that we were better off when they left; we also had people slip through our fingers with whom we had relationships that we thought we never wanted to let go. I’m remembering Emi before she met Mike, the heartbreak she felt because the one she thought was meant for her, decided to end the relationship; then along came Mike. I’m sure that is a story that is repeated in many of your lives. We do need sometimes to thank God for unanswered prayers.

Hellos and Goodbyes become a part of who we are as human beings. We feel it in the plant and animal world as well. Hellos and goodbyes occur because we become attached, we have an emotional investment in the relationship, however, they bring us both joy and sadness, from which none of us are immune. I am continually amazed at the breadth of our life experience, the diversity, and wonder that opens up each new day.

The intelligence of our Creator unfolds day by day, bringing new experiences and new source of life. How glad I am to be a part of humanity. I sure hope you are too, in spite of its ups and downs. Know that whatever you have to face and go through God is with you always and will never leave you.

Be strong! Stay Safe! Be of good cheer!

Together in the Service of Christ

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