May 15, 2023

TO: Friends of Melrose

FROM: Rev. Sonia Ireson

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

Today, our family is off to Toronto for the funeral of Vince’s mother, Bernie who was 100 years old. She died the end of March. His brother, wife, 2 sons, and families arrived yesterday from the west – B.C. and Alberta. The service will be a full Catholic Mass, (this full side of the family will not be allowed to participate in the communion because of the differences in belief between Protestants and Catholics) followed by burial of ashes and reception, so it will be a full day. In the afternoon, Scott will be undergoing a minor surgical procedure which his mother will take him to, so that Sarah can join the family for her grandmother’s burial.

Sarah has access to information on the transplant website associated with Scott and she saw two things of note: First, he has been moved up the list of priority because of his critical state, and second there is an approved donor which we still don’t know who it will be. Perhaps, it is one of the donors who will swap with another who is not a blood match. May 29th continues to be the target date for all of this coming together and the transplant is anticipated four to six weeks later.

Carolin submitted her final paper Friday at 3.30 p.m. after a marathon session for two full days this week. What a relief for her and a recognition of how tired she had become. A surprise phone call came in shortly after her paper was done to say that her brother-in-law and sister-in-law were at the airport ready to fly out from B.C. and would arrive at 1 a.m. Saturday morning in Hamilton – not Sunday morning as she had noted in error. A major flurry of activity ensued getting the master bedroom and master bath ready for their use and moving Vince and Carolin up to the loft. Fortunately, Emi came in to our rescue and looked after the bathroom including replacing a toilet seat. Thank God for grandchildren! All was well and ready for their arrival. It is a bittersweet visit as we see the deterioration in Rod, Vince’s older brother, who has aggressive Alzheimers. Yesterday morning he tried to put a banana in the microwave. And he does not remember us from day to day. It will be a stressful visit for both he and his wife, Peg.

We continue to have an abundance of activities at Melrose. This week, was a Board Meeting on Monday; a pot luck dinner and zoomed in thought-provoking presentation on violence in women, from a woman in Mexico (her sister was in attendance for the evening and introduced her) on Wednesday evening; and another evening at the movies on Friday. After our Sunday service, Meg very thoughtfully, handed out carnations to the women in attendance to celebrate Mother’s Day.

My weekly reading led me to *Choose Joy* a 3-minute devotion for women; it offers this tidbit. Have High expectations. When all around you seems to be in disarray and disappointments come your way, look beyond the circumstances and know that God is watching over you. Scripture promises that an overwhelming supply of love will pour out from God when we place our trust in the Divine. God will never quit loving us. All of God’s saints had their periods of emptiness with God. Mother Theresa was proclaimed a saint, but even she said that she had long spells of drought in not feeling the presence of God, yet she held fast and continued to believe even in the absence of sensing God’s presence.

Look around you. See the signs of spring and newness, the green grass, the beautiful flowers, the variety of life in a pond, the swans swimming at the waterfront. Nature teems with life. It came from somewhere; from an intelligence so far beyond our own that it is hard to take in. All of life supports itself. Everything has been built in to complement and coordinate with one another. Humans are intended to be in contact with one another and to appreciate what has been created for our use and enjoyment.

When you feel alone, or disjointed in your day-to-day life, take a deep breath, reach inside yourself, and know that a benevolent Creator has made you to experience joy and loves you with a profound love that no human can replicate. You have been given friends, family, and lovers to share in your life, to laugh with you in joy, and to cry with you in sorrow. And this extraordinary being has asked you to remember that they are the Creator and Sustainer of all that surrounds you and flows through you.

No matter what trials and difficulties you face, whether you have created them yourself, or they have seemingly come out of nowhere, you can rely on God to give you the strength to walk through them. The road can get very rough and almost unpassable, but boulders in the road way can be rolled aside, and cracks in the pavement can be stepped over, and detours can be undertaken with new hope around the corner.

Are you now going through a crisis, or do you have a memory of a recent one that has rocked your world? Think back to the many hurdles you have overcome in your life, the challenges that you once thought to be unsurmountable, take a deep breath, and take pride in what you have managed to overcome. You have been given great inner strength and you build on it with the help of the Divine three-in-one. Whether you think of it as Jesus walking alongside you, or the Holy Spirit whispering in your ear, or Godself, the Father, sending a sign or an individual to answer your momentary prayer, the Divine trio work together for your good, and hold you in a love that is beyond understanding.

On your good days, be thankful for deliverance through the bad. On the bad days, hold on to the hope that “this too, shall pass.” Look for joy with high expectations of receiving it as a gift of our Creator. And try to find ways to see joy in the midst of circumstances that are not in themselves, joyful.

These words of hope and encouragement, first are directed at our own family, for me to take in, and live by, as much as for you. They are not meaningless and empty words. The day-to-day struggles and upheavals that we are facing in the journey to health with Scott and Sarah sometimes bend us to our knees. His health is not good and the dialysis is keeping him alive. We appreciate your prayers, good thoughts, and concern. I hope when you are facing your own difficulties you will be able to reach out to share in what you are going through. Knowing someone else cares is one of the best ways to feel like we are not alone. That’s what we do as a congregation of disciples, we offer Jesus’ compassion to others to help them through their hard times. **We do not walk alone**. We are so fortunate to know that God cares and to see examples of this popping up daily, if we can clear our minds sufficiently to watch for them.

We all get down from time to time. Fortunately, this is not a permanent state. Our intended state is “joy.” May you find peace, laughter, and joy to fill your days.

Be strong! Stay Safe! Be of good cheer!

Together in the Service of Christ

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