

## Coming Around Again

The Last Sunday after Epiphany. Year C. RCL. Luke 9:28-43a. (The Transfiguration and its aftermath). March 3, 2019. The Episcopal Shared Ministry of Our Saviour, Salem and Trinity, Alliance in the Diocese of Ohio. The Rev'd Jerome H. (Kip) Colegrove.

Lent starts in a few days. Today, on the ragged edge of the season of Epiphany, our lectionary throws us the reading that drenches us in what the season is all about. In short, Epiphany goes out with a bang.

The story of Jesus' transfiguration is wonderfully told by Luke, a master storyteller. The awe and majesty of the situation are highlighted by the gormlessness of Jesus' companions, who are utterly overwhelmed. It's funny and touching; this is what people are like when they are all the way out of their depth. Build huts for divine apparitions, indeed! As if you'd have time and there were materials handy. But we aren't supposed to think Peter, James and John are hopeless fools; after all, they stand for us.

They stand for people who don't very often have transfiguring visions (or at least most of us don't, which is *not* to say most of us never have any) but who are normally embroiled in the messy, often wearisome, occasionally astonishing day-to-day adventure of extending the life of Christ into the world in which we live and move and have our being.

Jesus is patient with the overwhelmed disciples on the mountain; peak experiences (pun absolutely intended) do tend to overwhelm human beings. But Jesus is himself emotionally overwhelmed when, back at the mountain's foot and back in the day-to-day mess, he encounters a collision between the ineptitude and inexperience of his disciples (the ones who were not with him on the mountain) and an urgent need for exorcism. This kind of healing was fairly typical of what went on when Jesus and his entourage showed up. But Jesus has been working hard—he doesn't have much time—to get his followers ready for how to proceed when he's not in the midst of them in the ordinary, sweaty and footsore way he was at that moment. When he says, "How much longer must I be with you and bear with you?" He does *not* mean "I'm sick and tired of you guys!" he means "I *don't* have much longer with you, I wish I did, and I wish the learning curve around here were steeper!"

I suppose he wishes *our* learning curve were steeper too, sometimes. Oh, we have our mountaintop moments. And we have our occasions of competence in doing the works of God's kingdom. But a lot of the life in Christ is plain old footslogging, doing a routine act of generosity here, offering an ordinary prayer there, recruiting our patience yet again in the face of foolishness, and so on, and so on, seemingly ad infinitum, as if we're on the ragged edge of running out of inspiration, confidence, compassion...

And yet...

Jesus isn't really "not here," you know. His life and his purpose inhabit the whole universe and especially, on this planet, the Church. That's with a capital C: not just another human institution but a way of approaching the world from a heavenly standpoint, empowered and guided by Jesus. And one of the things the Church does is keep working on that old learning curve, the one where we learn to teach and heal and live and laugh and love like Jesus did, like he was trying to teach those disciples of his to do way back when.

One way the Church does this is by bringing themes and occasions and practices around again and again. (It's called *reinforcement*, in learning theory.) What just came around is Epiphany, where we've been focusing once again on the mountaintop experience of God revealing himself in Jesus Christ. And Lent is coming around again, starting in three days, where we focus on how to deal with sin and temptation in this messy, wonderful, routine, terrifying, amazing life. It's basically about getting ready for Easter to come around again, but I've always been

impressed by the realism and helpful proportion of Lent. Anything worth doing, like living an Easter life, is worth practicing for. Lent is a school of humility, charity, and clear-mindedness that we get to attend together.

So. To help us do that, I have the official Mother Julie and Father Kip 2019 resource list for practicing Lent. I'm going to pass it out right now, and while there's nothing in it about building booths for holy apparitions or healing people possessed by demons, there is plenty about self-examination, prayer, generosity, and all sorts of things that keep the learning curve of discipleship trending upward. That's what Lent is all about. Coming soon to a Church near you.

## 2019 Resources for Practicing Lent

**Daily Devotionals:** via subscription, downloads, apps or just visiting sites.

- Lent only
  - Lenten Meditations from the Diocese of Ohio: subscribe for emails or download the pdf at <https://www.dohio.org/> or see them daily on their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/dohio>.
  - Character Reflections: use Chinese characters to illuminate spiritual truths for Lent by Elyn MacInnis. <http://www.characterreflections.com/beginning-of-lent-reflection-199/>
  - Episcopal Relief and Development Daily Lenten Devotionals: daily emails with a focus on health and healing of oneself and the world <https://www.episcopalrelief.org/church-in-action/church-campaigns/lent>
  - Living Well Through Lent from Living Compass: download pdf or subscribe to daily emails <https://www.livingcompass.org/lent>
- Year round
  - Forward Day by Day Prayer Page: Subscribe to or read online their famous daily meditations <https://prayer.forwardmovement.org/>.
  - D365: Phone-friendly format particularly encouraging to youth and young adults <https://d365.org/>.
  - Art of the Day: subscribe to experience a different work of religious art year-round <https://www.artbible.info/art/artoftheday/>.

### Reading the Bible

- Purchase new or used on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Recommended translations: the New Revised Standard Version (used in Episcopal Churches on Sundays, has gender-inclusive language) and *The Message* (a paraphrase that makes it easier to read). The King James Version is not recommended – the meanings of many of its words have changed over the 400+ years since it was written.
- Reading plans for the bible: <https://www.biblegateway.com/reading-plans/>. Subscribe to plans for reading many translations of the bible in a wide variety of ways, text or audio, including
  - The whole thing, in either text order or historical order (not the same thing), over 1 year or 90 days
  - Excerpts in various 40-day plans perfect for Lent
  - In Episcopal Daily Office 2-year cycle
  - Verse of the day

### OVER

**Using the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*:** morning, noonday, evening and bedtime devotional prayers; all 150 psalms from the Bible; prayers for every occasion; a chart to read the whole bible in two years; an outline of the Christian faith; and more.

- Download for free at <http://www.bcponline.org/> or download for free in Word, WordPerfect, RTF and PDF formats at [http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/formatted\\_1979.htm](http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/formatted_1979.htm)
- Purchase new and used in paperback, hardcover, leather-bound and Kindle formats

at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

**Praying the Daily Offices:** daily bible readings and prayers based on ancient monastery services for morning, noon, evening and bedtime.

- Using two books: get a bible and a copy of the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP). The BCP has morning, noon, evening and compline (bedtime) prayer services. Use the 2-year bible-reading cycle in the back of the Prayer Book to look up the proper scripture readings for each day.
- Online: since the prayers and readings change daily, and there are special options for holy days, the Daily Office can become very complex if you want it to. These sites format the offices for you daily with all the options.
  - Download in text, PDF, Kindle, iPad and iPhone formats, read online or listen as a podcast with music. <http://www.missionstclare.com/english/>
  - Visit daily <https://prayer.forwardmovement.org/>.

### **General Devotional Resources**

- ExploreFaith.org: website full of resources for developing your spiritual life, including prayer, journaling and creation care. <http://www.explorefaith.org/>
- Lent Madness: Who Will Win the Golden Halo? A fun game that helps you learn about the saints throughout Lent in the format of the March Madness playoffs. <http://www.lentmadness.org/>
- Praying in Color: free handouts for children and adults with coloring pages and suggestions for prayer exercises with them. <https://prayingincolor.com/handouts>
- The Hive: A wide variety of spiritual helps from an Episcopal source <https://www.thehiveapiary.com/>
- Praying with the Anglican Rosary: Download prayers and directions for making one [http://www.anglicanprayer.org/resources/P-41-Anglican%20Rosary\\_Web.pdf](http://www.anglicanprayer.org/resources/P-41-Anglican%20Rosary_Web.pdf)