

Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

Among The Flowers Of Golgotha

By Ken Woodley

This is going to be an Easter none of us will ever forget.

We're going to remember it forever not because of what COVID-19 prevented us from doing but, instead, what this coronavirus prompted us to do anyway.

Instead of coming to Easter service, picking a flower from a petal-laden basket and putting it on our Easter cross, each of us who can is going to drive individually to St. Anne's with our own flowers. We will place them on the cross, which will be waiting for us on the front stoop of the church.

Or, if there are no blooms left for us to bring, we will decorate the cross with greenery, which will echo our "greening of the church" for Christmas. What a poignant bookend.

This Easter, therefore, will find us more closely resembling Mary Magdalene on that very first Easter morning. She had awoken before dawn and in the darkness went to the tomb, which she found to be empty.

As empty as our sanctuary is going to be this year on Easter morning.

And she began to weep, thinking someone had gone off with the body of Jesus. He was there with her but in the darkness Mary had mistaken him for the gardener. When Jesus revealed his identity, calling Mary by name, I am certain she felt the "flowers of Golgotha" blooming inside her.

From that awful crucifixion, an eternal garden blossomed. Darkness was turned into light and death turned inside out.

The blooms of Jesus's resurrection are still there. They always will be. Nothing could ever take them away.

With the darkness of COVID-19 all around us, it might be easy to miss Jesus standing with us, too. The world is "weeping" all around us. But as we bring our flowers or greenery to St. Anne's on Saturday afternoon or Easter morning, we shall sense our "gardener" with us. We will feel the blooms of Jesus's resurrection, and his heavenly promise, blossoming inside us.

We will feel that this year, I think, perhaps more strongly than we ever have before. And our flowered and greened cross will declare that truth, and our faith in it, to everyone who passes our church. As we have always done.

This year, however, I believe everyone in our community who sees that we have found a way to flower and green that cross will feel its message more deeply too.

There is so much that the flowers and greenery of St. Anne's represent.

They remind us of what Jesus and the love and grace of God mean to our lives. Especially at a time when the world, itself, feels like it is being crucified.

They also embody what each of us brings to St. Anne's, to each other and to those with whom we share our lives.

Each of us is a flower and together we are a garden—a fact dramatically emphasized this year. A garden in which someone desperately searching in the darkness of their own crucified world for the light of Christ can find the “gardener” waiting.

But there is something else, too.

When we place a flower or greenery on the cross, we allow the child of God within us to shout, “Hallelujah!! Yes!! I am still here!!”

Our child of God self.

Our truest self.

Our child of God self that embraces the miracle of Easter and believes that flowering or greening the cross really does matter, whether there is an Easter church service or not.

Especially, in fact, because there can be no Easter church service this year.

Not because the miracle of Easter can be proved but, instead, because it does not have to be proved.

In the depths of winter, spring flowers and green leaves cannot be proved either.

Were we to dig into the ground to find them, daffodil and tulip bulbs would have all the appearance of death after life, not life after death. Just like the barren tips of winter tree limbs and branches.

Yet, there we are, our child of God selves transforming the crucifixion place of Christ into a cross-shaped garden because petals and blooms and greenery did rise from their winter death.

And, somewhere in all of that, we hear “the gardener” call our name, telling us the resurrection is not his alone.

Just as the Appomattox community that ventures down Oakleigh Avenue will see those flowers and greenery and feel Jesus calling their name, too.

Calling us all.

And there is no virus in the world that can stop that.

