

St. Paul's Parish, Kent
The Sixth Sunday After Easter, 13 May 2007
The Reverend Allen LaMontagne, Rector
(Rogation day, Mothers Day)

A sermon preached on the Revised Common Lectionary Lessons and Gospel; Acts 16.9-15; Psalm 67; Revelation 21.10, 22-22.5; John 14.23-29

In the spirit of the phrase, "time is money" --which could be said to describe American life-- about a decade ago, the personnel agency Accountemps sponsored a time-study of 200 executives in the workplace. They found on average, executives spent almost 2 hours a day ,or two months a year, waiting on telephone hold, reading unnecessary mail, and attending unnecessary meetings. Two months per year of so-called "wasted totals."

I wonder what impact studies of this kind have on us, because one luxury we seem not to afford ourselves easily, at least in terms of spiritual life, is time. People tend to want or need religious activity in somewhat time-tidy packets, like packaged food today. Sometimes we linger at coffee hour, but were we to extend the amount of time we are in worship, I wonder what would happen to attendance. So many other activities vie for our attention, and rightly so, things like family time, time to rest and exercise, to name a few, not to mention the more mundane: housekeeping, car maintenance, paying bills and other paperwork. We get so busy that a "tipping point" appears to emerge. Either we continue down the path of busyness leading to more busyness and forsake seemingly extra things like church, Scripture reading and meditation, or we put on the brakes and....stop. Simply...stop.

Stop and consider, what is the point of all our coming and going? What is our purpose in relation to God?

Having stopped in here, we find today is characterized by it being Mother's Day. And this is also Rogation Sunday. In addition to tending to the relationship mothers have, and we have with them, the Episcopal Church Kalendar calls us during Rogation Days to a special focus on our role as stewards of the earth, stewards of our time, stewards of all God's gifts entrusted to us in partnership with the One who creates and sustains us and the world we live in. The word Rogation stems from the Latin *rogare* which means, "To ask." For instance, "Rogaine" the hair growth product, implies to ask for the growth of hair!

The origins of Rogation Days hark back to the fifth century when in the town of Vienne, Bishop Mamertus lead processional litanies on several weekdays before the observance of Ascension Day (which is celebrated this Thursday, by the way). This was in response to devastating earthquakes that afflicted the countryside and people. Pope Leo earlier put in place similar processional litanies on April 25, a day of pagan worship in honor of the god Robigo, who was believed to protect crops. Thus develop Rogation Days" a time during planting season when people ask God to preserve their lives from danger, that their land pose no threat, and instead yield sustenance.

The people pray as though their lives depend on it. For in fact, their lives *do* depend on the mercy of God and God's divine protection, as do *ours*, even if in our busyness we neglect to think, to stop and think, about where good things come from.

This being Mother's Day, a day set aside to honor our mothers, we remember the temporal way we come to life. As Mary brings Jesus to life, we too are spirit enfleshed. Like mirror images of Christ, we who are enfleshed are given Spirit by God whose Spirit becomes flesh and dwells among us in the person of Christ. By his death and resurrection, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. God is where we come from and to whom we go again.

On this Rogation Sunday, we hear our Lord say, "Those who love me will keep my word." Jesus says further in the Gospel of John, "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit...will teach you everything, and remind you of everything I have said to you." A time consuming job, this is. "The Holy Spirit...will teach you everything, and remind you of everything I have said to you." The Gospel is more than a traditional course of study, more than a Master's Degree or Ph.D. It is a lifetime of paying attention to God, and lots of tests along the way. It's not easy being "resurrection people." The language of resurrection is deep and complex. Even the most avant garde are at a loss for words. All the better that we stop on Rogation Sunday to ask not so much if we *understand* what the Bible says, but do we even hear the Word of God, the voice of God...?

"Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give to you..." Do you hear that? There is no lack of peripheral noise pollution, which only adds to the internal noise we generate with help from the demon of busyness who toils tirelessly to keep us distracted from hearing God's Love in our hearts, of enjoying God's Peace.

But the language of resurrection is known in the natural world, and we are able to hear it as we are willing to listen. Mother Earth, Mother God, shares the Good News with us in the language of the Spirit. It is in the sound of wind and rain...

To stop and take the time to enjoy this conversation may have you feeling as though you are "wasting time." We have been taught, "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." But is it? The world, our culture has sold us on the need to *get* busy. But now, that instruction has subtly evolved. Now it is *stay busy--always*. All of our in-between times that used to afford us natural and genuine leisure have been invaded by email and cell phones. We are more connected...to something, but the question is the extent to which the something is God. For certain, God is connected to us. We are connected to the land, whether we know it or not. And we do well to know it, for if we neglect this relationship, it is likely to wither.

"Those who Love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." Today, Mothers Day, has a family focus. In God's world, everyday is family day. Everyday, God dwells with us, feeds us, loves us. We enjoy our familial relationship with God to the extent we allow ourselves time for conversation, being present to God as God is present to us, in the flowers and trees that

blossom especially in Springtime. In the sounds of the birds, in the smells of new life, God breathes joy into our hearts, peace into our minds, health into our bodies. "May all the ends of the earth stand in awe of him," beginning with us today, in this corner of God's dwelling place, "our fragile island home." Let us pray, (The Collect for Rogation Day, BCP, 259).