



THE UNITY MESSENGER

Unity of Santa Rosa
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A Different Kind of Lent

By Harker Brautighan

Last month, I talked a little bit about what the period of Lent means to me. I certainly am experiencing a different kind of Lent than what I expected. Instead of choosing to possibly give something up during this period, I find myself and my fellow global citizens in a period of enforced fasting from one another's physical company. While we have video calls and other technology, which are great blessings, we still miss hugging, holding hands, touching one another's faces. There's something enchanting about looking into each other's eyes, hands clasped, as we pray together. Now, we pray together virtually. We pray for the world.

Is it a time for inward reflection, as one might usually focus on during Lent, or more a time to go outward? I see outward movement in a global outpouring of love sent digitally and through prayer—prayers from spiritual leaders, texts from friends and family, stories of the brave people fighting on the front lines of COVID-19. An outward flow of news and information, as well, can lead to an inward anxiety, a tightness, a holding onto a consciousness of fear and insularity. It is important, rather, to keep up a consciousness of circulation. As our thoughts turn inward, we can spend time in prayer and meditation, reflecting on the changed appearance of our world. Breathe. Inspire. And bring our thoughts outward, in a shining flow of love and healing energy for our world. We circulate healing love through our own bodies, hearts, minds, and spirits; we circulate it back out to our families, groups, towns, societies, and global community.

In Matthew 14, Jesus performs some remarkable outward works—for example feeding the five thousand with five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:18-21, NIV). Before doing so, however, "he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place" (Matthew 14:13). When the "crowds followed him on foot from the towns," he "had compassion on them and healed their sick" (Matthew 14:13-14). His solitary, private, inward journey blossomed into an outward show of compassion and then the concrete actions of healing the sick and feeding the five thousand. Then, after feeding the five thousand, and before walking on water, Jesus "went up on a mountainside by himself to pray" (Matthew 14:23). We see again the consciousness of circulation at work. (continued on Page 2)

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As Marilyn Russell points out, "Jesus, our teacher and way shower, acted with great love for all. It is wonderful to have this Easter season upon us so we can be guided by his unselfish sacrifices. We need to put aside our differences and do what we do best as a nation and world and rise to face our common challenge. We need to heal our hearts as well as our bodies."

I encourage you all to seek time for contemplative, affirmative prayer and meditation, and also to pray for others. I encourage you to take in what is nourishing to your own spirit and to pour out what is nourishing to others. Remain open to the cycle of giving and receiving, of being a conduit for Spirit, and in circulating affirmative prayer. Never underestimate your own power and value. You are a blessing.