

Living in Gratitude by Angeles Arrien

As presented by Eileen Selleck

April: Mercy and Atonement

Opening Prayer: Robert Frost, from **A Boy's Will**

Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers to-day;

And give us not to think so far away

As the uncertain harvest; keep us here

All simply in the springing of the year.

Oh, give us pleasure in the orchard white,

Like nothing else by day, like ghosts by night;

And make us happy in the happy bees,

The swarm dilating round the perfect trees.

And make us happy in the darting bird,

That suddenly above the bees is heard,

The meteor that thrusts with needle bill,

And off a blossom in midair stands still.

For this is love and nothing else is love,

That which is reserved for God above

To sanctify to what far ends He will,

But which it only needs that we fulfill.

It is April, it is spring

As we move through the spring season we are continually presented with the new. It is the rebirth, or the resurrection of the earth with spring flowers emerging from the soil, fresh green leaves on the seemingly dead stalks and branches of the plants around us, and the baby animals emerging into the lengthening and warming days of spring. Among my favorite religious services has been the Easter “sunrise” service.

As a child we would go to Mass and there was an Easter Egg hunt in the fields following the service.

As good a reason as any to love the Easter service as a child.

However, when I started attending Unity, 22 years ago,
I experienced Easter (this spring season)
like I never had before.

Unity of Olympia is nestled in its own forest,
with tall trees, ferns, and flowering shrubs.

For Easter they would host a 6am “Sunrise” Service.

I went the first time not knowing what to expect.

As I approached the church there was no one
in the sanctuary - I found them outside.

Reverend Anna began by talking of rebirth and
resurrection, and then we were invited
to walk the grounds.

We were to look for evidence of rebirth and resurrection.

I had lived through half the springs of my life and
I had never stopped to marvel at the wonder of spring.

I walked the grounds slowly, for the first time really
looking at the fresh spring flowers,
the emerging buds of summer’s blooms,
the pale green of the new ferns.

I had never stopped to wonder at the

dew soaked spider webs or
notice the chirping of the newly hatched baby birds.
I wandered those grounds in awe,
as if looking at the world around me for the very first time.
It was spring and the earth was in a state of resurrection.

We gathered back together and Rev. Anna talked about
how, we too, experience this time of resurrection -
when we take the time to grow in spiritual practice.

As we all know, the Lenten season
and Easter is for just that.

However, I invite you to continue in this state
of spiritual resurrection throughout the spring season.

As many of you know,
I've been super busy this past couple of months.
We recently sold our house, buying a property and
renovating the existing structure, with plans to
build a new home...at some point.
We chose the property for many reasons, and when
it comes down to it, the bottom line is that

it is the “right” property for us.

We viewed the property in January, the dead of winter,
and knew it was the right place for us.

Now, I marvel at the fact it is mine.

As we have entered the spring season I find myself
wandering the acres, noting the budding plants,
the new leaves, the birdsong.

I have sat in the light of a perfect sunbeam
and stared up at the blue sky through the branches
of my mighty oaks with tears in my eyes at the sheer
perfection of my slice of heaven.

Spring, the season of resurrection
has found me again, as it did 22 years ago.

It was new to me then, and this season
it was like coming home to find it new again.

As the days lengthen and earth around us comes back to
life we can be “startled into thankfulness at any moment.”

April is not just important to Christians,
as Easter is not the only spiritual tradition
for this time of year.

“Depending upon the tradition in question,
it can be a time of sanctification, purification, surrender,
redemption, liberation, or resurrection.”

All very spring-like.

“In all the spiritual traditions and redemption stories,
human beings return to and experience the natural states
of freedom, love, humility, and goodness.

So it is that April holds the twin blessings
of nature’s spectacular renewal
and the soul’s sanctification and redemption.”

This season of renewal is a time of mercy and forgiveness.

Among the most potent examples of forgiveness we have
in Christian teachings is that of Jesus upon the cross.

Even as he hung upon the cross, nailed through his hands
and his feet, he spoke of forgiveness,

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Luke 23:34

We've talked about forgiveness before,
it is a forever practice.

However, in this time of spring,
it is a natural time to work on forgiveness.

With all the fresh and new about us, it
is a time to renew our spirit through forgiveness.

With forgiveness comes mercy.

We cannot experience forgiveness and mercy
from a place of ungratefulness.

“During this month, our gratitude work is to expose the
states of ungratefulness we harbor within