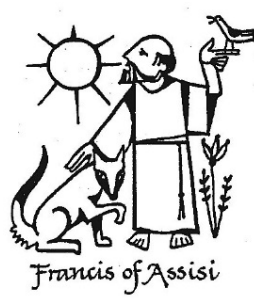


Dear friends in Christ



April 17, 2022, Easter Day

“We Can Do This”

The Rev. Dr. John C. Forney, St. Francis Episcopal Mission
Isaiah 65:17-25; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Acts 10:34-43;
Luke 24:1-12

I used to have a little Bishop's Miter cactus in a small blue pot. Actually, it was our son Christopher's plant. It's now in a new home in our relandscaped side yard of drought-tolerant plants. And every time this year, as Easter approaches, what looks to be a boring, dead thing, bursts forth with two or three yellow flowers. Luke says, **“On the first day of the week.”**

It looks again this year to be right on schedule, reminding me that no matter how drear the headlines or how bad the news Ali Velshi is serving up, RESURRECTION HOPE is at hand. And I'm reminded of the words of determination of Ketanji Brown Jackson to her Sisterhood when discouraged, **“WE CAN DO THIS!”** That's RESURRECTION HOPE!

It has been said by Frederick Dennison Maurice, an Anglican divine, that It is of little consequence to believe that one dead body was reanimated on Easter morn if the believer cannot believe that RESURRECTION is a real and present event for the faithful. Otherwise, the Easter miracle is just an obscure, one-off event of little practical consequence for how we go through our days. RESSURECTION is empowerment in the Spirit available to all. It is behind the belief that, as Ketanji would urge her sisters, **“WE CAN DO THIS.”** For Easter People, it is always the **“first day of the week.”**

No matter the darkness of Good Friday, no matter how badly this republic may falter, no matter the mediocrity of some of our political class, we have the possibility of correction. Our nation is daily being resurrected as a compact of the rule of law. Yes, this week a problematic personality popped up again in the news: Marjorie Taylor Green. She's somewhat dismayed that the framers of the 14th Amendment frowned on seditionists and insurrectionists being eligible for election to public office. Imagine that!

In my eighth-grade history class unit on the Constitution, had she been paying attention, she might have come across the words:

"No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice-President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who...shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof..."¹

A group, of her constituents, "Our Revolution," has filed suit in her 14th Georgia congressional district, litigating this issue in an attempt to have this provision of the Constitution fully enforced. And of course, MTG is apoplectic. How dare the Constitution be ruled determinative – that the law be followed! Isn't that just for the "little people?"

This turn of events gives me RESURRECTION HOPE that we yet remain a nation of laws, that someone would bring this case forward. It's as hopeful as my little bishop's miter cactus blooming its heart out every sunny day.

It is the Resurrection People who do not give up, do not give into cynicism. Who engage the battle for a civil society each and every day. They run for office, donate to support voter rights, write postcards urging infrequent voters to, for God's sake, VOTE. No matter how long they make you stand in line.

Even after a former president who, himself, ought to be barred from reelection by the same legal stricture—even after her antics at the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing for Ketanji Brown Jackson to be confirmed to the Supreme Court -- should Marjory Taylor Green and Trump both be barred, I shall certainly shed no

¹ The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, Section 3,

tear. Disgraceful, rude and obnoxious come to mind in considering her contribution to the hearing. And did I mention ignorant? Why not? She's an entitled White woman.

Judge Totenberg may possibly have her ruling this coming week as to whether the case can go forward. That would certainly be an affirmation that nobody but nobody is above the law." RESURRECTION HOPE, indeed! Maybe this republic will yet stand.

Speaking of Hope, this week I just received an e-mail from one of our team that a very prominent CA state senator, James Ramos, who's on the Appropriations Committee, has put a \$26 million earmark in the California state budget for addiction treatment in San Bernardino County. Targeted for House of Hope. We have been working closely with his office and are assured that he is highly supportive of the House of Hope – San Bernardino program. As Ketanji urged her sisters, "WE CAN DO THIS!"

I've just finished reading a book on teen addiction written by a mother and her fifteen-year-old daughter. It is a heart-wrenching portrayal of what addiction does to a family -- a real eye opener on the difficulty of achieving sobriety, especially for a young person.

Off the Rails: One Family's Journey Through Teen Addiction² begins with the parent's last-gasp attempt for help and sanity. Their daughter Hannah's destructive behavior has literally terrorized her family – dragged them through hell and gone.

As one reviewer writes: "... a desperate story of teen addiction, punctuated by misdiagnosis, overdose, and rehabilitation...A brave if harrowing, work..."³

Yes, this book is about addiction, but more than that – from her mother: "...it is first and foremost about my relationship with my daughter and how we saved each other, with help from our family, and lots of people who supported us along the way."⁴

² Susan Burrowes, *Off the Rails: One Family's Journey Through Teen Addiction* (Berkeley, CA: She Writes Press, 2018).

³ Op, cit., back cover.

⁴ Op, cit., 7.

Some of the harrowing problems from Mom's perspective:

"Hannah threatened to rip her sister's homework in half. When I told her to stop, she called me an ugly hag and told me to shut the hole in my face. Then she smiled."

"When Camilla refused to give Hannah money, Hannah cut the heads off Camilla's favorite stuffed animals. This scares me. Is she a psycho?"⁵

Hanna would phone her mom at all hours of the night very drunk and very high, calling for help from some party or some street corner, cold, hungry and shivering. Literally, this girl was "off the rails" and shredding her family in the process. Any family dealing with drug abuse or mental illness has lived this nightmare story.

In the end, Hannah is placed in a wilderness camp in Utah, Second Nature, which is for teenaged girls with substance abuse problems. For three months, in the most primitive circumstances, these girls and their counselors would face the behavior which not only landed them in this camp, but landed them in jail, hospitals and on the streets. Stealing, begging, trading sex for drugs, lying, overdosing, suicide attempts -- all a very dead-end journey.

As Hannah concludes at the end of her story: this camp is a sort of last resort for only the most screwed-upness (she uses another word here) situation in which she and these girls found themselves.

Hannah is resistant from the get-go. Writing to her mom: "I'm in a wasteland with a bunch of messed-up street urchins who are so bored that they want to fix me. I look at this bunch of hobos and whores and know they have nothing to teach me. They are dirty, they stink and they are meaner than hell. At least to me."⁶

The trials and melt-downs are many. The other girls, she derisively calls the bitches, will not let her slide during community meeting time – read group therapy here. They call her on her evasions, lies, seeking sympathy, and self-

⁵ Op.cit., 98.

⁶ Op. cit., 73.

aggrandizing B.S.

Every morning and evening each girl has to get her own fire going using a bow drill, a stick and stone. No matches. If she can't get her fire going, it's a cold meal. The best she can do is a whisp of smoke. No flame.

Most of the girls come in with some very serious behavioral and psychological problems. One new girl rejects the first and most basic requirement to join the circle. She is consigned to the outer edge of meetings because she refuses to write her life story. That's where everyone starts until that assignment is completed.

She is also consigned to the edge of the circle because she won't dig a latrine. She poops in her pants. As the smell becomes overwhelming after days, she is referred to as Poopster or Poopzilla by the others. Talk about passive-aggressive behavior! Finally, she just decides to hold it in. After several days, this behavior lands her in the hospital.

When she returns to camp, she is still on the edge of the circle, but has begun to write her life story. It looks like she may get with the program after all.

A turning point comes as the end of the three months as Hannah's stay at Second Nature draws to a close. Hannah is doing much better, but has a long way to go. Returning to Santa Cruz and its drug scene with the same old druggie friends is not an option. Recipe for failure.

When Hannah is told by her parents that she will be going to Vista, a rehabilitation high school, she goes into meltdown. Yelling, cursing, crying, for which she's busted back down to newbie status. But after several months working back her privileges, she graduates wilderness camp and is ready for Vista.

The story ends with Hannah learning the necessary life skills at Vista and developing pride in helping the other girls with their recovery – the bitches, she now calls them with true affection. She leaves that high school with a sense of accomplishment. She is accepted into a first-class art college, and in the epilogue reports she is able to support herself with her art, now having a B.A. degree.

This is RESURRECTION. It has taken an entire village, literally, to give Hannah the tools, the love, the belief in herself to pull through. This book is a collective, “WE CAN DO THIS.” One day at a time. It’s the really real Easter story. Not just of one, but it’s truly -- WE ALL RISE TOGETHER.

A heck of a lot better than dyed eggs, bunnies and all the other junk our society hawks this time of year. It’s the glorious Gospel come alive in living 3-D color.

That is what we aim to be about at House of Hope – RESURRECTION.

I close with a poem a Black woman writes of her journey against all odds. Graduate of Harvard in English literature, and now Poet, Writer, Professor at Vanderbilt University.

won’t you celebrate with me

LUCILLE CLIFTON

won't you celebrate with me
what i have shaped into
a kind of life? i had no model.
born in babylon
both nonwhite and woman
what did i see to be except myself?
i made it up
here on this bridge between
starshine and clay,
my one hand holding tight
my other hand; come celebrate
with me that everyday
something has tried to kill me
and has failed.⁷

Yes, indeed! Won’t you celebrate with me this **first day of the week**? This Easter morn? Happy Easter. Amen

⁷ Lucille Clifton, “Won’t You Celebrate With Me” from *Book of Light* (Port Townsend, Washington: Copper Canyon Press, 1993).