

**The Still Point**  
**A Time of Meditation and Reflection**  
**The Sixth Sunday of Easter**

... At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance...

T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*

Peace on each one who comes in need;  
**Peace on each one who comes in joy.**  
Peace on each one who offers prayers;  
**Peace on each one who offers song.**  
Peace of the Maker, Peace of the Son,  
**Peace of the Spirit, the Triune One.**

**Alleluia! Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

**Opening Prayer**

Glorious Lord of Life,  
we praise you,  
that by the mighty resurrection of your Son,  
you have delivered us from sin and death  
and made your whole creation new;  
grant that we who celebrate with joy  
Christ's rising from the dead,  
may be raised from the death of sin  
to the life of righteousness;  
for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God for ever.  
**Amen.**

## The Gospel

*John 15:9-17*

Jesus said to his disciples, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."

**Poem:** "Only if Love Should Pierce You"

*by Salvatore Quasimodo  
trans. from Italian by Jack Bevan*

Do not forget that you live in the midst of the animals,  
horses, cats, sewer rats  
brown as Solomon's woman, terrible  
camp with colors flying,  
do not forget the dog with harmonies of the unreal  
in tongue and tail, nor the green lizard, the blackbird,  
the nightingale, viper, drone. Or you are pleased to think  
that you live among pure men and virtuous  
women who do not touch  
the howl of the frog in love, green  
as the greenest branch of the blood.  
Birds watch you from trees, and the leaves  
are aware that the Mind is dead  
forever, its remnant savors of burnt  
cartilage, rotten plastic; do not forget  
to be animal, fit and sinuous,  
torrid in violence, wanting everything here  
on hearth, before the final cry  
when the body is cadence of shrivelled memories  
and the spirit hastens to the eternal end;  
remember that you can be the being of being  
only if love should pierce you deep inside.

## **Meditation:**

Today's reading from John is so well-known that its shock has probably worn off. To obey, Jesus says, is not to submit to a tyrant, or to follow nitpicky rules, or to passively, robotically check off a list of duties. To obey is to love, and to obey is to seek joy. Or, the way Jesus would probably frame it: to love is to obey; to seek joy is to obey. We can imagine the sense of relief and of a burden being lightened when hearing these words for the first time. Not that love is easy, of course. But imagine the ragtag group of Jesus's followers hearing that the one item on the 'to do' list (in a world filled with them) is simply to love.

Salvatore Quasimodo, who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1959, surprises us further by reminding his human readers that they are also animals, and therefore just as capable of violence, just as prone to primal desires, and just as doomed to die as a frog, a horse, or a sewer rat. But despite our bestial natures, he tells us, if we let the commandment of love pierce us "deep inside," we can transcend our animal nature and be the "being of being."

## **Reflection:**

How does our world of obligation and duty limit our capacity to love?

Think of your 'to do' list today. What happens to your mood if you replace that entire list with "love"?

When have you felt "pierced" by love in the past year? What other verbs would you use to describe that feeling?

## **Prayers**

We bring before God someone whom we have met or remembered today

We bring to God someone who is hurting tonight and needs our prayer

We bring to God a troubled situation in our world

We bring to God, silently, someone whom we find hard to forgive or trust

We bring ourselves to God that we might grow in generosity of spirit, clarity of mind, and warmth of affection

We offer our thanks to God for the blessings in our lives

We name before God those who have died.

Gracious God, you hear all our prayers: those we speak aloud, those we hold in our hearts, and those prayers for which we have no words. Hear the prayers of your people, and grant them as may be best for us, for the sake of your holy name. **Amen.**

Accept our thanks for all you have done, O God. Our hands were empty, and you filled them.

May Christ's holy, healing, enabling Spirit be with us every step of the way, and be our guide as our road changes and turns, and the blessing of God our Creator, Redeemer and Giver of life be among us now and remain with us forever. **Amen.**

*Poem Selection and Meditation by Matt Bentley*