

July 10th, 2020

First: Today is the last day the [regathering survey](#) will be open. If you have not submitted yours yet, please do so now. We value your input! The more responses we gather, the more complete the results will be, and the more fitting a plan the committee will be able to draft. Every voice counts. Thank you to everyone who has already submitted one!

Today is also the day our choir would have departed on their triennial tour of the UK — this year would have included a week's residence at Lincoln Cathedral and then another week at Durham Cathedral. We are all mourning the loss of plans and events long-scheduled and eagerly-anticipated (and some of us are mourning far more than canceled events!). But at the moment I am mindful of this particular loss for our choir — the pleasure of the journey, but even more the pleasure of music-making, in prayer and worship, at some of the most iconic centers of our tradition. We do not yet know if or when the tour might be rescheduled. For that matter we are still no clearer about when choirs might be able to sing in church again. For everyone's safety it is important we take our time, and employ the utmost caution. But there is still a lot of sadness, and I am sensitive to that.

Yes, others are suffering more than a canceled trip, more than the temporary suspension of enjoyable activities. But it's important to recognize our own sadness, and perhaps to sit there for a while — because true compassion cannot circumvent my own pain (however slight it might be by comparison with that of others); rather the more familiar I am with it, the more patience I can have with myself, the more empathy I can offer my loved ones and the suffering in our world. Do you wish you had more compassion for others? For some specific other? Start by searching for whatever wounds or sadness you're neglecting in yourself, and offer that to God in prayer. Don't try to explain it away — just offer it, as is, without comment or apology, to God. It never ceases to amaze me how this seemingly selfish exercise can so unfailingly lead to more mature love for others — but it does seem to be the way grace works.

Finally, I will be away for two Sundays starting on July 19. David and I won't be doing much traveling, but I'm grateful for the chance to step away for a bit. Once it was clear coronavirus was staying through the summer, George and I decided to stagger our holidays somewhat — he is now back, and we'll overlap this Sunday (the 12th) and the week following before I go away. I'll be gone starting July 19, and be back again from Sunday August 2. Live-streamed worship will continue while I'm away, at the usual time/place — but we'll be offering Morning Prayer for those two Sundays instead of the Eucharist. Believe it or not, Morning Prayer (or its more musical name, "Choral Matins") was the principal worship service for most Anglican churches for three hundred years between the mid 18th and mid 20th centuries — and in America for even longer, from the early 1600s until the 1970s. I'm glad the Eucharist has regained its rightful place at the center of our worshiping life. But in these extraordinary circumstances, when we are prevented from having another priest "fill in," it will be good to recall just how strong a spiritual food the Office can be.

Yours faithfully,

Fr. Blake+