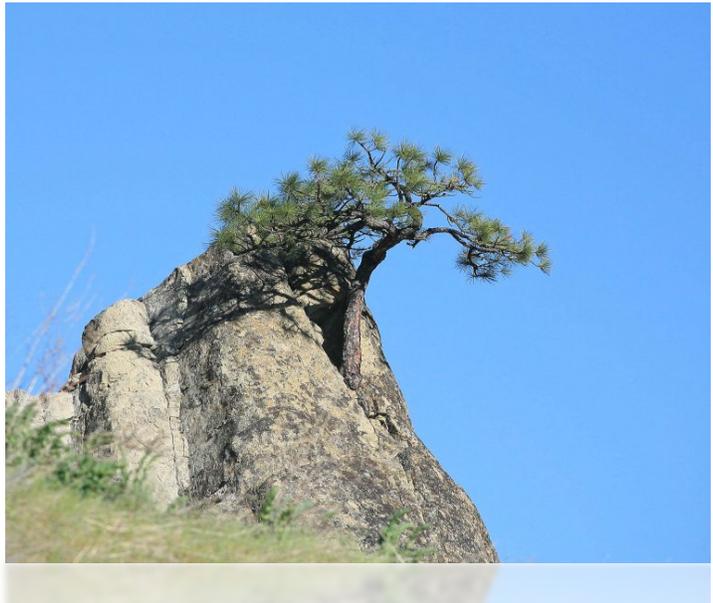




Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you,
All things are passing away:
God never changes.
Patience obtains all things.
Whoever has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices.

St. Teresa of Avila



Advent 2020

Dear friends,

Through all the uncertainties and disruptions in this year of COVID and a rancorous election, I've spent several hundred hours in Zoom rooms and on FaceTime doing spiritual direction and talking with groups about God. And what I've heard over and over from so many people has been pretty much the same: a lot of sadness, and anger, and grief. Perhaps you've wrestled with those feelings yourself. I know I have.

Then early this fall in the midst of a particularly down day, I ran across the above words from St. Teresa of Avila, who has been such a teacher to me over the years. Her words helped me refocus. I quickly wrote them down and they have been sitting in the corner of my computer screen ever since. I read them daily, and reflect on them, and I've shared them a lot.

“Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you...” Do we really have any control over being disturbed and frightened? How can we not be disturbed and frightened by a killer pandemic and the harsh antagonisms of political propaganda? For that matter, what can Jesus mean when he says to us “Do not let your hearts be troubled...” (John 14:1)?

It's true that we often create our own emotional states by how we think and what we tell ourselves—and I have to keep learning this anew when I feel discouraged myself. It can be easy to lose the eternal perspective and “awfulize” a situation beyond its reality. And so St. Teresa declares “All things are passing away,” that whatever is causing my dismay is a transient thing—even the coronavirus which will hopefully soon be vanquished by developing vaccines. However, “God never changes.... Whoever has God lacks nothing.” God is my rock of stability in unsettled times, God's infinite and unconditional love wraps me round and holds me secure, come what may. Thanks, Teresa, for that much needed reminder!

And you, my friends, you share that rock of stability, you too are wrapped in God's infinite and unconditional love—come what may! To sit for a spell in meditation on that certainty can help us begin to grasp what Teresa (and Jesus!) are saying to us. But we need to be patient with ourselves and our slow progress in growth, patient with others, patient with our world, patient with God. “Patience obtains all things”!

And isn't that what Advent calls us to? Be patient as we wait for better days, patient like the people of Israel waiting for a savior. They lived in far more difficult times than our own, yet they clung to their hope in God their Rock, knowing that God is faithful. And we know that too, don't we? Even on days that feel dark and barren, we know in a way that passes understanding that we are held in strong hands. And with Teresa we can affirm: God alone suffices.

The ministry of the Spiritual Renewal Center has managed to survive even with our doors closed since March, and we've even reaped some blessings in these difficult months. While we eagerly look forward to being able to open safely at some point in the coming year, the new avenues of serving God's people and the long-distance connections that have been forged online will surely continue. And you, my friends, have been generous in your support, and I can't thank you enough for your strong partnership in this good work. I pray, as 2020 comes to an end, that you will continue your kindness by sending a year-end gift of support. You can use the enclosed envelope, or make a gift on our website by credit card.

I am confident that there are brighter days coming—for our country and our world, and for all of us in the Christian movement as we continue to witness to the reality and the love of God.

Gratefully, in Christ,



Jim Krisher
Director

