



Weekly Resource

April 6th: What Does Easter Mean This Year?

Dear friends,

We humans are built for community. During this time of social distancing, it's crucial that we remain connected, holding one another in love and support. It's for this reason that **each week during the COVID-19 crisis, we'll be sending you a short resource** to use in a virtual meeting held over the phone or via video conferencing. This weekly resource is a great tool to stay connected with your current and past JFM small groups. It is also a great resource to use individually, or with groups of friends or family to stay connected and engaged in a meaningful way. These reflections will provide a time to pray together, check in with one another, and have conversation around a short passage.

In the meantime, we're offering tips and tools for facilitating all of our current programs through videoconferencing (including a Zoom training on April 16th at 7 pm ET). While we hope that this weekly resource will spiritually sustain your community while in quarantine, [now is also the perfect time to start one of our regular programs](#). The call to seek justice is just as important now as ever!

Last but not least, generosity is, at its core, a benefit to everyone. When you donate today, your gift helps us sustain individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out](#). Also, please feel free to [forward this resource](#) to friends and family!

Thank you for continuing to care for one another during this time of heightened anxiety. Know that we are praying for you!

Stay well,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff



What Does Easter Mean this Year?

“The mystery of prayer is that we may never understand exactly how it works, just that it draws us into intimacy with a God who hears.”

Kate Bowler, “Gondola Prayers”

About This Resource:

Easter is almost here. But what does it mean to celebrate Resurrection in the midst of illness and even death? How do we rejoice in the victory of love and light over evil and darkness... while in a pandemic?

This one-hour resource guides you in discerning what the Easter message means in this context. Whether you choose to engage this resource individually, with those you live with, or with your JustFaith group over the phone or video, we hope it will bring you hope and peace this Holy Week.

During this time of solitude, Just Faith Ministries invites you to deepen your prayer practice. Our 21-week program, EngagingSpirituality, offers an opportunity to revisit the wisdom of the teachings of our Christian tradition and rediscover the power of prayer as a tool to address the needs of our world. This program is easily adaptable to an online format. Visit our [website](#) to sign up!

Optional Resources:

[Listen](#) to Kate Bowler reading her “Gondola Prayers.”

The [story](#) of the poem “Lockdown” by Father Hendrick.

Fellowship of Reconciliation’s coronavirus prayer [petition](#).

Prayer [resources](#) for the coronavirus pandemic from the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference.

[Prayer](#) and reflection from the President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Prayer [resources](#) for the coronavirus pandemic from World Vision.



Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin by saying aloud (or reading silently, if you're by yourself) these words:

Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you on this Holy Week, despite that we can't be together in person. Today we'll reflect together on what Easter means in light of our current reality. We'll begin with prayer. You might notice the prayers look the same as last week.... This is because in times when our minds are whirling, it can be helpful to rest upon something familiar. We'll then spend a few minutes checking in with each other and have some conversation around a short reflection before closing in prayer. Most importantly, though, this will be a time to care for one another and to be the community we're called to be.

Let's take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the opening prayer.

In this time when the world is whirling from the Coronavirus and we are filled with anxiety and fear for ourselves, our families and our neighbors, give us courage.

In this time when tending to our physical health means avoiding health care facilities, sustain us.

In this time when health care workers risk becoming patients, embrace them.

In this time when those whose health is compromised have to worry about compromising their health, protect them.

In this time when we are invited to show affection by not showing affection, hold us.

In this time when communal prayer must be done in solitude, comfort us.

In this time when basic needs must be met from a distance, fill the emptiness.

In this time when exercising our civic duty means staying away from the voting booth, unite us.



In this time when strength in numbers means breaking up our large group, embolden us.

In this time when technology is facilitating human connection, link us together.

And, in this time when Easter Sunday feels more like Good Friday, fill us with a boundless sense of hope and the audacity to believe we really do have the power to help bring healing to the world. Amen.

– Susie Tierney
Executive Director
JustFaith Ministries

Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you're by yourself, journal about them.

- **Before we begin this week's reflection, let's take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling?** (It will be a bit more difficult via phone to know if someone is being talked over or is trying to get a word in.... Be sure everyone has a chance to speak).
- **What is something you're struggling with this week?**
- **Where have you seen a sign of hope this week?**

Reflection (15 minutes or so)

Then say:

Brother Richard Hendrick, a Franciscan priest living in Ireland, wrote a poem about the coronavirus entitled "Lockdown." He posted this poem on Facebook on March 13, and it immediately received thousands of likes and shares. Together let us listen to this poem as a prayer.



(Read the poem aloud, or have a volunteer read it.)

“Lockdown” by Father Richard Hendrick

Yes there is fear.

Yes there is isolation.

Yes there is panic buying.

Yes there is sickness.

Yes there is even death.

But,

They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise

You can hear the birds again.

They say that after just a few weeks of quiet

The sky is no longer thick with fumes

But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi

People are singing to each other

across the empty squares,

keeping their windows open

so that those who are alone

may hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland

is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.

Today a young woman I know

is busy spreading fliers with her number

through the neighbourhood

So that the elders may have someone to call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples

are preparing to welcome

and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary

All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting

All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way

All over the world people are waking up to a new reality

To how big we really are.

To how little control we really have.

To what really matters.

To Love.

So we pray and we remember that



*Yes there is fear.
But there does not have to be hate.
Yes there is isolation.
But there does not have to be loneliness.
Yes there is panic buying.
But there does not have to be meanness.
Yes there is sickness.
But there does not have to be disease of the soul
Yes there is even death.
But there can always be a rebirth of love.
Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.
Today, breathe.
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic
The birds are singing again
The sky is clearing,
Spring is coming,
And we are always encompassed by Love.
Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able
to touch across the empty square,
Sing*

Optional: listen to Taizé song “Stay with Me” (5:38):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCr2tn4yYKY>

As they listen, invite participants to recall the gestures of solidarity and compassion they have heard about or personally witnessed during this time of isolation. (Alternatively, you can journal).

Then say:

Most biblical scholars think that the Gospel of Mark has two endings. The oldest manuscripts show Mark’s text ending with chapter 16, verse 8, and it is this older story we will now read (Mark 16:1-8, NIV).

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?”

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”

Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

After reading, reflect on the text with these or similar questions:

- Mark’s Easter story ends on a strange note: fear and silence; the good news is not shared. When do you experience fear? Is fear keeping you from talking? What can you share when you are afraid? With whom?
- Witnessing the resurrection is first witnessing the empty tomb: the women are alarmed, bewildered, and afraid. In this time of crisis, how do you experience God’s presence? Do you experience God’s silence too? How do you feel when God “is not here?”
- The women are bringing to the tomb the following question: “who will roll the stone?” Who carries and rolls the stones of your life? Can you share the burden with others? When isolated, who is still there with you?
- Does the Easter message have relevance to your life or to this current context?

Optional: Listen to Taizé song “Nada te Turbe” (4:50):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=go1-BoDD7CI>

Nada te turbe,
nada te espante,
quien a Dios tiene
nada le falta:
Solo Dios basta.

Let nothing disturb you,
let nothing frighten you,



he who has God
nothing lacks:
God alone suffices.

Closing Prayer (20 minutes)

Introduce the closing meditation with the following words:

Over the next few weeks or even months, our steps will be slower and scarce as we walk in the world. Will we take this time of isolation as an opportunity to center ourselves on what is essential? Can we use this time to meditate, to pray for one another, and to be a witness to love and compassion?

Optional: listen to Taizé song “Tui Amoris Ignem” (5:25):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkfSQO9aQG8>

Veni Sancte Spiritus, tui amoris ignem accende.
Come, Holy Spirit, and kindle the flame of your love.

Then invite participants into the closing blessing. Read it aloud, or ask a volunteer to read it.

**May we who are merely inconvenienced,
remember those whose lives are at stake.**

**May we who have no risk factors,
remember those most vulnerable.**

**May we who have the luxury of working from home,
remember those who must choose between preserving their health or
making their rent.**

**May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close,
remember those who have no options.**

May we who have to cancel our trips,



remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market,
remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home,
remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country,
let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,
let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors.

AMEN.

“Prayer for Pandemic”
By Cameron Belim, Seattle, WA
Used with permission