



Reflection for September 13

By Bishop Jung



The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night. (Exodus 14:19-20)

We are living in difficult days. In our lifetime, we have never faced such a challenge as COVID-19 – individually, as a society, and as a global community. Our days are filled with anxiety, concern, uncertainty, and loss. For those afflicted by the coronavirus, the physical impact is deeply personal, sometimes fatal. For families and friends, it affords special unease and worry, and too often grief. As we watch the numbers of people afflicted rise in the millions, it is natural to wonder when it will end.

Some say that doubt is the opposite of faith, but I believe that fear is the true

reverse of deep and abiding belief. When we fear, we tend not to use our best judgment. We become reactive and short-sighted. We make snap decisions and we sometimes act irrationally (remember the hoarding of toilet paper at the beginning of the pandemic?). Fear erodes our foundation of faith and turns our focus from God. This happens time and again throughout the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Like Peter stepping out of the boat to walk on water with Jesus (Matthew 14:28-32), fear causes us to become distracted – to take our eyes off our Savior – and to sink into our anxiety and distress.

But the story of our Jewish and Christian forebears is an almost constant reminder to “fear not,” to know in the deepest reaches of our hearts and souls that the angel of God is with us to protect us, to guard us, to strengthen us, and to deliver us. In this life and the next, God is with us. Through the terrors of life, God is with us. In sickness and in health, God is with us. In the darkness and the light, God is with us. In pandemics and social upheavals, God is with us. In the gentle, happy, safe and comfortable days, as well as in 2020, God is with us. The angel of God is here, now, with each and every one of us. And our God is the God of life, and light, and hope, and grace.

Prayer: Fix our eyes upon you, O Lord. As storms rage, as earthquakes and floods and fires threaten, as plague and darkness spread, comfort us, God, and renew our faith. You are greater than every danger, every challenge, every fear. Hold us in your love and empower us through your Spirit that we might emerge faithfully through every test. We praise you, God of salvation. Amen.

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May this devotion provide you with a moment of faithful reflection and care. You are involved in ministries of justice and witness, in ministries of standing up and standing with people working to create better systems and communities, in ministries of learning and searching and researching to become more aware and awakened, more technologically savvy and proficient, more virtually and personally present in your churches and communities and world. Each of us who serve as members of your Wisconsin Cabinet write these devotions in grateful prayer for you – for sustenance and buoyancy, for strength and courage, for safety and just actions, and for faith and love to be full and fulfilled in your daily lives. God’s grace and blessings, God’s challenge and healthy discomfort, God’s Spirit and energy be with you, in the hope Christ offers us all.

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