



ST. ELIZABETH EPISCOPAL CHURCH



Two weeks ago, I presented a reflection Fr. Henri Nouwen about loneliness and solitude. Last week, I offered a second essay from Fr. Henri that described an enlarged view of community being, like solitude, primarily a quality of the heart. As a conclusion, here is a third of Fr. Henri's insights that seemed especially appropriate for the people of St. Elizabeth. Fr. Henri wrote more than 30 years ago: "One of the most beautiful passages in scripture is Luke 1:39-56, which tells us about Mary's visit to Elizabeth. What happened when Mary received the words of promise? She went to Elizabeth. Something was happening to Elizabeth as well as Mary. But how could they live that out?"

"I find the meeting of these two women very moving because Elizabeth and Mary came together and enabled each other to wait. Mary's visit made Elizabeth aware of what she was waiting for. The child leapt for joy in her. Mary affirmed Elizabeth's waiting. And then Elizabeth said to Mary, "Blessed is she who believed that the promise

made her by the Lord would be fulfilled." And Mary responded, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord." She burst into joy herself. These two women created space for each other to wait. They affirmed for each other that something was happening worth waiting for.

"Here we see a model for Christian community. It is a community of support, celebration, and affirmation in which we can lift up what has already begun in us. The visit of Elizabeth and Mary is one of the Bible's most beautiful expressions of what it means to form community, to be together, gathered around a promise, affirming what is happening among us.

"That is what prayer is all about. It is coming together around the promise. That is what celebration is all about. It is lifting up what is already there. That is what Eucharist is about. It is saying 'Thanks' for the seed that has been planted. It is saying: 'We are waiting for the Lord, who has already come.'

"The whole meaning of the Christian community lies in offering a space in which we wait for what we have already seen. Christian community is the place where we keep the flame alive among us and take it seriously, so that it can grow and become stronger in us. In this way we can live with courage, trusting that there is a spiritual power in us that allows us to love in this world without being seduced constantly by despair, lostness and darkness...Waiting together, nurturing what has already begun, expecting its fulfillment – that is the meaning of marriage, friendship, community and the Christian life.."

Preparation

Now that we are in the late Spring/Summer season after Pentecost called “Ordinary time,” we use green as the liturgical color for altar and priestly vestments. The color symbolizes growth, creation, life, health and hope for many people from many faiths. At home, worship can take place anywhere but it is most appropriate at a table: a kitchen table, a dining table, a table in a garden or under a tree.



During this temporary physical separation, you might dress your worship space with photos or real flowers and greens. Anglican spirituality holds that all the senses can disclose God’s presence – not just texts for speaking or singing. You may want to burn some incense as a way to enhance your prayers and let them rise with the fragrant smoke. If you have a favorite icon, cross, rosary or image of Jesus, putting holy artifacts in your worship space can help focus your prayer. A candle is always appropriate, as is inviting friends, family or loved ones to join you by phone or through social media. You may want to invite loved ones that we no longer see or saints that you admire.

Liturgically appropriate music before or between readings or prayer also enhances home prayer life. There is a lovely and intimate rendition of Hymn 679, “Surely it is God who saves me” to be enjoyed at: youtube.com/watch?v=kqQJFmhHCjk sung at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in Savannah, Georgia, where Fr. Hunt Priest from the Diocese of Olympia is the Rector. Or you might try this lush recording of Bach’s “Blessed Jesus, at your word”: youtube.com/watch?v=IhbTXFHv5Uc (The lyrics are only slightly differ from our Hymn 440 if you have a hymnal and want to sing along.)

In that same spirit of ecumenism, try this moving acappella version of Hymn 512, “Come, Gracious Spirit, heavenly Dove, at: youtube.com/watch?v=id9yPwhW9JU sung by the Altar of Praise Chorale. This is a group comprising some of the best male and female singers in the Anabaptist world. Members come from various Anabaptist backgrounds: Beachy Amish, Mennonite and Charity Christian Fellowship. Because most conservative Mennonite and Amish churches sing only acappella hymns in their churches there are numerous Mennonite and Amish acappella singing groups, who typically sing in simple four-part harmony. You may also enjoy this very contemporary offering based on an ancient prayer, “The Blessing” at: youtube.com/watch?v=PUtl3mNj5U done virtually across the entire United Kingdom

We will continue to seek God’s inspiration creatively and act responsibly because we are God’s children. We pray together in the plural – “we,” “us” and “our” – even when we are worshipping by ourselves or temporarily apart from each other physically, because no matter what separates us – politically, geographically or economically – we are also always bound together in Christ.

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
12 July 2020

Centering

Make the sign of the cross as the leader says: Blessed be God; (+) Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever.

The leader prays:

O God,
you have assured the human family of eternal life
through Jesus Christ our Savior.
Deliver us from the death of sin
and raise us to new life in him,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

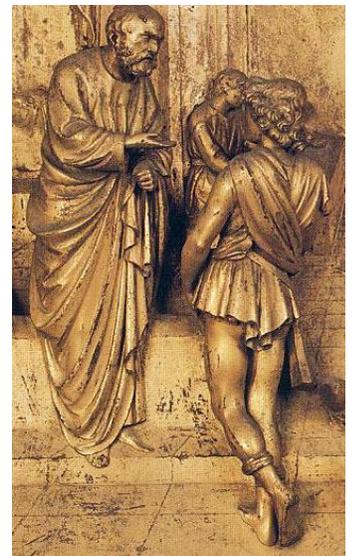
The Word of God for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

A reading from Genesis: This is the story of Isaac, son of Abraham. Abraham begot Isaac. Isaac was forty years old when he took to wife Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean. Isaac pleaded with the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD responded to his plea, and his wife Rebekah conceived. But the children struggled in her womb, and she said, "If so, why do I exist?" She went to inquire of the Lord, and the Lord answered her,

"Two nations are in your womb,
two separate peoples shall be mightier than the other,
and the older one shall serve the younger."

When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. The first one emerged red, like a hairy mantle all over; so they named him Esau. Then his brother emerged, holding on to the heel of Esau; so they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when they were born.

When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the outdoors; but Jacob was a mild man who stayed in the camp. Isaac favored Esau because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah favored Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the open, famished. And Esau said to Jacob, "Give me some of that red stuff to gulp down for I am famished" – which is why he was named Edom. Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." And Esau said, "I am at the point of death, so of what use is my birthright to me?" But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Jacob then gave Esau bread and lentil stew; he ate and drank, and he rose and went away. Thus did Esau spurn the birthright.



Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God

(The response: Prayed together or by alternating verses) Psalm 65

O God of Zion!

Silence is the better praise for You;

I will fulfill my vows.

All of us, creatures of flesh,
come to You because You hear our prayer.

I feel overburdened by sinful acts;
yet I know that You will pardon us for our rebellion.

Blissful is the one chosen and brought close to You,
who can be at home in Your courts,
satisfied with the goodness of Your House,
the sacredness of Your Temple.

It's awesome to see how You respond with righteousness,

O God of our salvation;

even in the farthest places, in the ends of the Earth,
in the wide seas, You keep us safe.

You make mountains rear up and contain them with might;

You calm the wild waves, as well as mobs of nations.

Those who dwell in the far places can see Your signs;

they sing Your praises at dawn and dusk.

You take care of the land and water it;

You improve its riches.

Drenched with water the harvest is prepared;

the plowed furrows are moist

and a fine drizzle blesses the plants.

Thus You crown the year with Your goodness

and Your paths are full of ripening fruits;

even the planes of the desert show their flowers

and the hills are girded with delight.

The sheep are well fed,

the valleys filled with ripening grain;

people are happy and singing.

A reading from Romans:

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this

reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law-- indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God

A reading from Matthew: *The Gospel is the primary reading of the day and should always be read. Read the passage aloud without rushing. Allow the images to enter your awareness and find a home within.*

On that day Jesus, going out of the house, sat down beside the sea; And many crowds were gathered before him, so that he embarked into a boat in order to sit down, and the whole crowd stood upon the strand. And he told them many things in parables, saying, "Look: A sower went out to sow. And, as he was sowing seeds, some of course fell beside the path and birds came and devoured them. Others, however, fell upon stony places where there was not much soil, and it sprang up instantly because there was no depth to the soil; But when the sun had risen it was parched, and because it had no root it withered away. But still others fell upon thorns, and the thorns grew up and throttled them. But still others fell upon the good soil and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Let [those who have] ears listen.

"Listen, therefore, to the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom and does not understand, the wicked one comes and seizes away what has been sown in [the] heart; this is what was sown beside the path. And the word sown upon stony places: this is the one who hears the word and immediately accepts it with joy; but [they do] not hold the root within [themselves] and it is temporary, and when tribulation and persecution come on account of the word, [they] immediately falter. But what is sown among the thorns: this is the one who hears the word, and the anxiety of [their] life and the beguilement of riches throttle the word, and it becomes fruitless. But the word sown upon the good soil; this is the one who, hearing and understanding the word, bears fruit, one a hundredfold, another sixtyfold, another thirtyfold."



Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God

Sermon: “Now,” St. Paul writes, “Now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.” At this momentous turning point of his majestic letter to the church in Rome, Paul wrote one essential and simple sentence. And that one line has thrown us off for centuries.

No one, not one person, is condemned in Christ.

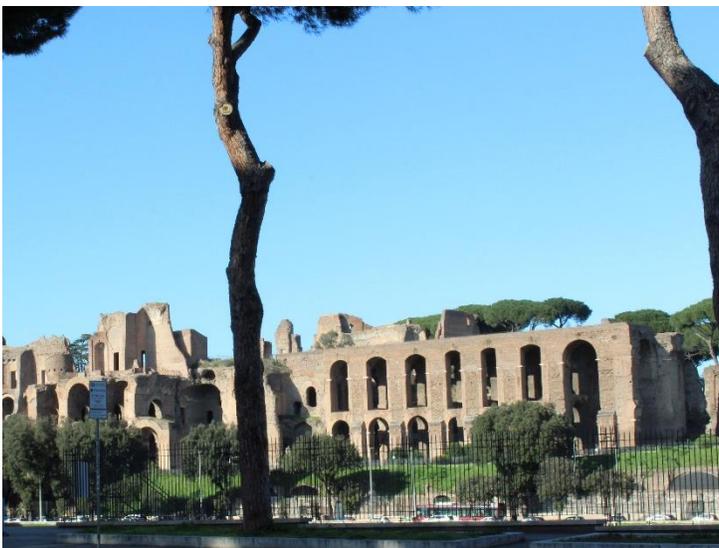
That’s certainly not what many popular parts of the church preach. That’s not what most non-religious people associate with the church. Many, in fact, connect only judgmentalism and exclusion with us. If we use being “religious” to justify ourselves, we aren’t doing much to correct that impression and we’re missing Paul’s point here. On the other hand, mere “spirituality-without-religion” doesn’t do much either as it is often just another form of judgmentalism and exclusion using slightly different criteria and language.

We are accustomed to dividing people, most often people unlike us, into good people and bad people. A gentler version of that discernment is good for helping children stay safe. And yet, if we carry that filter into adulthood, that habitual way of separating people into who’s “in” and who’s “out” drops us into exactly the trap that Paul is trying to help us avoid.

And so, it helps to remember that this is a letter that Paul wrote somewhere around 57 C.E. to a young church in Rome that he did not start. The community was a mix of mostly Second-Temple Jewish and some Gentile Christ-followers.

It also helps to remember that Paul understood himself to be a loyal Jew; a circumcised Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews, a Roman citizen and a Pharisee, and the apostle to the Gentiles. These are foundational influences on Paul’s worldview, but they have been largely misunderstood or ignored for centuries.

As an educated Hebrew-speaking man living in the Eastern Mediterranean of the first century, Paul also spoke a form of Greek as a second language. And so, in this letter to a specific group of people, Paul chose a Greek word, “*sarx*,” that we hear translated as “flesh.” He does not use the Greek word “*soma*,” meaning “body.”



Here's why that matters: Paul spends the entire chapter before this reading describing how all people are bound by the human condition – the socioeconomic, cultural and political forces like those that are particularly inflamed in this country right now. That’s what Paul means by the realm of the “flesh.” He is saying that we – the entire human race – cannot free ourselves from the grip of these forces or escape the impulses of our worst instincts.

Paul is not describing a mind/body or body/soul dualism. Our individual bodies, our “somas,” and all they entail, are not his focus here. He is concerned about whom or what we serve with our God-given bodies, minds and spirits.

What God did by manifesting perfectly in Christ Jesus, our brother, was to show you and me, like the young church in Rome, how to serve God in this earthly realm rather than serving a political party or ideology; how to live in right relationship with God rather than worshipping human pursuits like money, status or control.

What God did through Jesus the Anointed was to show us how some of our worldly pursuits can be done in the Spirit of God.

Creating and sharing wealth that benefits others can be done in the Spirit of Christ, as Nicodemus and others have done. Done in the Spirit of Christ, stepping into leadership roles where a higher visibility can encourage others to be their best selves, as the apostles and numerous saints have done. Working for reliable justice infused with mercy that inspires shared responsibility can also be done in the Spirit.

Jesus embodied Torah, God's teaching – he never intended to replace it. In writing to the church in Rome, Paul tells all followers of Christ that God has granted the gift of a new way to engage God's teaching. The right relationship that was unattainable for some is now given to us all, liberating us from the grip of human empires and appetites. Paul will go on in his letter to the church in Rome to explain that our liberation means we are free and joyfully compelled to liberate our neighbors from oppression, injustice and death.

“There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.” Paul doesn't mean that God approves of everything we do. He doesn't mean that we can act out whatever self-involved, self-justified, self-serving behavior we choose. What Paul told the church in Rome and for the rest of time is that, because of what God has granted, we have a choice.

Paul is trying to help the followers of Christ to soften their grip on former identities shaped by the structures of sin and death. His challenge is for us to open freshly washed eyes to see and to live into the beautiful reality God created through Christ. Being “in Christ” means we are in this world, yet no longer bound by structural snares of sin and death. We are in this world, yet it is a place liberated and made somehow new because we acknowledge God's Spirit as our master.

We can choose to walk in God's Spirit of life, love and peace. Or we can walk by the dictates of death, which still remain powerful and attractive. We can choose to walk with each other beyond our limitations. Or we can choose to allow small-mindedness or the craving for power to drive us further and further away from God's teaching.

We are free. In the life, death and resurrection of Christ, God has granted to every one of us the freedom to share in God's movement in the world; movement that transcends us even as it carries us with it. God has liberated us not to be floated off to some enchanted place beyond the clouds. Instead, God has liberated us to live fully in this aching, gorgeous, maddingly painful and staggeringly beautiful world. God has liberated us in these mortal bodies, just as they are, to live our lives in the Spirit of Christ.

Imagine what could happen if we hoisted our sails and caught the wind of that breath in them.

Silence and stillness

The Nicene Creed

Leader: Let us reaffirm our faith in the words of the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God,

the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:

by the power of the Holy Spirit

he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son he (or “she” or no pronoun) is worshiped and glorified.

He (she/who) has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need

These intercessions may be used, adding others in each household:

Leader: Through baptism we have been made alive in Christ Jesus. With the breath of the Holy Spirit speaking through our renewed lives, we pray for the whole state of Christ's church and the world, saying: "LORD, have mercy."

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, we pray for the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea, the Most Reverend Allan Migi, Archbishop of Papua New Guinea.

In the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer, we pray for the Community of the Paraclete; Little Sisters of St. Clare; the Third Order Society of St. Francis; Community of the Lamb; the Order of the Daughters of the King.

We pray for our neighbors at Navos, for Neighborhood House, for Hospitality House, for Operation Nightwatch, and for the safety of those in military service, for the safety and stamina of healthcare workers, for first responders, and for their families. We pray for those on our long-term list. Let us pray for our own needs and those of others, offered silently or aloud.

Leader: For this congregation, that we might be eager to welcome, diligent in prayer, and generous in deed, let us pray to the LORD.

All: LORD have mercy.

Leader: For our nation, town and neighborhood, that we might be advocates for the excluded, diligent in prayer, defenders of liberty and models of justice.

All: LORD have mercy.

Leader: For those who lament the iniquity of racism, those who protest the brutality of hateful speech and deadly action; for those working for racial justice and harmony, and for the courage to examine our own prejudices, inviting the Holy Spirit to free us from them.

All: LORD have mercy.

Leader: For those experiencing homelessness, unemployment or under-employment, and those without healthcare or food stability.

All: LORD have mercy.

Leader: For those who grieve, for those isolated in care facilities, those in prison, those suffering from addiction and those who are despondent.

All: LORD have mercy.

Leader: For those in dangerous occupations, for those who care for the sick, those who work the land, those who work in transportation, warehouse or delivery services and those who teach.

All: LORD have mercy.

Leader: For our families and all those placed in our care, for those with whom we disagree, and for those who are examples of grace in our lives.

All: LORD have mercy.

A period of silence follows and then, leader: God of the harvest, make us fruitful in reconciliation, forgiveness and in serving those whose cries fall on stony ground and those whose

fulfillment is frustrated. Embolden us to share your salvation and remind us to enjoy bringing in your harvest through Christ Jesus, our brother, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit we lift our souls, our minds and our bodies. *Amen.*

Leader: Let us confess our sins to God.

Silence may be kept and then all together:

Almighty God, our heavenly Father:

We have sinned against you,

through our own fault,

in thought, and word, and deed,

and in what we have left undone.

For the sake of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,

forgive us all our offenses; and grant that we may serve you

in newness of life,

to the glory of your Name.

Amen.

Leader: May the Almighty God grant us forgiveness of all our sins, and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Pater Noster/Our Father/The Lord's Prayer

Please feel free to use the translation and language that most feeds your heart.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come; thy will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,

for ever and ever. *Amen.*



Prayer of spiritual communion

Most Holy Christ, we trust that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

We love you above all things, and we long for you in our souls. Since we cannot at this

moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into our hearts. We embrace you

as though you were already there and we unite ourselves entirely to you. Never permit us to

be separated from you. *Amen.*

Concluding Prayer

Lord, our God, in the confusion and loneliness of this world, you do not cease to gather with your word a holy people from every land, city and nation, so that in charity they may offer worship pleasing to you. Keep the flock you have gathered, preserve it in your love, now and forever. *Amen.*

Blessing

Make the sign of the cross as you say: The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that God has given us. May the blessing of God (+), Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us, and those for whom we pray, this day and for ever. *Amen.*

Giving Thanks at Table

Giving God,
bless all who have gathered round this table.
May we know the fullness of your presence
at every meal and in all our sharing.
Amen.



“...if you pray for all, all will pray for you, for you are involved in all. In this way there is great recompense; through the prayers of each individual, the intercession of the whole people is gained for each individual. There is here no pride, but an increase of humility and a richer harvest from prayer.”

~ **St. Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan**

Offerings

Just a reminder: There are many ways to continue to invest in our shared ministry at St. Elizabeth during this time apart. You can still send your pledge or gift to P.O. Box 66579, Burien, Wash., 98166 or you can find us on Givlify.com. You can also find us at <https://resources.ecww.org/> Your gift will help to provide upkeep and maintenance of the building and grounds; allow church staff to maintain our ministry; ensure that normal operations can resume when the time comes. If you want to make a gift to the Rector's Discretionary Fund, which we use for those who have emergency needs, please indicate that on your check.

Sources and references:

Opening essay: excerpted from Henri Nouwen, “A Spirituality of Waiting: Being Alert to God’s Presence in Our Lives.” *Weavings* 2, No. 1 (January-February, 1987).

Opening essay image: icon of the Visitation that hangs in the Marian shrine at St. Elizabeth.

“Preparation” image: photo of St. Elizabeth chancel & baptismal fount

Opening acclamation: *The Book of Common Prayer: and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church.* Morehouse-Gorham, 2007.

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“Elder Testament” reading (Hebrew scripture): Berlin, Adele, and Marc Zvi Brettler. *The Jewish Study Bible.* Oxford University Press, 2014.

Genesis image: detail of gilded bronze by Lorenzo Ghiberti on a door of the Florence baptistry depicting Isaac sending Esau to hunt.

Psalm translation: Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman. *Psalms in a Translation for Praying.* ALEPH, 2014.

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Gospel image: photo of the field traditionally held to be the site where Jesus preached this parable beside the Sea of Galilee

Gospel reading: adapted from Hart, David Bentley. *The New Testament: A Translation.* Yale University Press, 2018.

Sermon image: photo of the ruins of the Roman Forum

Prayers of the people adapted from: Ramshaw, Gail. *Intercessions for the Christian People.* The Liturgical Press, 1990.

Concluding collect: adapted from Adam, David. *Clouds and Glory: Prayers for the Church Year.* Morehouse Publishing, 2001.

“Pater Noster” image: photo of Pater Noster in Korean at Carmelite monastery, Domaine de l'Eleona, Jerusalem.

Prayer of Spiritual Communion: adapted from a prayer by St. Alphonsus Liguori

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Sidebotham, Jay. *Conversation with Scripture: Romans.* Morehouse Publishing, 2015.