



God-given surprises

Will we remember?

By Bishop Greg

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Will I have eyes to see what is springing up around me? What God-given surprises shall greet each day as spring unfolds like newness around us?

As we move into a post-COVID era, will we have eyes to see? And will we remember what we said we would value, what we said we would change? I pray that we do not go back to the way things were. Throughout the centuries, certain things cause a re-set, a fundamental shift in thinking and living. Perhaps COVID has done that for us.

What have we learned? What did we miss and long for? And what can we, should we, set aside?

We have learned that we have failed our elders in care and need to rethink how we care for these vulnerable ones. When millions of people lost their jobs, we talked about livable wages and the present reality of so many workers receiving such little pay. We were reminded time and again to “be kind, be calm, and be safe” (Dr. Bonny Henry). We re-learned how to value community.

We recognized that there are many who provide services to us who really are “essential.” My hope is that we will continue to value as essential those who stand at cash registers as we buy our food, those who drive our transit systems, and those who provide home care. We must acknowledge the ministry not just of doctors and nurses, but of all care staff — those who change dressings, wipe bums, and lift spoons to people’s lips. And what of those who mop the floors in schools, hospitals, care centres and operating rooms? They are vital, essential, and we give thanks for them.

And let us not forget those who teach our children and youth, who provide nursery care and out-of-school care for children.

Are we learning what it means to be a society? This COVID-era is laying bare the divisions in our society and the systemic injustices all around us. We see more clearly the financial inequities, the extra burdens placed upon the poor and the underemployed, on those without security of housing, without secure access to food, and without guarantees of work. We see that those who are marginalized are even more at risk.

We see so vividly how this COVID-era has affected people’s mental and emotional health. There is increasing stress and strain, and many face challenges in their relationships. We see more clearly the fragility of life, the vulnerability of elders in care.

Birdsongs changed during the pandemic, too. With the quietness of urbanscapes, birds did not need to sing as loudly to be heard. Wildlife ventured into towns and cities in ways not observed previously. People throughout the world could glimpse mountain ranges not seen for decades due to pollution. Throughout the world, millions are asking questions and imploring their governments to make strong and firm commitments regarding climate change and to take real action, not token gestures.

Are these the things that are springing up around us? Is this what we are learning from these 13 months of pandemic? Perhaps the words from one of our hymns is a fitting way to close these reflections:

*“Yet I believe beyond believing
that life can spring from death,
that growth can flower from our grieving,
that we can catch our breath
and turn transfixed by faith.*

From “Each Winter As the Year Grows Older,” text by William Gay, Copyright © 1971 The Pilgrim Press, Used by permission, all rights reserved.

May it be so.