

The Churchman

Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church

250 Woodside Road, Riverside, Illinois 60546 * (708) 442-5250

“Faith Active in Love”

www.stspeterandpaulriverside.org

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Issue 5

We are called together by the Holy Spirit around Word and Sacraments to glorify God the Father, creator of all things, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We trust God to nurture lives of faith and hope, as we serve and give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world.

The Easter Effect: “Death Be not Proud”

This sermon was video recorded for Easter Day 2020. The texts for the day were Isaiah 65:17-25; I Corinthians 15:19-26; and Matthew 27:62-28:10.

Among the Holy Sonnets of the English writer and Anglican priest John Donne are the words of that familiar poem entitled, “Death, Be not Proud”:

*Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.*

It's Thursday evening in the sanctuary at Sts. Peter and Paul. There's been a fierce gust of wind from the north most of the day—a wind among the winds of winter's last stand. This, of course, is Maundy Thursday, the hour of every spring season when we, together with the whole church, begin The Great Three Days journey with our Lord Jesus, a journey that leads through death to life, through the cross to the resurrection.

Some call this the beginning of the Christian Passover as we also remember the Jewish Passover from slavery in Egypt to the freedom of the Promised Land; but this year, on this evening, the sanctuary is empty, filled only with the glow of the setting sun. On this night, there will be no procession to the font for the laying on of hands and the individual pronouncement of forgiveness. We will not hear the beloved stories of the Hebrew Exodus and of the self-giving service of our Lord Jesus on the night of his betrayal. There will be no tired feet present—feet to be washed and caressed as Jesus washed and caressed the feet of those whom he now calls his “friends.” And there will be no gathering around the Table with our Lord for his Last Supper among his friends.

So I'm wondering whether or not Death is even more proud of

itself this year than in the past since this year it has prevented Jews, Christians and Muslims across the globe from gathering together physically as communities of faith during our most sacred days of the year.

I've shared with some of you that I often have had disturbing dreams—“bad” dreams, I call them, about not being able to reach Sunday morning worship on time. These are “bad” realities, too. In these dreams, I can hear the piano beginning the Prelude. I see the other worship leaders seated in the chancel, craning their necks to catch sight of me. I peak through one of the sacristy doors and see a rather sizeable crowd in the sanctuary, but people appear to be getting restless because minutes have passed since the service was scheduled to begin.

There I am, frantically combing through the robes and vestments, unable to find anything that fits; and then, when I do find the right size, I realize that I'm putting it on backwards, wrestling with it as though I were trying to get out of a straight jacket. Finally, when it seems that I'm almost ready, I'm startled to realize that I've left my sermon at the parsonage. As I dash for the house, I see people starting to leave the church and heading for their cars. I plead with them to have mercy and to give me just a few more minutes.

“I'll be there as soon as I can!” I shout, “Please, please give me just a little more time!”

It has been a recurring dream for me throughout years of ministry; but now that I think of it, I have never dreamed of an entire congregation not being able to get to worship. And even though I have often rehearsed sermons on Saturday evenings alone in this space, I have never imagined what it would be like not to be here with you, especially during these most holy and precious days of the year.

Yes, I think Death surely must be very proud of itself this year.

Since the middle of December we have seen Death on the move. We have seen it magnified. We have witnessed it crossing every border. We have experienced Death exceeding all boundaries. We have recoiled as Death has deflected all efforts to subdue it. And now, it appears that Death has eclipsed even Easter as we have always known it. Very few souls living today have ever experienced an Easter like this one. One would have to go back over 100 years to the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918-19 to find churches closed on Easter.

The grand and glorious Easter Day has always been marked by the gathering crowds—friends and family from far and near—filling sanctuaries with choruses of “Jesus Christ Is Risen Today” and the victorious sound of the trumpet announcing the first sign of Easter dawn. The grand and glorious Easter Day beckoning us with the aroma of breakfast blended with the sweet scent of lilies, hyacinths and tulips. We see the resounding parade, welcoming the appearance of the long-buried “Alleluia!” and the floral cross rising up through springtime

surrounded by joyous hearts filled with promise and hope for the future. But this year, all seems to be missing—all except, of course, the empty tomb which stands before us.

Easter this year is an empty tomb.

Is this not what the first witnesses of the resurrection encountered—an empty tomb—there when they went carrying their spices early on the first day of the week? They did not see Jesus raised from the dead. No one, as far as we know, actually saw how the resurrection happened—no one, with the possible exception of the angel who, in Matthew's Gospel "came and rolled back the stone and sat on it." (I like that detail: the angel "sat on it" like some pigeon sitting on a statue.)

This is an empty tomb. But the tomb is not silent. The voice that is heard at the tomb announces to the women what has already happened earlier that morning, assuring them, as angels do, "Don't be afraid..."

As dramatic as Matthew's telling of the resurrection is, replete with earthquakes and an angel, we soon realize that the resurrection has already taken place in the darkness while the tomb was still locked and the guards have fainted. All has happened by the time Mary Magdalene and the other Mary get there. There are no finely dressed crowds. No children with bow ties and Easter bonnets. There's no egg casserole or fruit salads. No singing and shouting. There's no sound of the trumpet. There are no Easter egg hunts beneath the magnolias. All this seems to lie somewhere deep in the future. The two Marys encounter none of this.

As in the other gospels, here we do not actually have a "resurrection story." What we have is a "post-resurrection story." Then come the orders from the messenger: "Go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He's been raised from the dead, and indeed he's going ahead of you to Galilee; there you'll see him.' This is my message for you."

This is my message for you, Death: "Death, be not proud... Death, thou shalt die."

Come Easter dawn, the risen Jesus is already on the move, and he's on the move with us. Having left death behind, he's returning to that place called "Galilee of the Gentiles," that place where the borders between Jewish and Gentile are skewed. Both Isaiah and Matthew emphatically proclaim that the light which shines from Israel's Messiah is to be a light that shines into the darkness and the sickness of all the world. Like the angel, the risen Jesus meets us outside the empty tomb, wherever we may be today, and reassures us, "Don't be afraid."

Here is the Easter effect upon those who were there after the resurrection of Jesus outside the empty tomb. What we see here is the blossoming of Easter in the lives of people like us. As Paul says, the resurrection of Jesus is the "first fruits" of what God intends for creation, transforming the world, banishing all sickness, healing the wounded, comforting the grieving, rescuing the endangered, feeding the multitudes, making whole the impaired, providing hope to the despairing, wiping away every tear and moving us from death to life until, as the prophet Habakkuk says, "the glory of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea."

We believe, but we do not yet understand. We believe in the resurrection, but we do not yet understand the ongoing, proud cruelty of death.

But—"One short sleep past, we wake eternally / And death shall be no more; / Death, thou shalt die."

"Let no one fear death," preached John Chrysostom in an early Easter sermon, "for the death of our Savior has set us free... For [death] grabbed a body and discovered God. It took earth and behold, it encountered heaven. It took what was visible, and was overcome by what was invisible."

What about this Easter 2020? Old Testament scholar William Brown has suggested, "Let us make this Easter profoundly memorable by celebrating the 'empty tomb,' by letting our sacred gathering places

remain empty as testimony that lives are being saved in doing so. The empty tomb, after all," Brown reminds us, "marked the beginning of the Resurrection. So, let's linger over it this year; let's revel in it. ... Let us follow the science as we follow Christ from the cross to the empty tomb that is emptied of death."

So, my dear loved ones, my sisters and my brothers, we are physically separated and socially distanced—certainly not by choice—but for the sake of saving lives. For this year, let the empty tomb speak. Let it speak of life in these days and life in the days to come. Let it speak life in all those places where we are tending to Easter effects in a Good Friday world.

Not long before his own death, Father Henri Nouwen wrote, "We are afraid of a lot of things, most of all, we are afraid of death. This fear takes away our freedom," he said, "but when we can reach beyond our fears to the One who loves us with a love that was there before we were born, and will be there after we die, then nothing will be able to take away our freedom."

God can always open the future, even when all around us seem hopeless, "when all other lights have gone out" (J. R. R. Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings*).

At the close of the funeral service for Winston Churchill—a liturgy which he himself had planned—a single trumpeter stood at the west end of St. Paul's Abby and sounded "Taps," the song that signals dusk and the close of another day, frequently played at the conclusion of a military funeral. Then, after a moment of stillness, following the final plaintive note of "Taps," another trumpeter stood at the east end of St. Paul's, the end that faces the rising sun. That trumpeter played "Reveille," the song of the morning and the call to a new day.

"The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard and keep your hearts in Christ Jesus."



A Prayer for a Time of Anxiety

It seems that I return to you most easily when I need comfort.

O God. Hello... here I am again, knowing that you are waiting for me with love and warming light. I find respite and relief that feeds my innermost self and renews my soul. Day and night, you are my refuge.

These uncertain days of news conferences and quarantines tempt me to assume the worst for my loved ones, myself and my community.

"Pandemic" is a frightening word, and I can easily feel confused or helpless to respond.

Now I am relying on you to lead and guide me, to put my anxiety in its place. Help me see it as a human response that keeps me conscious of the seriousness of this moment, but do not let it overwhelm my spirit.

Buoyed by your love, I choose each day to let peace reign in me. Breathing deeply of your calm, I repeat, again and again, "You are here."

Good and gracious Companion, my family and friends need tranquility and assurance. Help me to offer them your tenderness.

Those in my community who are suffering need care. Help me to be generous and to keep contact with the forgotten.

Our world calls for cooperation among national leaders, scientists, health care providers, and all who are instrumental in overcoming this crisis. May my prayers and support be with them all.

I have come back to you, and I will return, knowing that your open arms will never fail.

God of hope, may your love blanket the earth, as you teach us to live more generously today than yesterday. May my anxiety be transformed into love. Amen.

from *Diakonia* Newsletter
—submitted by Charles Matthies

Beannacht ("Blessing")

by John O'Donoghue

On the day when
the weight deadens
on your shoulders
and you stumble,
may the clay dance
to balance you.

And when your eyes
freeze behind
the grey window
and the ghost of loss
gets in to you,
may a flock of colours,
indigo, red, green,
and azure blue
come to awaken in you
a meadow of delight.

When the canvas frays
in the currach of thought
and a stain of ocean
blackens beneath you,
may there come across the waters
a path of yellow moonlight
to bring you safely home.

May the nourishment of the earth be yours,
may the clarity of light be yours,
may the fluency of the ocean be yours,
may the protection of the ancestors be yours.

And so may a slow
wind work these words
of love around you,
an invisible cloak
to mind your life.

JUNE WORSHIP SERVERS

(Tentatively Scheduled)

June 7th:

Greeters: Larry Crachy and Karen Kubik
Acolyte: Bryan Galdun
Assisting Minister: Vicki Michaels
Comm. Minister: Brandon Michaels
Lectors: Paul and Carrie Watkiss
Usher: Rafael Martinez

June 14th:

Greeters: Carole Pollitz and Carl Busch
Acolyte: Sebastian Myers
Assisting Minister: Tom Myers
Comm. Minister: Beverly Tarbox
Lectors: Robert Melnyk and Brandon Michaels
Ushers: Rafael Martinez and Walter Cudecki

June 21st:

Greeters: Sandy Garvey and Karyn Bute
Acolyte: Ben Myers
Assisting Minister: Tom Michaels
Comm. Minister: Paul Watkiss
Lectors: John and Shirley Kostelny
Ushers: Gregg Valek and John Kostelny

June 28th:

Greeters: Paul and Carrie Watkiss
Acolyte: Aidan Altavilla
Assisting Minister: John Broussard
Comm. Minister: Martin Pennino
Lectors: Charles Matthies and Joanne Sefara
Ushers: Janet Broussard and Rafael Martinez

Sacristan and Altar Care:

Kristine Boike and Esther Meksto

From the Stewardship Committee: Offerings During Closure

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As in-person church services continue to be suspended and for those of us who rely on putting our tithe into the offering plates on Sundays..., the Stewardship Committee would like to suggest that you mail your contribution to the church office.

Karen and the other church staff will continue to be working during this hiatus and can get your checks to the right place. Continuous financial support of the church is critical as bills, salaries, and other expenses need to be met regardless of the current situation. If you donate cash, we do not recommend that you mail it. Rather, either use a check instead, or feel free to come by the church and drop off your contribution.

Large gatherings are discouraged but meeting with the pastor or visiting the church individually is easily arranged.

Thank you for remembering the church at this time. Please continue to pray for all of our members, especially those most vulnerable to this virus.

—Members of the Stewardship Committee

March 2020	
Current, Benevolence and Freewill Offering	
Budgeted Offering: \$2,597.00	
Date	Offering
3/1	\$4,180.00
3/8	\$1,459.00
3/15	\$4,273.00
3/22	0.00
3/29	\$ 980.00



Memorials and Honorariums

✦ For the Church ✦

Betty Jane Licko-Keel, in memory of dear husband +William Jerry Keel+ on the anniversary of his passing on March 28th and mother +Marie Licko+ on the anniversary of her birth on March 20th.

Jan Small, in memory of mother +Suzanne Janovic Bartizal+ and grandmother +Zuzanna Janovic Pribula+.

In memory of dear wife +Deanna Oklepek+ on the anniversary of her passing on Easter Morning, April 1st, 2010 by remembering husband Milan.

Peter and Sandra Spilotro, in memory of +Larry Bakalich+.

Peter and Sandra Spilotro, in memory of +Jan A. Hapgood+ to the Special Appeal Fund.

Steve and Beverly Podzamsky, in celebration of their 71st Wedding Anniversary on April 23rd.

Dennis and Diane McGee, daughter and son-in-law of the Podzamsky's Kenneth and Carol Morydz, in memory of parents +Steve+ and +Irene H. Boor+.

Kenneth and Carol Morydz, in memory of parents +Steve+ and +Irene H. Boor+ to the Special Appeal Fund.

Stephanie Rusnak, in memory of +Emily Rusnak+.

✦ In Memory of Betty Kany ✦

Dr. Robert Kany and Liz and husband Mark Rouck, and grandchildren John and Lauren, in memory of loving mom and grandma.

The Estate of Betty Kany (Special Appeal Fund)

Dolores Krc, in memory of sister-in-law.

Robert and Donna Tuider

Marty and Ann Pennino

Robert and Sara Jewison

John and Anne Rogalewski and Family

Steve and Terry Sorussi and Family

Robert and JoAnne Doebler and Family

Dr. John and Nina Mikuzis and Family

Tony and Lynn Schullo and Family

Dolores Schjerwen

Emil and Helena Galdun

Betty Ann Mocek and Adam Walker

Betty Mocek

Tom and Vicki Michaels

Lois Mika

Earl and Rita Mika, Jr.

Rose Tornil

Lois Michaels

Frank and Ann Kmet

Edward and Joanne Sefara

Bob and Sue Skudrna

John and Shirley Kostelny

Mildred Londak

Anita Horak

Olga Zavodny and Family

Betty Bagel

Audrey Ritter

Mildred Mendel

Susan Yurik and Joseph Kaslauskas

Jim Triska

John and Cynthia Lyman

Ruth Lubawy

Ellen Michael

Nancy Baty

Vera Borysek

Karyn Bute

John and Janet Broussard

Paul Kubecka

✦ In Memory of Betty Kany ✦

Milan Oklepek

Mary Ellen Hrivnak Gram and Family

✦ In Memory of Robert Nowak ✦

Gary and Jocelyn Drahos, in memory of cousin.

Edward and Joanne Sefara

John and Shirley Kostelny

Lois Michaels

Lois Mika

Earl and Rita Mika, Jr.

Edward and Joyce Svancara

John and Heidi Gorsica



Birthdays

May 1: Dennis Lauritsen	May 18: Brian Bucz
May 5: Henry Quest	Colin McShane
May 6: Jonathan Drahos	May 19: Sean Jones
May 7: Charlene Patula	May 27: Kristina Patel
May 11: Jake Collins	May 28: Timothy Sender
Karole Gaydusek	Sarah Wilson
Jane Lauritsen	May 29: Thomas Myers
May 12: Caitlin McShane	May 31: Thomas Murray
May 13: Joseph Hassel	
Kenneth Hurbanis	

Anniversaries

May 8, 1971: Walter and Judith Cudecki
May 15, 2009: Jeffrey and Lisa Triska
May 15, 2010: George and Catherine Pagurko
May 20, 2006: Paul and Jessica Drahos
May 23, 1993: Earl, Jr. and Rita Mika
May 25, 1968: John and Shirley Kostelny
May 28, 1995: Jennifer and Benjamin Smith
May 28, 2017: John and Valerie Borysek
May 29, 1994: Jillian and James Collins



From the Parish Register

Burials:

Robert Lee Nowak, age 61, son of the late Leo and late Elizabeth Nowak, and cousin to Dr. Gary Drahos and many others, passed from this life on Friday, March 27th, and was entombed at Woodlawn Cemetery in Forest Park on March 31st.

Emily Rusnak, age 99, passed from this life on April 8th. A private service and interment was held on April 14th at Woodlawn Funeral Home and Cemetery in Forest Park.

How the Virus Stole Easter

By Kristi Bothur with a nod to Dr. Seuss

Twas late in '19 when the virus began
Bringing chaos and fear to all people, each land.
People were sick, hospitals full,
Doctors overwhelmed, no one in school.
As winter gave way to the promise of spring,
The virus raged on, touching peasant and king.
People hid in their homes from the enemy unseen.
They YouTubed and Zoomed, social-distanced, and cleaned.
April approached and churches were closed.
"There won't be an Easter," the world supposed.
"There won't be church services, and egg hunts are out.
No reason for new dresses when we can't go about."
Holy Week started, as bleak as the rest.
The world was focused on masks and on tests.
"Easter can't happen this year," it proclaimed.
"Online and at home, it just won't be the same."
Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the days came and went.
The virus pressed on; it just would not relent.
The world woke Sunday and nothing had changed.
The virus still menaced, the people, estranged.
"Pooh pooh to the saints," the world was grumbling.
"They're finding out now that no Easter is coming.
"They're just waking up! We know just what they'll do!
Their mouths will hang open a minute or two,
And then all the saints will all cry boo-hoo.
"That noise," said the world, "will be something to hear."
So it paused and the world put a hand to its ear.
And it did hear a sound coming through all the skies.
It started down low, then it started to rise.
But the sound wasn't depressed.
Why, this sound was triumphant!
It couldn't be so!
But it grew with abundance!
The world stared around, popping its eyes.
Then it shook! What it saw was a shocking surprise!
Every saint in every nation, the tall and the small,
Was celebrating Jesus in spite of it all!
It hadn't stopped Easter from coming! It came!
Somehow or other, it came just the same!
And the world with its life quite stuck in quarantine
Stood puzzling and puzzling.
"Just how can it be?"
"It came without bonnets, it came without bunnies,
It came without egg hunts, cantatas, or money."
Then the world thought of something it hadn't before.
"Maybe Easter," it thought, "doesn't come from a store.
Maybe Easter, perhaps, means a little bit more."
And what happened then?
Well... the story's not done.
What will YOU do?
Will you share with that one
Or two or more people needing hope in this night?
Will you share the source of your life in this fight?
The churches are empty—but so is the tomb,
And Jesus is victor over death, doom, and gloom.
So this year at Easter, let this be our prayer,
As the virus still rages all around, everywhere.
May the world see hope when it looks at God's people.
May the world see the church is not a building or steeple.
May the world find Faith in Jesus' death and resurrection,
May the world find Joy in a time of dejection.
May 2020 be known as the year of survival,
But not only that—
Let it start a revival.

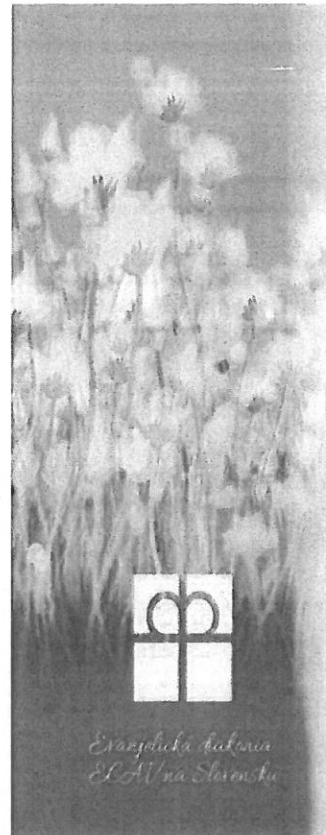
—submitted by Charles Matthies

From an Easter Sermon, 2004

by Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury

"The goodness of the resurrection news is most evident for those who have lost people they love to any sort of incomprehensible evil—the tragedies of dementia, the apparent meaninglessness of accident, the horrors of violence or injustice. Think back for a moment to the days when death squads operated in countries like Argentina or El Salvador: the Christians there developed a very dramatic way of celebrating their faith, their hope and their resistance. At the liturgy, someone would read out the names of those killed or 'disappeared', and for each name someone would call out from the congregation, *Presente*, 'Here'.

"When the assembly is gathered before God, the lost are indeed *presente*; when we pray during the Eucharist 'with angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven', we say *presente* for all those the world (including us) would forget and God remembers. With angels and archangels; with the... Rwandans of ten years ago and the... Ugandan children of last week or yesterday; with the young woman dead on a mattress in King's Cross after an overdose and the childless widower with Alzheimer's; with the thief crucified alongside Jesus and all the thousands of other anonymous thieves crucified in Judea by an efficient imperial administration; with the whole company of heaven, those whom God receives in his mercy. And with Christ our Lord, the firstborn from the dead, by whose death our sinful forgetfulness and lukewarm love can be forgiven and kindled to life, who leaves no human soul in anonymity and oblivion, but gives to all the dignity of a name and a presence. He is risen; he is not here; he is present everywhere and to all. He is risen: *presente*."



*I am the good shepherd
The good shepherd lays
down his life for the sheep
John 10:11*

*We wish you
a blessed Easter!*

*Evangelická diakonia
ELAV na Slovensku*

Jan Gasper

*Jan Gasper
and colleagues*

*Evangelická diakonia
ELAV na Slovensku*

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DATED MATERIAL

Pandemic

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.

And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

—by Lynn Unger
—submitted by Mildred Mendel

Keep in touch with us during this time of
social distancing with sermons, devotions and
prayer by visiting our new church website:
www.stspeterandpaulriverside.org

For Sale

Woodlawn Cemetery, Graves 1 and 2, Acacia Garden
3 Section, Lot No. 49, Unit B in Part 10.

Currently worth \$9,900.00
(plus legal paperwork and transfer of deed).

WELCOME BEST OFFER!
Inquiries: Contact Ed and Joyce Svancara
(636) 448-8255.



A Mother's Day Prayer

Heavenly Father, to you I pray...
On this day called, "Mother's Day."
Let all mother's on earth give praise,
To you...for the children that you gave.

For you have blessed them from above,
with little souls to nourish and love.
Let them mold each one with care...
And teach them to be kind and share.

Forgiveness is the special key...
Start early on, to help them see.
Their fragile minds are easily impressed.
Please teach them ways, so they'll be blessed.

Sow godly seeds into their minds.
With careful pruning, you will find...
Young adults with such strong roots,
all through life, will bear rich fruit.

And then have faith for God to show...
Them all the rest they have to know.
Remember they're His children too.
For they were only lent to you.