

Lent 5: Episcopal Relief & Development Sermon Notes

Isaiah 43:16-21

Opportunity to recreate....for something to be rebuilt, it needs to be destroyed.... Sad premise, but realistic. ***“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?”*** God is constantly doing new things in us. In the context of the work of Episcopal Relief & Development, I see God doing new things, rebuilding, recreating. Episcopal Relief & Development not only serves those nations that are facing a particular natural disaster, such as Haiti, but also helps countries or regions toward development on so many scales. So, we are constantly invited to recreate, to rebuild and be part of an amazing new thing. Do you perceive it? Lent is a great opportunity to engage in this creative adventure.

Philippians 3:4b-14

When we come to the understanding that St. Paul reached, ***“What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.”***

“But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” Our Christian journey is full of blessings, joy, challenges and obstacles. St. Paul made a great point about forgetting what is behind; in modern language we would say, “Don’t live in the past,” “Let go and let God” or “Stay focused.” He recognized that in order to stay focused in our Christian calling, we must press on, focused on the goal. And the goal is salvation, which in my opinion starts here as we strive to live with a greater level of awareness of our role in the history of humanity. How is the path we walk toward that goal? Since the genesis of our relationship with the Divine...our Creator has invited us to live in harmony with one another and be mindful and good stewards of creation. I think that is a good start to “get it right,” to continue to press on toward that goal. How are we walking the walk?

John 12:1-8

“You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.” Jesus said this phrase in a particular time in history, where he was physically present among his friends and disciples. Judas and the disciples might not have understood where he was coming from. This statement is a reminder to me that there is always opportunity to serve and help those who are in need. As I write this note, my neighbor nation, Haiti, has suffered a second earthquake in two weeks. This one was smaller in magnitude—but if you ask me, larger in impact, as the people in Haiti struggle to understand why their country continues to face tragedy after tragedy. Jesus’ words in today’s Gospel, “The poor will always be among us,” are a reminder that we always have space and opportunity to care for them. Episcopal Relief & Development is the platform our church has set up for us to collaborate with and contribute to in situations like this. The immediate assistance that God’s people receive, thanks to our generosity and the structure and

Lent 5: Episcopal Relief & Development Sermon Notes

work of Episcopal Relief & Development, allows us to be present for “those who will be always among us.”

***The Rev. Miguelina Espinal** is a young adult from the Dominican Republic, serving as Priest-In-Charge of Church of the Epiphany, Orange, NJ (Diocese of Newark).*