

Dear Friends,

This may sound like a shameless advertisement but I mean it more as a sharing and invitation. I'm talking about Morning Prayer. When I think about what is getting me through these days, what is steadying my mood, grounding me in hope, opening my heart, and giving me a sense of community, it is hands down Morning Prayer. Normally during the year, I lead Morning Prayer in our Oratory (prayer chapel at 234 French) 1-2 times a week and attend sporadically on days when others lead, or I say it at home by myself. It makes a difference then. It's important to my day, my life, my awareness of God throughout the day, my sense of community - but it is nothing compared to now.

Since our stay in place order began, we've been holding Morning Prayer virtually on [Zoom](#) - and broadcasting it through our [YouTube channel](#). An on-line community of 12 or so has developed, including old friends living far away like Judy Allen and Anne Mallonee. Each weekday we 7-10 of us sign on at about 8:45 and decide who's going to do what, catch up with each other, share good news and prayer requests, and get ready to pray. Then comes the service. We follow along together using the website [dailyoffice.org](#), which posts the service with all the variable readings and canticles and things in place, and with interesting art and photos, with descriptions of current events or saints of the day, and always with a musical selection at the end from a wide varying set of sources. We then wish each other well, maybe tease or make a joke, and then we're all off on our separate ways to live the day for which we've just given thanks and have entrusted to God.

When the COVID days are rough, I feel like I'm in a house of mirrors. I can't get perspective. I feel lost and confused, and I don't trust myself, my decisions, my motivations, my desires. I become immobilized, how can I move forward? But then with a good night's sleep, or after a night of wakefulness, of tossing and turning, then comes Morning Prayer. I have read in some novel somewhere that when in a hall of mirrors, you can find your way by dropping to the floor and breathing on the bottom mirror. Your breath will steam up the mirror and show you the way forward. That is Morning Prayer for me right now. It grounds me - in scripture I know again who I am in God's love and mercy, and in his community of saints and sinners all. It opens me to the breath of God's Spirit that leads me forward out of myself, my fears, my grief and anxiety. And the house of mirrors falls away. I'm no longer trapped or immobilized. And I am part of a wonderful community of God's friends.

It is better than a pill or any other possible mood enhancer you can name. Meeting each day and as a steady community, hearing God's Good News, his faithfulness and promise, offering words of praise and faith in response, and praying for our world and Church, remembering St. John's especially and those in need in our community - it is energizing. I am changed by the end of it. And in this time of quarantine, I am aware of the day, the passing of time. Days don't blur into each other - they are marked and distinct. And I am praying for God grace and power in our world and I feel like I'm making a difference, even when I can't leave my home. And I see this great group of people regularly and I don't feel so fractured or displaced because of them. It is the best thing since sliced bread - and to think it's been here all along. And I realize now how even though I have appreciated Morning Prayer before, I have still taken it for granted, and I am so grateful for it now.

I invite you all to Morning Prayer. You might like to join us weekdays at 9 am ([Zoom link](#)). But maybe 9 am doesn't work for you? Of course you can pray with our video at any time in the morning after 9 am ([YouTube link](#)). But even better, maybe you'd like to pray at another time with others you know from St. John's or family members across the country, or a best friend who moved away long ago. This is such a great

time to reach out to someone and see if they'd like to join you in a regular practice - even if it's just one day a week, but regular day that you can count on. Maybe compline at the end of the day makes more sense than morning - that's great too (and [dailyoffice.org](http://dailyoffice.org) offers evening prayer and compline every day as well as morning prayer - it's a great resource). Or maybe you'd like to pray the office with someone but you don't know to whom you'd reach out. Is there a ministry group that you're already a part of? Perhaps others in your group would like a way to come together in prayer. Or send me an email ([rector@stjohnsbangor.org](mailto:rector@stjohnsbangor.org)), and let me know your desire, and I can try to connect you with others who want to form a group.

Why not take a chance? This is a crazy upside down time. And while we are disoriented in so many ways, perhaps it is a time when we will find the things that can truly orient us, and through them find deeper and richer ways for living these precious, wonderful lives that God has given us. Perhaps in a time of so much loss and hardship we will also find blessing.

May God bless us now and always.

Yours in Christ,

*Mo. Rita +*

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