

April 2020

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

I write to wish you Easter joy and I do so with a glad heart. This year as we cope with the impact of Covid 19 on the world, our nation, our communities and our Church it is more important than ever to celebrate the joy of the resurrection and to live as people of hope. The restrictions on movement and gathering mean that we have to find different ways of expressing and sharing that joy. This year we must accept the limitation of not being able to in our Church buildings on Easter morning, or on hill tops to greet the first light of Easter, or to celebrate Holy Communion together.

Each year I have had the deep privilege of serving you as Chair of this District I have shared poetry with you and this year I have chosen Mary Oliver's poem Egrets. (Devotions: Poems of Mary Oliver, 2017) The allegories from "Egrets" seem apt at present because Oliver's descriptions seem so exact. In these last weeks we have fought our way through "knotted catbrier" and battled with "wheeling and whining" mosquitoes. We have known in recent weeks those moments when the path seems to be closing over us and there is no expectation that anything will open up or get better. Upon reaching the black and empty pond, the poet believes that all her efforts have come to nothing. Here there seems to be nothing but bleached reeds. But as so often occurs with Oliver, she is suddenly presented with a moment of grace and revelation.

### **Egrets**

Where the path closed down and over,  
through the scumbled leaves,  
fallen branches, through the knotted catbrier,  
I kept going.  
Finally I could not save my arms from thorns;  
soon the mosquitoes smelled me, hot and wounded,  
and came wheeling and whining.  
And that's how I came to the edge of the pond:  
black and empty except for a spindle of bleached reeds at the far shore  
which, as I looked, wrinkled suddenly  
into three egrets— a shower of white fire!  
Even half-asleep they had such faith in the world that had made them—tilting through the  
water, unruffled, sure, by the laws of their faith not logic,  
they opened their wings softly  
and stepped over every dark thing.

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It is as though the egrets appear out of nothing. The water wrinkles and suddenly, surprisingly, there is “a shower/of white fire!” The birds do not operate by our logic, which spends a lot of energy toting up its responsibilities and grievances and anxieties. They are unruffled by dark things.

We may currently feel and be very ruffled, anxious and fearful. Our Easter joy and peace is not dependent on our lives being smooth but emerges from God’s love for us seen in the face of Jesus Christ. The source of our Easter joy is the resurrection of Jesus from death. The source of our hope is that death, and all shadows are defeated. Death has no power over us and we know that nothing can separate us from the love of God seen in Jesus Christ. Jesus rises from death and we rise with him. We can, and will step over every “dark thing” in the power and strength of God who raised Jesus from death.

A prayer for Holy Week and Easter by Alan Amos:

Ah my dear Lord, the church is locked  
But let my heart be open to your presence;  
There let us make, you and I,  
Your Easter garden;  
Plant it with flowers,  
And let the heavy stone be rolled away.

I wish you all a Happy Easter

With every blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Amos". The signature is stylized and cursive, with the first name "Alan" and the last name "Amos" clearly distinguishable.