
Where Have All the Alleluias Gone?

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Rev. Canon George Maxwell**

I sensed it on the morning of the first day. It grew a little stronger that evening. By the time Sunday arrived, I was in mourning.

We don't say the Alleluias during Lent, and I missed them.

The words that come just before or just after those familiar Alleluias seemed to feel the same way. They sounded a little tentative, more vulnerable somehow.

The Amen anchoring the opening doxology in Morning and Evening Prayer was suddenly less sure of itself.

The "Therefore, let us keep the feast" response to the fraction had lost some of its bounce.

The Alleluias had gone and left an empty space behind.

Alleluia comes from an ancient Hebrew term that means, "praise Yahweh." Many of us have come to think of it as our ultimate response to God. It carries our joy and our gratitude, and it carries an awareness of our limitations and our dependence on God.

It is, after all, "Alleluia!" that the angels sing as they gather around the throne of God in Revelation. (See Rev. 19:1-4.)

Maybe it's true. Maybe we really don't know what we've got "till it's gone.

I am reminded of a paragraph in a Jeanne Murray Walker poem titled "Staying Power."

*It's the attention, maybe, to what isn't
there that makes the notion flare like
a forest fire until I have to spend the afternoon
spraying it with a hose just to put it out.*

I am already looking forward to the Great Vigil of Easter.

We will light the New Fire and bring it into the Nave, as if we were bringing the love of the resurrected Christ into a suffering world. We will tell again the great stories of our history with God's healing presence. We will baptize candidates into a new life as part of the Body of Christ. And, then, finally, at long last, we will shout, yes, SHOUT, three times: "Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!"

But, for now, I'm left standing here, staring at this empty space, wondering where all of the Alleluias have gone. Because,



you see, we don't say the Alleluias during Lent.

by Canon George Maxwell

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