

## *Protagonist Corner*

### *An Old Preacher's Easter Prayer for His Young Colleagues*

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*Note: The last of my "Old Preacher Prayers" to be included in the pages of this journal was from a collection of my private devotional prayers that were not written to be read by anyone other than me. This one, like the other, is published at the request of the editor. Unlike the previous one, however, the present offering is written specifically as intercessory for my young colleagues in ministry. Easter blessings, friends known and unknown. Thank you for your faithful ministry and bold proclamation. JSL*

God who sprinkles the night sky with stars,  
    numbers each one, and calls it by name;

God who selects a handful of stars  
    and sets planets around them to spin;

God who on one such planet  
    teaches song birds to sing,  
    blows breath into human beings,  
    calls preachers to preach,  
    and, by your Word living and spoken,  
    teaches them to teach us  
    how to love and be loving.

Word of God, who from before creation  
    was seated at the right hand of God,  
    who once in time  
    while on the road to destiny  
    taught and healed, spoke, and fed,  
    and who on Calvary's slope  
    died to live so that we might live...  
    live to sing for you *alleluia* once again;

Word of God, who sits now in Spirit and Truth  
    beside me just here in a cane bottom chair  
    listening to this old preacher's prayer,

    (You smell like a refugee, you know,  
    too long without a shower  
    walking long on a stony road;  
        or is that the odor of an alien  
    looking for a home?):

Easter's coming, Word of God,  
    and I've come to pray for my young colleagues,  
    women and men called by you,  
    fellow travelers, pilgrims, along the way.

At my age almost all of them are young,  
very young indeed,  
or so they surely seem to me.

Some of my young friends  
are all full of spit and vinegar,  
confident in what they believe,  
ready in joyful confidence  
to declare Easter's hope and truth.

Others are plagued with secret doubts  
that by seasons come and go  
when the church must  
hold the faith in trust for them.

Most of them are somewhere between.

Give them every one and give them all  
strong grace and clearing thoughts  
as they pour again  
over the stories of your rising,  
savored and passed  
from generations past,  
parsing every nuance and verb  
to gather the truth of Easter's hope  
to be proclaimed in accents bold  
to your waiting people longing for truth...  
your yearning people and theirs  
hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

The world just now,  
as always and ever before,  
needs to hear the Easter story:  
Refugees are clamoring at fences and borders;  
White supremacists are spewing their fear and venom.  
Masses of people are believing lies and half truths.  
Governments are teetering and governments are falling.  
Children from gunshots in the streets are dying.  
The good earth by place is awash or afire, parched or melting.  
Our leaders are, by case, too vocal or too silent  
while my young colleagues just now are wondering  
what on earth this Easter they should be saying.

So help the young preachers  
to know for sure  
you are as surely with them  
as you are at my elbow now...

there as here to cheer them on  
and in the end  
to say to them again,  
“Good job, well done,  
fellow travelers, servants, and friends.”

My first thought, Word of God Most Holy,  
is to suggest you take a shower before Easter morn;  
but my second thought is better by far.  
Perhaps it'll be a good thing  
if you attend Easter worship just as you are.  
Among the lilies your people will whisper,  
“Is that an alien I smell...  
an alien from Main Street or some foreign land  
or a refugee or someone else  
named as the least of these?”

“Yes,” the young preachers will say.  
“What you smell among the lilies today  
is an alien who has at last found a home...  
found a home right here...  
right here  
sitting on the pew next to you...

at home at last...  
at last and at least  
on this glad Easter day  
alive and well  
as you can see.”

Then with a gentle elbow nudge,  
Holy Son of God,  
prod the young preachers one and all to say,

“Let the church stand and sing,  
*Christ the Lord is risen today.*  
*Alleluia!*”

Amen.