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## Daily Meditations

### May 3-8, 2021

The Biblical readings are taken from the Daily Office in the Book of Common Prayer for Year 2 and written by the St. Stephen's Meditation Writing Team: Dave Boyd, Jon Campbell, Becky Denton, Pat Gillory, Jay Nickel, Bob Reed, and Carroll Wilson.

Click on the scripture reading for each day to go directly to link. Current and past copies of the "Daily Meditations" may be found at: [ststeve.org/daily-meditations](http://ststeve.org/daily-meditations)

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## COLLECT: Fifth Sunday of Easter

*Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

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## An Open Door

Monday, May 3, 2021

### **Colossians 3:18-4:18**

"...pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ..." - Colossians 4:3

New things are going on at St. Stephen's, and I am excited about them. Here is just one: the second Sunday of every month has been declared *Mission Sunday* with Anita McNabb leading us in a different outreach project year-round. I attended the April 11th kickoff Sunday where gently used clothing was collected with donations going to the Wimberley Valley Thrift Store and a local women's shelter. It was a joy to sing along with the Half-Time Band and enjoy our youth leading the service.

We can be grateful to Anita and Fr. Kevin for opening this door. Please join me in praying for this new mission focus, and when you can, join the group that gathers the second Sunday of every month at 2 p.m. The event begins with worship, as we thank our Lord for the ways we can help others. May St. Stephen's become an open door declaring the mystery of Christ to all in our community.

Thanks be to God!

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## Let it Be!

Tuesday, May 4, 2021

### **Romans 12:1-21**

*"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." - Romans 12:2*

Paul's beautiful and eloquent Chapter 12 is a favorite of mine, and I'm tempted to ask you to just read it, and read it again, rather than inserting my own thoughts. However I will say a few words about a verse that has special meaning for me.

Please pay attention to what Paul commands us to do in Verse 2. He tells us to "be transformed." He doesn't tell us to try the daunting task of changing ourselves, rather he instructs us to present ourselves before God so that our Lord may do that work through Jesus Christ.

Now, to use a phrase coined by Bishop Andy Doyle, I consider myself *Unabashedly Episcopalian*, so I can't help but look at our prayer book to see what it has to say relating to this verse. In Eucharistic Prayer A (BCP p. 363) the priest prays over the bread and wine as he uses the sign of the cross to ask for sanctification of these earthly elements by the Holy Spirit. The very next sentence begins, "Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace." There it is! We are praying for this transformation in ourselves and acknowledging that it can only be done by the grace and mercy of the Holy Spirit.

Thanks be to God!

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## What is Your Armor?

Wednesday, May 5, 2021

### **Romans 13:1-14**

*"So let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." - Romans 13:12b*

This verse makes me think of a superhero or science fiction character covered in a brilliant armor made entirely of light. It also seems to say that before we can put on this armor of light, we must cast off the works of darkness. I'm now forced to stop and think about my own dark places. Where do I harbor petty resentments, discouragement, sloth, or envy? I don't think I'll go any further with this list, but instead I want to look at verse 14.

It is in verse 14, the last one of the chapter, that we find what we need for our armor of light. Here Paul tells us to put on the Lord of Jesus Christ. I love to just think about this and to visualize myself putting on Jesus, wrapping Jesus around me and over me so that he becomes my full body armor. Jesus tells us that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light (Matthew 11:30). Put on your armor!

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## Judge Not

Thursday, May 6, 2021

## **Romans 14:1-12**

*"Why do you pass judgment on your brother? And you, why do you despise your brother? For we all stand before the judgment seat of God." - Romans 14:10*

You may remember a song from the Rodgers and Hammerstein 1949 musical **South Pacific** called "You've Got to be Carefully Taught." If so, you'll likely remember the controversy in the story when a young military officer falls in love with a Polynesian woman. I remember one particular line of song, "to hate all the people your relatives hate." Reading the scripture about judgment brought this song to mind, so I did a bit of research. The famous musical duo was subject to widespread criticism, as this number was quite controversial and even considered by some as part of a Communist agenda. Rogers and Hammerstein stubbornly refused to remove this musical number saying that it represented why they had wanted to do this play in the first place.

There is a line in the show preceding the song that says of racism, "it is not born in you! It happens after you're born." Today we are still wrestling with both overt and covert racism that has long been part of our society. This is one of the ways that we are trapped in this dangerous pattern of judgment. A good friend of mine used to say, "If you have one finger pointing at someone else, three fingers are pointing back at you."

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## **Don't be a Stumbling Block**

*Friday, May 7, 2021*

## **Romans 14:13-23**

*"Therefore, let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean." - Romans 14:13-14*

When Uncle Boyer came to town, he took us all out to lunch; that is three generations of whomever happened to be available that day. Uncle Boyer was quite a dapper dresser, and these lunch gatherings were fun for all. He was also a recovering alcoholic. I happened to be at my stepmother's house the last time she prepared for the annual visit from her brother. Barbara said, "I have to find a place to hide the liquor before Boyer gets here."

This occasion helped me better understand today's scripture. In this writing, Paul is referring to the strict dietary laws still followed by some Jewish Christians. He is advising that new Christians who feel freed from the ancient laws to take care around those without that same understanding. Barbara wanted to be very careful not to put a "stumbling block" in the way of her baby brother. So, while she enjoyed a drink each evening, she was willing to hide all alcohol. How might this apply in a situation in your life or mine? I think we want to take care to discern when not to offer the second glass of wine or second serving of dessert to a friend or family member. Also, we want to watch our words to never open up a situation to gossip. I'm sure you can think of other situations where you might consider this wise advice from St. Paul.

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## **Abound in Hope**

*Saturday, May 8, 2021*

## **Romans 15:1-13**

*"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." - Romans 15:13*

Wouldn't we all love to "abound in hope!" I confess that this certainly doesn't come naturally to me. And the Holy Spirit, through whom we are told we can have this abundance, is for me the most elusive member of the Holy Trinity.

And what about the word "hope?" We use it frequently: "I hope it rains this week"; "I hope my grandson finds a job." But this is not the kind of hope St. Paul is talking about.

Paul tells us that our God is the "God of hope." Our God is also the God of endurance and encouragement, and we learn this through Holy Scripture. (Romans 15:5). An ethic of hope pervades the New Testament. This Christian hope, that we might become more and more like Jesus until finally we dwell with Him forever, is the hope Paul prays for us to obtain. This brings us full circle to Tuesday's scripture from Romans 12. We are to present ourselves to God for his work of transformation. We just can't do it ourselves. I think I'll just "show up" –show up to read my Bible, show up to pray, show up to worship on Sunday, show up to help those in need. What about you?

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