

## Something weird happened!

Part of my morning routine is reading several online newspapers: the Austin American Statesman, Houston Chronicle, and Corpus Christi Caller Times. Most of the news seems to be a regurgitation of previous news stories. For a change of pace, I decided I would look at the Episcopal News Service to see if there was something interesting to read about. There were stories about Diocesan politics from Springfield, Illinois and court battles in South Carolina. It was a mirror of these other newspapers. As I scanned the articles, I saw a small teaser at the bottom of the page — “Third Season of ‘The Way of Love’ podcast continues with guest Richard Rohr”.

Looking at the various podcast topics on the Episcopal Church website, I began to reflect on the last few months. I suspect that each of us has experienced every imaginable emotion over the past few months. It seems as if the devil is a part of most of these emotions by inserting fear or doubt in some way or another. For me, I’ve reached emotional fatigue. I’m frustrated with humanity. I am losing patience with family and others. I’ve resumed yelling at “dumb drivers”. This “new normal” is beginning to look like the “old normal”.

What happened to the sense of neighbor? Working together against a common health enemy had been replaced by more selfish attitudes.

In a weird way, God spoke to me through the Episcopal News Service! I got the strong message that it was time to pause and reflect — self-examination and spiritual growth. It is a time to become new rather than reverting to the "old normal".

At some point we must make a choice. We can wallow in self-pity. We can be angry at this person or that group of people. We can find our own desert islands and slip away from the world. Or, we can allow ourselves to open our hearts to God and allow God to transform us and our lives to something new.

I’m going to open my heart in new ways.

I’m going to begin a series of intentional prayers for the next forty days. I will be using a book published in 1974 by William Barclay entitled "A Guide to Daily Prayer". Each day beginning July 6th I will send you Prayers in the Morning, Prayers in the Evening, and a Scripture for the Day.

I’m also going to begin listening to the Podcasts from the Episcopal Church. Season 1 is a series of episodes on the “Way of Love: Pray, Rest, Worship, Learn, Bless, Turn, and Go.” Season 2 is a series of episodes on “Putting the Way of Love into Action.” Season 3 is a series of interviews with well-respected religious folk (some may be a little controversial) discussing the way of love in a variety of ways. I haven’t listened to any of them but I’m going to begin with Season 1 Episode 1

and open my heart to the words being spoken — even if I think that I already have the answer. I will be sending you links to these Podcasts on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

In addition, I am going to be blogging about my journey. I will send you the link to my blog on the July 6th and you are welcome to comment and update us all on your journey.

Finally, if there are people or things you would like for me to pray about, you may add them to the blog or you can send them to me at [bur@dobbins.cc](mailto:bur@dobbins.cc) .

As you battle whatever you may be battling (if anything) while being called to return to a new normal, I invite you to open your heart to God and allow God to transform you. You can pick up that book you bought five years ago and take time to read it. You can find online courses, listen to podcasts or pray intentional prayers for the next 40 days. There are an infinite number of options. If you make that conscious decision to let God in, God will enter by the most unexpected ways. Don't allow yourself to fall back into "old" normal, open your heart and allow yourself to be extraordinarily "new".

I'm going to take a couple of months away from the office in order to devote my full attention to this journey. Don't worry; I will still be in town. If the world and pandemic change dramatically I will return early. However, it seems like an ideal time to do this while we are unable to do so many different things at Church, and while members of my family remain particularly at risk. May God's blessings continue to flow down upon our world as we all find ways to open our hearts to our neighbor and God.

With much love,

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Note: I will be sending my daily Prayers and Scripture from the email address [youareloved@stbarnabasfbg.org](mailto:youareloved@stbarnabasfbg.org) -- please make sure your email program allows you to receive emails from this address.