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A Different Planet

It’s not every day that the International Space station is something that comes into my awareness. I just don’t think about people being up there, but they’re there, doing research. Among their daily routines, astronauts are making frequent observations about the earth 250 miles away. From time to time we might come across a report of someone who has been on the Station for several months and is returning to earth. On a recent segment of NPR host David Greene took a call from the Space Station. The call was from Jessica Meir who was preparing to make a return trip to earth the next day which was April 16, 2020. Meir was asked, when she viewed the earth from the space station, what she would be thinking about in that moment and from that vantage point. Jessica said, “You’re looking down at the earth. All the places you’ve been and all the people you’ve known. And its surreal and so incredibly beautiful.” She mentions getting ready to come home, and acknowledging the situation unfolding here, she says, “It’s looks like we are going back to a completely different planet.”

During the interview we also learn the favorite room to view the earth is called the cupola where there are the most windows. Two things come to mind: the distance from which Jessica and other astronauts are able to view the earth; and, what that vantage point means to the one with such a wonderful view. We don’t have the luxury of
seeing the earth from a distance. Right now, we have a very different way of understanding distance. We talk about social distancing as a means to respond to COVID-19 as well as sheltering in place. Even though we do these things, we’re not able to separate ourselves from what’s happening in our world. We have this global pandemic, and we are part of that environment. It’s that old adage, “you can’t see the forest for the trees.” Some people who work in consulting and planning with organizations use the concept of “imagining a view from the balcony or from 10,000 feet up.” It’s a suggestion of “How to do good planning, when thinking about an organization in which, most of the time, we are completely submerged.” Taking a view from the balcony or 10,000 feet can also be done in our personal lives as well. It is the profound situation of looking from the space station that helped me to realize, indeed, we are on the edge of returning to “a completely different planet.”

As we prepare to “return,” going through a mental exercise “to see ourselves from afar” may be helpful and productive. We may find that we are not as anxious about the present or the future. Sometimes our problems don’t appear so insurmountable, when we see ourselves from a distance. My experience is that when life is lived so up-close and as intensely, as is the case now, stepping back can help us see different possibilities and gain a new perspective. One colleague suggested such a view gives us the opportunity to reimagine our future. Not only do we now have an opportunity to change our view, we can help reimagine and indeed bring into being—if you will-- a different planet. With the reopening of church, we are able to rediscover what is important and share with others how God’s providence and loving presence can help us shape a new future.

Rev. Dan Krutz

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**May 7th National Day of Prayer**

The Bible tells us of how often the nation of Israel turned from God’s path and also of their times of repentance. God spoke to the prophet Habakkuk during one of those times of darkness and disobedience, telling Habakkuk how a heathen army would execute God’s judgment on His people. However, God also promises hope for the future. In Habakkuk 2:14, God promised: “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.” A companion verse to this echoes into the New Testament as the apostle Paul writes in 2nd Corinthians 4:6, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

**Pray God’s Glory Across The Earth**

is the 2020 National Day of Prayer theme.

Bishop appointed for Diocese of Alexandria

Vatican News:
Pope Francis has appointed Father Robert Marshall as the new Bishop of the Diocese of Alexandria, Louisiana, in the USA. Bishop-elect Marshall succeeds Bishop David Talley, who was appointed by Pope Francis as Bishop of Memphis in March 2019.

Bishop-elect Marshall was born in Memphis, Tennessee on June 17, 1959. He attended Christian Brothers University in Memphis (1977-1980) where he received a Bachelor of Arts in History. In 1983, he received a Juris Doctorate from the Humphreys School of Law at the University of Memphis, and a Master of Divinity from Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans in 2000. Prior to entering seminary, Father Marshall worked as a civil attorney. He was ordained to the priesthood on June 10, 2000 for the Diocese of Memphis. The Diocese of Alexandria comprises 11,108 square miles in the State of Louisiana with a total population of 389,837 of which 35,402 are Catholic.

Congratulations to Fr. Marshall and to the Diocese of Alexandria.

A new style of worship - guidelines for COVID-19

Specific denominational guidelines may vary

Governor John Bel Edwards has announced a gradual re-opening of the state starting May 15, 2020. Houses of worship will be allowed to start hosting services – at 25% of each meeting room’s capacity. Some churches may need to stagger services in order to accommodate this downsizing and/or continue with online streaming as well as local services. At-risk congregational members may be best served by continued online services.

Some details are sketchy at this point, but social distancing (6-foot spacing for those not in the same household) should be adhered to. No hugs nor hand-shaking. It is recommended that ALL congregational members wear facemasks at all times. (Facemasks are NOT recommended for babies; a protective breathable cover should be placed over the higher handle framework of the infant carrier instead.) A preacher, while in the pulpit at a safe distance from all others, should be able to preach without using a mask. However, the preacher should wear a mask at all other times. Singers will need to maintain 6-foot distances and will probably be able to follow the same facemask rules as the preacher. Mics and equipment must be sanitized before and after use. It is recommended that churches be prepared to offer facemasks to anyone who arrives without one. It is also recommended that ushers open and close doors when greeting guests, and/or hand sanitizer be readily available at entry points and around all other commonly touched surfaces (i.e. bathroom door handles, faucets, etc.). The Governor hopes to be able to start Asymptomatic testing at some point.
Interfaith Webinar- best practices for houses of worship

From the Interfaith Federation of Baton Rouge:

HOUSES OF WORSHIP:
COVID-19 Best Practices Webinar
Tuesday, May 5, 2020, 10-11 am

NOW is the time for houses of worship to prepare to re-open. What are the best practices moving forward? This webinar is designed to answer your questions and is in collaboration with the East Baton Rouge Mayor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness.

See the Federation website for MORE INFO: here or go to: https://www.ifedgbr.com/

Friends of the LIC mailout coming up in May

Approximately 90% of our operating income comes from Judicatories. Their faithfulness in prayer and financial support is always appreciated. Twice per year, we also send out a ‘Friends of the L.I.C.’ support request. For all of those on our postal mailing list, you should be receiving a letter before the end of May. (For those who gave in the last six months, we will not send you a new request at this time. Thank you!)

Understanding that many are affected by COVID-19, we ask that for those who can, to please respond as generously as you are able, as your support helps with our on-going operational expenses. Our budgeted goal for 2020 is $3,990. We have already received $897 towards this year’s goal. The majority of that was given at the 50th Annual Assembly worship service and we also had a few folks who have contributed by mail. Thank you all! Every gift counts and your help in meeting this need would certainly be appreciated! We will send a couple of 2020 “50th Anniversary” wallet calendar cards as a small thank you to each person who contributes. Please keep the L.I.C. in prayer as well.

If you are not currently on our mailing list, and would like to contribute, please mail contributions to: Louisiana Interchurch Conference, Friends Pledge Drive, 527 N. Blvd., 4th Floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, or contribute online via PayPal/credit card at http://www.lainterchurch.org/contribute/index.htm. Thank you, again!

Offering thanks to our recent contributors – we couldn't make it without you all!

The majority of the LIC operating income is contributed through the leadership of our member Judicatories, whom we deeply appreciate and depend upon.

Contributions received from March 31, 2020 through April 29, 2020:

Friends of the LIC donations:  Mrs. Ann Romero; and Rev. Constance Saizon.
Thank you all!
Please pray for this ecumenical ministry. If you would like to help financially, please mail contributions to: Louisiana Interchurch Conference, 527 N. Blvd., 4th Floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, or contribute online via PayPal at http://www.lainterchurch.org/contribute/index.htm.

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**Board Meeting Dates to Calendar**

**Fall Board meeting dates:**

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<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>2020</td>
<td>Sept. 21-22, Shreveport, LA</td>
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<td>Sept. 20-21, Houma, LA</td>
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<td>2022</td>
<td>Sept. 19-20, Alexandria, LA</td>
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**Annual Assembly meeting dates:**

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<td>March 1-2, Lake Charles, LA</td>
<td>51st Annual Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>March 14-15, Baton Rouge, LA</td>
<td>52nd Annual Assembly</td>
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“To live the faith we hold in common”
President: The Most Rev. Douglas Deshotel; President Elect: The Rev. Dr. Nadine Burton; Executive Director: Fr. Dan Krutz