

Harriet Lindeman:

Good morning.

Congregation:

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Harriet Lindeman:

Happy Easter to those who celebrate. Welcome to Morning Prayers here at Appleton Chapel. Our speaker this morning will be Timothy Patrick McCarthy, lecturer on education at Harvard Graduate School of Education. Welcome back. Please rise in body or in spirit for a responsive reading of Psalm 4 found in your black psalter. "Answer me when I call, oh God of my right. You gave me room when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer."

Congregation:

How long, you people, shall my honor suffer shame? How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies?

Harriet Lindeman:

"But know that the Lord has set apart the faithful for Himself. The Lord hears when I'm called to Him."

Congregation:

"When you are disturbed, do not sin; ponder it on your beds, and be silent."

Harriet Lindeman:

"Offer right sacrifices and put your trust in the Lord."

Congregation:

"There are many who say "O that we might see some good! Let the light of your faith shine on us, O Lord."

Harriet Lindeman:

"You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound."

Congregation:

I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O Lord, Make me lie down in safety." (Singing).

Timothy Patrick McCarthy:

Good morning everyone.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Timothy Patrick McCarthy:

A reading from Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 1952. "But the final word is love. At times, it has been a harsh and dreadful thing, and our very faith in love has been tried through fire. We cannot love God unless we love each other and to love, we must know each other. We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community." Therein ends the reading.

Since it's April Fools and the day after Easter, let me confess something. I love gallows humor. Perhaps this is because I am Irish by tradition and temperament. Gates said, "Being Irish, he had an abiding sense of tragedy, which sustained him through temporary periods of joy." And so it is during this tragic year with so little joy that I respond to the wearisome question, "How are things at Harvard with references to rearranging deck chairs and replenishing drinks on the Titanic?"

But this is no laughing matter. We are in trouble. There's no need to sugarcoat things or to pretend otherwise. To do so is to perpetuate the problem, and this is no time for delusion or denial. Harvard has been my home for more than three decades. During that time, I have always tried to be a faithful and loving critic of this institution that has changed my life. I've never seen anything like this. History will need time to sort out the full story. The truth is this tragedy is a constellation of complex crises. Many of the forces at play right now, progress and backlash, prejudice and polarization, terrorism and genocide are much bigger than any one people or place. There are no easy explanations or answers, but Harvard is neither innocent nor inoculated in any of this.

Some of our problems are decidedly homemade. Governing boards too free from accountability and transparency, a university administration too bound by lawyers and too beholden to big donors, a historic president who was given no chance for success, alumni who have weaponized their resentments and riches, faculty and staff who are afraid or unwilling to speak freely and honestly. Students with social media practices in dire need of intervention, and a doxxing truck with images of our students, mostly students of color, some of my students that was funded by some craven bully and allowed to circle menacingly around campus all fall and winter. It's hard not to feel that Harvard like the world is burning to the ground.

I have spent the last couple of months trying to escape the fire. I'm taking some time away from teaching this term, my first sabbatical in over two decades. Though I planned this break over a year ago, given the context, it feels like an act of mercy some days. I am using this time away from campus to rest my weary body, to restore my wounded spirit and to repair my broken heart.

One of the benefits of stealing time for yourself is that you have space to read and reflect at a slower pace. One of the books I returned to recently is Dorothy Day's *The Long Loneliness*, a book I first read in Robert Coles' famous course, *The Literature of Social Reflection* during my junior year in the college. There are many things in Day's writing that still resonate with me. The peace and labor activism of her early years, the deep devotion to the Catholic worker movement she loved, the search for love and community that she considers the solution to the long loneliness that so many of us feel in our lives, especially in times when a world is at war on so many fronts. This reunion with Dorothy Day has reignited a question that has been burning in me all year, what are we building together?

Among the central features of the Catholic worker movement are the hospitality houses, places for people from different walks of life to come together and get what they need. Food, shelter, discussion, prayer, and to share these things with others. Grounded in acts of faith and charity and mercy and peace, these are what Catholic workers call intentional communities. At their best, they're also beloved communities overflowing with love and justice.

In my time away from teaching, I've been thinking a lot about classrooms as intentional communities, places of mutual respect, robust reciprocity, deep care, and broad curiosity where people of different

walks of life build something together. I have been thinking a lot about the classrooms I most loved as a student, including that one long ago that I shared with Professor Coles. And I've been thinking a lot about the kinds of classrooms I've been trying to build with my students for the many years that I have been blessed to teach here. I've been thinking about the times we've fallen short, when we let our personal ambitions get in the way of our collective aspirations, when crass transaction overpowers critical reflection, and when showing what we know becomes more important than searching for what we still do not understand.

I have been thinking about the many times we have risen to the occasion in other crucibles, terrorist attacks and unjust wars, racial reckonings, and a global pandemic, assaults on democracy and crimes against humanity. It is in this spirit of hard hope and fierce love that I want to raise up what we have been able to build together this year in the face of the fires that still burn. There's been a lot of nonsense spoken and written about what is and isn't happening on college campuses like ours. Many of our classrooms, including mine, have found their way into the crosshairs, in the line of fire. Whenever I encounter such crass caricatures, I am quick to invite the not so loving critics to come see things for themselves. I'll give you one guess how many of them have taken me up on this invitation.

Do we always get it right? Of course not. We have been badly burned and we will need time to heal. But all over this campus, all across this country, there are classrooms where different kinds of people are doing the difficult work of listening to each other, learning from one another and figuring out how to live together. In other words, building beloved communities. The arsonists make this work a lot more hard than it needs to be. But if they took the time to witness our work and understand our classrooms and the beautiful people in them, they would see that these things that they fear and loathe, diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, so many of us who are now the faces of Harvard are actually part of the solution to many of the most pressing problems before us. My prayer this morning is this, that we stop burning it all down and start building things up. It is always easier to start the fire and fan the flames than to light the way with love.

Harriet Lindeman:

Please rise in body and spirit for prayer. Creator God, we gather together to ask for your blessing, looking for signs of life resurrected and renewed in this season. Help us to hold the pain of this year and to find new ways of being in relationship with one another, building foundations rooted in love. In your name we pray, amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Harriet Lindeman:

And now we pray as Jesus taught us, saying, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever." Amen.

Congregation:

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who

trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever." Amen.

Harriet Lindeman:

And now let us sing Christ the Lord Is Risen Again, number 165.

Congregation:

(Singing).

Harriet Lindeman:

And now as we prepare to leave this place, the peace of God be in your heart, the love of God be in your hands, the joy of God be in your soul. Go in peace. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.