



THE RT. REV. STEVEN ANDREW MILLER, D.D.

BISHOP OF MILWAUKEE

Eternal Lord of love, behold your Church
Walking once more the pilgrim way of Lent
Led by your cloud by day, by night your fire
Moved by your love and toward your presence bent
Far off yet near the joy of all desire (Hymn 135, The Hymnal 1982)

Dear Friends in Christ,

Soon we will begin the season of Lent. As I prepare to observe this most holy time an image that is speaking to me is the cleansing of the Temple. This act by Jesus is one of the few that is recorded by all of the Gospel writers. While John places it in a different time in Jesus life than do the synoptic authors, the message is clear that God's House is to be a House of Prayer.

When I first encountered the Episcopal Church, one of the things that struck me was the silence before worship. One could enter the nave and know that before the Liturgy it would be a place where one could quietly pray and prepare oneself to enter into God's presence. Sure, the silence would be broken occasionally by a baby's cry, the exuberance of a small child, or some other unintended interruption - a passing siren, a loud and swiftly door, and inadvertently rung bell-- but on the whole, a space for silence, prayer, and preparation. It was a welcome respite from the cacophony and noise of the world around.

Unfortunately, in recent years it seems to me that in many of our congregations this practice of keeping silence before worship has been lost. Perhaps it is because of the increased noise in the world around us and in ourselves as evidenced by the ubiquity of headphones and the constancy of television in public places. Maybe it is the result of our busyness and the feeling that a conversation can't wait. Nevertheless, a distinctive and important characteristic of our common life is being lost.

Lent is a season that invites us to listen—to be still and know that God is God. It invites us to reorder our priorities. It urges us to be open to God. I ask the congregations of this diocese and all our members to observe ten to fifteen minutes of silence before worship begins and to do our best to be still and hear the God who speaks in the still small voice, the sound of sheer silence.

I remain,

In Christ's service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven A. Miller".

The Rt. Rev. Steven A. Miller
Bishop of Milwaukee