Presiding Bishop Curry: Easter 2018 Message

“Hatred does not have the last word. Violence does not have the last word. Bigotry does not have the last word. Sin, evil do not have the last word. The last word is God, and God is love.”

There is a passage in the 27th Chapter of Matthew’s gospel where religious leaders, political leaders come together once again after Jesus has been crucified and executed, after he had been buried in the tomb. Once again they come together to seal the tomb, to make sure not even a rumor of his resurrection will happen. And this is what some of them say:

Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may go and steal him away and tell the people he has been raised from the dead. And the last deception will be the worse than the first.

It is easy to overlook, and sometimes convenient to forget, that Jesus was executed, Jesus was crucified by an unholy alliance of religion, politics, and economic self-interest. Politics represented in Pontius Pilate, governor of the Roman Empire, representative of that very empire and all of its power.

(Continued on page 3)
A Reflection on the March For Our Lives

By Cate Wallace

I don’t know what we call these kids, or what they call themselves—this cohort born after the year 2000. The Global Generation? They are the most globally diverse generation America has ever had. The 9/11 Generation? The oldest of them were infants that September morning when the world changed for the rest of us. For them, it’s the only world they have ever known. The iPhone Generation? They are the first generation to grow up with smart phones, with the organizing capacities provided by social media, with the ability to take and transmit digital photos and videos with a click of their amazingly agile thumbs. Whoever they are, the March for Our Lives marked their coming of age politically.

They are as certain as I was in 1969 that they can change the world.

In 1969, I was 19 years old—the same age one of the girls killed at Kent State. She was a sophomore, simply walking to her one o’clock history class. I was a sophomore. I also had a one o’clock history class that semester. Why did she die rather than me? She has shadowed me all my life, standing ghostly witness to every major milestone of my life, everything I got to do but she didn’t. And then, ten days later, it all happened again at Jackson State.

The Kent State police shootings were my introduction to a reality that black families have faced for centuries. Almost fifty years later, there I was, standing on the street, watching a new generation demand that the nation take responsibility for the ghostly witnesses now haunting their own lives.

(Continued on page 6)
Their confidence and energy worked on me like a long-lost flavor, triggering memory after memory until I was awash in grief and guilt and unbearable irony: these kids were convinced they would succeed where my own generation had so palpably failed. I didn’t know whether to cheer or to weep.

Dozing on the bus on the long ride home from Washington, I found myself pondering the difference between hope and confidence. Confidence soars, sure of its own success. Hope has a dark and gritty realism that keeps its feet on the ground and its head out of the clouds. Those who hope simply do what is right because it is the right thing to do. Period. You may not win, I wanted to say to them, but what you are doing is the right thing to do. You are laying claim to your own moral responsibility for the common good. That will change your life in way you cannot yet imagine, whether or not gun laws change.

And believe me, nothing will ever change if good people give up.

King Herod, who heard Jesus at one of the trials, representative of the Herodian and economic self-interest at the time.

The Chief Priest, representative of religious aristocracies who had a vested interest in the status quo.

These three powers came together - economic, religious and political - to crucify the one who taught love the lord your God, love your neighbor, and actually live that way.

The truth is the message of Jesus was unsettling to the world then as it is unsettling to the world now. And yet that very message is the only source of hope in life for the way of the cross, the way of unselfish living, the way of sacrificial living, seeking the good, the welfare of the other before one’s own unenlightened self-interest. That way of the cross is the way of love. That is the nature of love. And that way is the only hope for the entire human family.

The reality is the way of Jesus was a threat to the way that the world is, and hope for the way the world can and will be.

But on that third day after the crucifixion, when by the titanic power of God, by the power of the love of God, Jesus was raised from the dead. God sent a message and declared that death does not have the last word. Hatred does not have the last word. Violence does not have the last word. Sin, evil do not have the last word. The last word is God, and God is love.

On our pilgrimage here, we stopped and spent two days in Jordan. In Amman, Jordan, we were able to spend some sacred and blessed and painful time with Iraqi Christians. These are Christians, many of whom are Anglican, who have fled their country in Iraq because of war and violence and hatred and desecration. They have given up everything, refusing to renounce their faith in Jesus Christ. And there in Jordan, with the help of the Anglican Church there and many other relief agencies, they are at least safe, hoping to find safe and permanent homes in other countries.

In the course of our conversations, and listening to them, at one point I found myself quoting a hymn, a song that many folk have heard around Easter, certainly in our country. And I didn’t expect a response. You probably know how it goes – “because he lives,” referring to Jesus and his resurrection, “because he lives, I can face tomorrow.” When I quoted that song, those who have lost their homes, people who have lost everything except life itself, those who have lost loved ones, actually responded to the words of that song. When I said, “Because He lives I can face tomorrow.” When I said Jesus is alive, He’s been raised from the dead, I saw them lift up their heads and respond with the words amen, hallelujah.

My brothers and sisters, evil could not stop him. Death could not stop him. Violence could not stop him. For the love of God, the heart of God, the reality of God is stronger than anything else. And Jesus really rose from the dead on that first resurrection morning.

God love you. God bless you. And, may this Easter season be the first day of the rest of our lives. Amen.

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church
Virginia Film Festival Presents: America Inside Out with Katie Couric

In partnership with National Geographic, The Virginia Film Festival announces that award-winning journalist and UVA alumna Katie Couric will be in Charlottesville on Wednesday, April 4 to present two special preview screenings and discussions of an episode of her new National Geographic series, America Inside Out with Katie Couric.

The episode to be screened is titled Re-Righting History and centers around the battle over removing Confederate monuments and renaming buildings, schools, and roads named after Confederate generals. It also includes Couric’s first-hand experiences of the events of August 11 and 12 in Charlottesville.

The first event will be held at 3:00 PM at Culbreth Theatre and is open to UVA students, faculty, and staff. An evening event for the local community will follow at 7:00 PM in The Paramount Theater. Both events will feature post-screening discussions where Couric and moderator Larry Sabato, director of the UVA Center for Politics, will be joined by members of the UVA and Charlottesville communities featured in the episode.

Panelists will include Charlottesville High School student Zyahna Bryant, who wrote the original petition to have the Robert E. Lee statue removed from the park; Don Gathers, local activist and Chair of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Race, Monuments and Memorials for the City of Charlottesville; Seth Wispelwey, United Church of Christ minister and one of the leaders of Congregate Cville; Gary Gallagher, Director for John L. Nau III Center for Civil War History at UVA and Professor in the History of the American Civil War (Paramount event only); and John Mason, Associate Professor in the Corcoran Department of History at UVA and Vice Chair of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Race, Monuments and Memorials for the City of Charlottesville.

MORE ABOUT THE SERIES:
America Inside Out with Katie Couric is a six-part documentary series that follows Couric as she travels the country to talk with people bearing witness to the most complicated and consequential questions in American culture today. The series premieres Wednesday, April 11, 2018 and will air globally on National Geographic. Inspired by her own journey making National Geographic’s critically acclaimed documentary Gender Revolution (2017), Couric travels to dozens of cities across North America — from Fremont, Nebraska, to Montgomery, Alabama, to talk with hundreds of people to get an inside look at pressing social issues, including gender inequality, Muslims in America, political correctness, white working-class anxiety, the battle over Confederate monuments and statues, and how technology is affecting our humanity.

For the episode featured in these preview screenings, Couric travels from Charlottesville to Montgomery to New Orleans, the front lines in the highly controversial and sometimes violent battle over removing Confederate monuments and renaming buildings, schools, and roads named after Confederate generals. Couric meets with people on all sides of this divisive issue: from Oscar-winning actress Julianne Moore, who is helping lead the fight to change the name of her former high school, to Sons of Confederate Veterans and white nationalists. This is a very personal journey for Couric, who attended the University of Virginia in Charlottesville and who, while filming this episode, found herself in the middle of the alt-right protest that rocked the nation. Couric sifts through all the emotions and experiences that inform the debate, as she talks with scholars, celebrities, and Americans of all races about the complicated question of how we approach the history — and the future — of race in this country.

CULTIVATE YOUR PASSION FOR PLANTS BY GARDENING IN POTS
Do you want to dress up the entrance to your home or create an appealing patio? Do you want to grow food for your summertime eating? Most gardeners do not realize they are artists until they try their hand at container gardening. Master Gardeners will discuss:
- The benefits of container gardening
- The best containers, tools and supplies to use
- The best plants for containers
- How to keep your plants healthy and your containers looking good all season

GARDENING BASICS
In partnership with Break & Roses

GARDENING IN CONTAINERS

WHO: Beginning Gardeners
COST: FREE
WHEN: Saturday, April 14, 2018 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
WHERE: Trinity Episcopal Church 1118 Preston Avenue Charlottesville, VA 22903
HOW TO REGISTER: Send your name to: info@piedmontmastergardeners.org
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: April 9, 2018

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