

Matt: 24:1-2

**As Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. Then he asked them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another, all will be thrown down.”**

For me it was The Common Ground in Ithaca, NY, a magnificently seedy roadhouse several miles outside of town. It had a gravel and grass parking lot, a perpetual haze of cigarette smoke, and an all-age cast of regulars you could easily have built a sitcom around. My husband will tell you about ‘The Park in Roanoke, VA, which he and his college friends would drive 45 minutes to get to every weekend, and which they talk about today like it’s a homeland from which they’re in unwilling diaspora. Ask any queer person you know, and chances are they’ll have a story to tell you about a place like this. They will tell you about how they found a family there, how they found themselves there, how they felt safe for the first time on the dance floor, how much they learned there, how they found love there, how they learned to be bold there, how they dressed like themselves for the very first time there, showing off their glitter, or butch haircut, or size 13 high heels without fear. That note you hear in their voice as they tell you about it? That’s gratitude, and reverence. 50 dead and more than 50 wounded hits hard anytime and anywhere. But for many queer people, what happened at Pulse hits as hard as shootings in churches hit for Christians, as hard as shootings in black churches hit for black Christians. It’s not just the death toll; It’s not just that it was a hate crime. It’s that it happened in a sanctuary. Here’s a true thing: every sanctuary will be invaded, by madness or death or slow decay, sooner or later. Even the Temple in Jerusalem fell. Even the body of God was penetrated. But here’s what Christians believe: that body is still our refuge and our might. That the lord of the dance (hall) wouldn’t stay dead. That his pulse wouldn’t stop pulsing. That they couldn’t take our Sanctuary away.

Luke 8:26-39



Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me” for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him, he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds). Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” He said, “Legion”, for many demons had entered him. They begged him to order them to go back into the abyss. Now then on the hillside a large herd of swine feeding, and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons and been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

## 'Sanctuary'

**There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. Anyone who fears is not made perfect in love.** 1 John 4:18

Sanctuary: 'A sacred place, the holiest part of the temple, the part of the chancel containing the altar.' 'A place of refuge, protection, safety' (Webster) For the soul who had been tormented by a legion of fears terrorizing him coming from within and from without, sanctuary was a seat at the feet of Jesus.

For John Dorhauer, sanctuary was family. He tells about it in his reflection, 'Dad': 'It was only a few short days ago that I got a call from my brother. If you want to see Dad one last time, I suggest you make arrangements soon. I was on a plane the next morning back home to St. Louis. As a pastor, I have been attendant to the dying process for many beautiful people. Being present with death is familiar to me. What is not as familiar to me is being present with death when it is visiting my household. I have heard stories through the years of those who discovered something deeply profound and meaningful in the days they spent with a dying parent. What happened to me and my family in the days and hours of my father's passing is something we will never forget and will always cherish. When I arrived, Dad was non-responsive. I held his hands. I told him I loved him and was grateful for all the sacrifices he made as a father to make my life possible. I forgave him for his impatience with me at times, and apologized for my own impatience with him at others. I tried to discern some sense of knowing or recognition in his eyes, in the touch of his hand, across the lines of his face. Nothing. For two days he lay there motionless. Nurses came every three hours, each time reporting there was no pulse and no discernible blood pressure. They wondered how it was he was still breathing. They said he showed the classic signs of one waiting for something. We all knew what that was. Our youngest sibling, Jay—the seventh child—would not arrive until late the next evening. He was feeling a tremendous amount of guilt thinking he would not make it before Dad died, and that he

would be the only one not there. The hours slowly ticked by. Nothing changed. No movement. No sign of recognition. No pulse. No blood pressure. No Jay. Only the rise and fall of the chest as the lungs filled one breath at a time. Late into the second day of our bedside vigil, the front door opened and Jay arrived. In the hour preceding that, the house grew eerily quiet. I sat by the bed in that hour with two other siblings, and tears streamed. No words were said. Jay came to the back room where Dad lay, and one by one over the next hour 31 of us--- including Mom and Dad and all seven of their children--- gathered. Through a veil of tears through voices racked with deep grief, with story and with song and with prayer, with pain and with joy etched across the atmosphere we all said our goodbyes. And then it happened—the indication that Dad was there all along and knew exactly what he was doing and why he needed to do it. His eyes opened for the first time. His mouth moved. My brother reports he heard what others did or could not. I love you all. And then he breathed his last. Nothing I write here will capture what we all felt in those moments. It was beautiful. It was rich. It was profoundly spiritual. Dad's last gift to us all was waiting till the family could be together, reminding us one last time how important it is to be family. This is a small homage to the man I knew as Dad. I did not anticipate that this part of his journey would be such a powerful testimony to the presence of the sacred and the power of love expressed in the gathering of a clan. ('Into the Mystic' reflection)

For me, sanctuary is the church where people who love imperfectly gather to give praise to God who has made us, to give thanks to Jesus who has taught us how to love God, ourselves, and one another, and to bless the spirit of compassion that unites us with justice at the heart of God as one human family and with all creation. It's here I pray the 'Our Father' as Jesus taught me to pray and to have all my fears cast out by using Jesus' sanctuary name for God. . "Abba", which means Loving 'Daddy,