

I want to thank Wendy and Chad for the wonderful prelude, Kate Wolf's Give yourself to love. When I was in college in the late 60's in the Bay Area, Kate was a frequent performer at local coffee houses and pubs. I heard her several times at the Cotati Inn. This song I believe speaks directly to our Way of Love practice; if you do not know the song, I hope you add it to your library. When Bishop Prior chose this song for our recent convention and a blog of his, we shared our appreciation of her work. As I suspect Kate knew well, if it isn't about Love, it is not about God.

In the gospel we hear 'were our hearts not burning within us' as the disciples began to share their experience with the Risen Christ on the road that day.

Imagine for a moment times in your life when, as the Celtic would say, you experienced a thin place, and the recognition of the Holy in some indescribable way was overwhelming for you, rushing over you like the wind, or sending chills up your spine. It might have been listening to a piece of music as we did earlier, taking a hike in the wilderness as John Muir often described, "At the touch of this divine light, the mountains seemed to kindle to a rapt, religious consciousness, and stood hushed like devout worshippers waiting to be blessed." or in our regular worship together.. a moment perhaps where you were overwhelmed by Grace, or intuition, or memory.

Several years ago, several of us, some from Saint John's, were invited to a gathering of the Justice and Peace commission of The Episcopal Church at a meeting in Wayzata, at the Cenacle. There were Episcopalians from all over North, South and

Central America, and we prayed, discerned, and planned for creating a culture of peace.

Before lunch, we shared Eucharist, and Steve Charleston, member of the Choctaw Nation, then the Vicar of Holy Trinity/Saint Anskar in the West Bank, celebrated. Steve as most of you know shortly thereafter was elected the Bishop of Alaska, became Dean of EDS and is currently semi-retired.

Steve, asked us to set our BCP aside, and gathered us together around the altar as he retold the story of the last supper in the upper room. In a slow, intentional storytelling manner he was able to move me, and I suspect every one in that room to a time over 2,000 years past, to a place and time as if we were there present with Jesus, as he walked toward his certain murder. Now, I am certain Steve violated every rubric in the BCP, and missed most of the key required words, however that Eucharist was for me the most significant of my life thus far. I was moved in time to be present at that table along with everyone in that room. Every time I see Steve, we will speak briefly of that day.

Imagine for a moment Holy experiences in your life that you will never forget.

One of the important powers of ritual practice, or worship, is to recreate mythic times and spaces as sacred, as “something basically and totally different” than our profane, normal world.

Mircea Eliade, philosopher and theologian wrote that all rituals at their core are reenactments of the primordial deeds performed by God or mythical ancestors during the period of creation. In imitating these original events it is as if they were happening once again, and we release some of the potent, transformative power that was present at the very beginning of the world. Through ritual and worship, we are able to re-create the world, re-sacralizing time and begin anew, each ritual restoring freshness and strength to a broken world.

The Abrahamic religions have a more historical, linear view of time than some faiths. When a Christian participates in the Eucharist or a Jew in the Seder, or a Muslim in Hajj, they are reliving the original Last Supper, Exodus, or stories of one of the 5 Pillars of Islam. It is an experience of ritual remembering that connects the community of faith not only to the original story, the original actors, but to all those who have performed the same ritual throughout the ages, including in present time. Our worship integrates past and present providing us with a sense of connectedness, we might say that profane time is subordinated and a sacred, eternal time emerges.

Thomas Merton wrote in his memoirs of a time before he took his final vows. He was traveling in Cuba with friends, discerning if the monastic life was God's call to him. As he walked along early one Sunday Morning he heard the bells of a local church attached to an orphanage and school, and he stepped in to worship, kneeling to pray. He wrote the following of that experience...

Before any head was raised the clear cry of the brother in the brown robe cut through the silence with the words 'yo credo'... I believe which immediately all the children took up after him with such loud and strong and clear voices and such unanimity and such meaning and fervor that something went off inside me like a thunderclap, and without seeing or apprehending anything through any of my senses I knew with the most absolute and unquestionable certainty that before me, between me and the alter, was the same God in all his essence, God surrounded by the radiant faces of the thousands, the millions, the uncountable number of saints contemplating his glory and praising his holy name. The unshakable certainty, the clear and immediate knowledge, that heaven was right in front of me struck like a thunderbolt and went through me like a flash of lighting and seemed to lift me clean up off the earth. Thomas Merton: The story of a Vocation

Listen again to the words of Kate Wolf: what brings each of us to this place today?

what brings us together here has blessed us all today.

Love has made a circle that holds us all inside.

Where strangers are as family, loneliness can't hide.

The Isaiah message for today calls us to yet another level of understanding... one greater perhaps than worship or ritual itself, but to the path of justice and righteousness.

Maintain Justice, and do what is right...

Do not the foreigner joined to the community say I will be separated

Do not let eunuch who keep my sabbath be removed

My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people

This is strong language from Isaiah. It is not merely a mild subtle suggestion about what the complexion of the worshipping community should be; and, clearly, it is not a country club invitation to a luncheon. It is rather a clear call for us to recognize and to embrace the fullness of God's loving community. It is a call to resistance, as John Dominic Crossan writes, to resist the brutal normalcy of civilization. It is a notion of God that Gutierrez, liberation theologian, calls the God of Life, a God who opposes oppression of all kinds, including the grinding down of the poor by unjust economic and political systems and the wreckage of habitats and life cycles of living species.

To the eunuch, who historically had been excluded from worship we might understand this as all those that are not just like us. God promises full inclusion to the outsiders, refugees, immigrants, LGBTQ and more; God would include these even more importantly even than family members, sons or daughters.

God, and later Jesus, invites those from the margins to the center of the covenant, to the center of Israel's cultural and worshipping communities.

The Way of Jesus asks each of us, "when was the last time that anything even close to the experiences of the early church has happened in the American Church" in our time?

Consider the conditions of the people of the way in the period immediately following the resurrection of Christ, in historical fact, as they were underground church. Place those historical conditions in our own time:

On your way to church do you check to see if you are being followed? Do we secretly hide our prayers of the people from the media? Do we share a common purse? Do we worry if our sermons or letters might show up on Wikileaks. Do we worry that perhaps ICE might break into our worship to check the immigration status of our members? And if they did, how would we respond?

When we worship, and as the PB clearly states it should be weekly, I suggest there are four core elements of our experience. We have the opportunity in community to share and to remember our sacred stories in word, music and eucharist; secondly together we recreate sacred space and time in a profane world, and thirdly actively co create with God a beloved community, the reign of heaven, justice and reconciliation. Finally as both Anne Lamont and Meister Eckart have suggested we pray: Wow, Thanks, and Help.

As we practice and experience fully the 7 aspects of the Way: Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, Rest we will more abundantly recognize what it means to live fully into our Baptismal Promises, to unconditionally love one another, to more fully love God, and follow the way of Jesus.

As the Presiding Bishop Micael Curry writes, The Jesus Movement is not a fanciful if inspiring notion for the moment. It is not a quick fix for a long-term problem. It is

a solemn call to return, to reclaim the deepest roots of who we are as followers of Jesus Christ, and thereby to reorient ourselves in a time of profound disorientation.

Curry, Michael B. Following the Way of Jesus

Amen