

Heidi preached at the Easter Vigil, and I have been meditating on this passage for the past week:

I remember years ago when I was practicing medicine in Flint, Michigan. Everywhere I went back then I saw billboards and bumper-stickers proclaiming "I Found It." And I couldn't help but think that this was the wrong way around. It should have been "It found me." Because that is the way that first Easter story went – Jesus found his followers, when they did not even know to search.

Jesus will find us... we cannot hide. God is present, whether bidden or not.

We hear in today's Gospel from John the traditional Easter 1 story of doubting Thomas. This is the third time that John has called out Thomas...first in the raising of Lazarus, the last of Jesus signs, where he promises eternal life. Thomas was confused, to say the least, assuming that Jesus was calling them all to death.

The second encounter with Thomas was the passage we hear often at funerals, 'in my fathers house there are many rooms', that Jesus is preparing a room and will take us with him. Jesus is attempting to calm the frightened anxious disciples with 'you know the way to the place where I am going, to which Thomas replies 'Lord we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way? Jesus responds famously, I am the way, the truth and the life.

We hear the third encounter today, 8 days after the resurrection. Jesus specifically finds Thomas; we experience the drama with Thomas fulfilling his need to feel Jesus pain, his wounds, the light finally goes on for Thomas as Jesus in frustration calls him to believe. My Lord and My God...

Jesus lovingly with some sarcasm responds "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

The Thomas trilogy highlights John's narrative of Jesus's concern, how do people come to faith? Or to Heidi's point, where does Jesus find us. Jesus comes back to the upper room specifically for Thomas...for one person, and relates with Thomas where he is.... that Thomas may come to believe, and may have life eternal.

Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit priest, scientist and mystic, writes in his *Mass of the World*, *When Christ comes to one of his faithful it is not simply in order to commune with him as an individual... the entire realm of matter 'creation' is slowly but irresistibly affected by this great consecration.*

Just as Jesus found and interrupted Thomas, we too are interrupted: in upper rooms, shady oak trees, riverbanks and swamps, deserts and barren wilderness, watching the countless stars in the sky, burning bushes, voice of the whirlwind, and welcoming perfect strangers. When people want to experience creation Jesus teaches to pay attention to the lilies of the field, the birds of the air, to women kneading bread and workers lining up for their compensation.

Barbara Brown Taylor, priest and theologian writes: “To make bread or love, to dig in the earth, to feed an animal or cook for a stranger require no commentary, no lucid theology. All they require is someone willing to bend, rake, weed, paint, teach, chop, stir. These tasks are so full of pleasure that there is no need to complicate things by calling them holy. And yet these are the actions that change lives, sometimes immediately and sometimes over time, the way dripping water changes stone. In a world where faith is often construed as a way of thinking, bodily practices remind the willing that faith is a way of life.”

We can all learn as much about the ways of God by paying attention to the world as paying attention to scripture, practicing worship, or sitting alone in meditation. Celtic Theology suggests that the book of nature is much larger and profound than the book of scriptures.

Newell, J. Philip . Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul

Why did the #MeToo movement take off so quickly in recent years in which hundreds of thousands of women came forward to speak out against abuse? Why did the Black Lives Matter protests burst onto the international stage within days of the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis? In each of these situations, deep down, we knew something sacred was at stake. And we woke up. The problem is that we keep going back to sleep, or otherwise live in ways that neglect this deep knowing.

Thus, the crises that we are in the midst of today, whether ecological, political, or societal, stem from the fact that we treat the earth and one another as less than sacred.

We know that our faith journey takes us at times to the dark places of our lives, to the brokenness in ourselves, the world around us, our trust in God. Matthew Fox teaches that we should never settle for what he calls spiritual comfort, all of the time, that it is in the darkness that the light, binds us to creation, a resurrection of new possibilities, a spirituality and a science.

I attended a recent Anglican symposium at Trinity College to hear our friend Charles and others speak on creation care....it was intense and touched me deeply. Of note was a comment from Jacob Sherman, Professor of Philosophy, Cosmology and Consciousness at California Institute of integral studies... the multitude of creatures are created by God to demonstrate God's love, creation is fully necessary to demonstrate God's love...

Things are not as they are because they have to be, but because God first loved them into being, continues to sustain them by this love, and will yet somehow transform them further in love.

God is a great underground river
that no one can dam up
and no one can stop....
Now God creates all things
but does not stop creating.
God forever creates
and forever begins to create
and creatures are always being created
and in the process of beginning to be created.
God finds joy and rapture in us. Meister Eckhart

Celtic Spirituality teaches that we limit our inner spiritual development without outer experience.....When we experience a flower, a butterfly, a tree, when we feel the cold winds or the warm evening breeze flow over us or we wade in a stream of clear water, our natural human response is immediate, intuitive, transforming, perhaps ecstatic.

John Muir: Holy Men, knowing full well his early challenges with native peoples....
"People talk about creation as a remote fact of history, as if it were something that was attended to a long time ago, and finished at the time. But creation was not an act; it is a process; and it is going on to-day as much as it ever was.

Nature is not in a hurry. With God 'a thousand years is as a day. God was and is creating a world of beauty, of seas and mountains, of flowers and forests, of song-birds and men. The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness; In God's wildness is the hope of the world...God's love is manifest in the landscape...

Teddy Roosevelt wrote of his experience camping at El Capitan with Muir: *"It was like lying in a great solemn cathedral, far vaster and more beautiful than any built by the hand of man."*

"We have become great because of the lavish use of our resources. But the time has come to inquire seriously what will happen when our forests are gone, when the coal, the iron, the oil, and the gas are exhausted, when the soils have still further impoverished and washed into the streams, polluting the rivers, denuding the fields and obstructing navigation."

Following the path of Jesus, the Way of Love, being available and trusting the experience of the sacred in all things has deep implications for saving this fragile Earth our island home. Theologian Sallie McFague, in *Super, Natural Christians: How We Should Love Nature*, writes: “We will not save what we do not love, and we cannot love what we do not know. Eco-theologian’s warn us that an absence of a deep spiritual relationship with creation will be a basic flaw in our efforts to adjust our impact on the natural world.

Next week several of our beloved youth will be confirmed by the bishop at St Mark’s. They along with all who attend will be asked to renew their Baptismal Vows as we all did together at the Easter Services. We know the church moves slowly... liturgy sadly slowest of all... nevertheless, we are close to adding one more commitment to our covenant....

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention authorize the trial addition to the Baptismal Covenant of a sixth question concerning our responsibility as baptized Christians to care for God’s creation; and be it further

Resolved, That the additional question and response be worded as follows:

“Will you cherish the wondrous works of God, and protect the beauty and integrity of all creation?”

We are blessed to have brothers and sisters in our community who are with God’s help committed to protect the beauty and integrity of all creation....

We are also blessed to have the Eco Fair and the Earth Matters Team, Doug, Sarah, Diane and a host of others....

Gardening group list... Ivy Booth, Darby Ringer, Sarah Parker, Erica Seavey, Susan Tapp, Ginni Jacobson, Betty Moe, Geri Lukaska, Pat White, Diane Erdmann, Jane Gilgun, Mary Corlett, Jeff Halvecek

Outside these doors is a bucket of sacred ground, earth from this sacred land that Saint John's buildings rest upon. It has been blessed over time, long before our residence, by the many hands that have dug, trimmed, planted, weeded, watered, pruned, and raked.

I am asking you after our worship has ended to place your hands into this sacred ground, consider for a moment Thomas touching the sacred. I am also asking you to bless this soil with your hands, and in this season of resurrection consider what blessings it might provide.

Thinking of our friend Don Hawkinson, agitator in chief, what if this soil were used by SJ to build raised gardens and create a community vegetable garden on our sacred corner. What if these gardens were available for all who pass by to share in the blessed tasks of digging, planting, weeding, watering, harvesting, and consuming. Imagine the fruits of these labors donated to food shelters, FNG, others.

In a short while we will once again break bread together....

Thich Naht Hanh who recently passed away, wrote regarding Teilhard de Chardin Cosmic Mass of the World:

'Take, eat, drink, my friends, this is my flesh, this is my blood'

Can there be any more drastic language in order to wake you up? What could Jesus have said that is better than that?

This piece of bread is the body of the whole cosmos. Christ is the body of God, the bread he offers is also the body of the cosmos. Look deeply and you notice the sunshine in the bread, the blue sky in the bread, the cloud and the great earth in the bread. Can you tell me what is not in a piece of bread? The whole cosmos has come together in order to bring to you this piece of bread. You eat it in such a way that you come alive, truly alive.

Practice resurrection....