



The Inclusive Community

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Discipleship

July 4, 2010

Luke: 10 1-11 16-20 Isaiah 66:10-14

Homily of Terry and Fred Quinn

Terry: One of the most important things a teacher must do is prepare well for whatever she/he is teaching. That involves drawing up a clear plan and then imparting that plan step by step to the students. Jesus, our ultimate teacher, today lays out a plan for his disciples as they go out to live and proclaim the Good News---the message that the kingdom of God is very near ---as near as yourself and every creature, every living thing, every part of the universe.

Notice that Jesus, like all good teachers, has an important theme that runs through his message---the theme of peace. Exude peace, even if you don't encounter it---embrace it and send it out from you, and it will come back to you---for peace is pervasive and enveloping.

He tells them to eat with the people they encounter, eating the food that is prepared for them. Jesus spent a lot of time eating with people, knowing that around the table as one shares food, one also shares himself, herself and in the conviviality of conversation, connections can be made---understanding can evolve. Since these disciples going out to spread the good news of the kin-dom (the kingdom within) were most probably Jewish, they would probably have had to acclimate themselves to eating foods they were not accustomed to in unfamiliar non-Jewish territory. Jesus (like a teacher or parent) is kind of saying, "Eat what's put before you. Be convivial." Jesus of course never excluded anyone from the table---whether they believed as he did or not. Nor did he ask questions before he would eat with them, or suggest that they were not worthy. Mangia! Mangia! And we'll come together in the breaking of the bread and the spirit of our connections will evolve and strengthen us and the world around us and we will experience God.

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The plan was one of acceptance, of peace, not one of subjugation or power or with the cudgel of fear ---of not satisfying an overhead judgmental God, or of subservience to a priest, or special envoy consecrated in some special way. Those who were sent out were men AND women with a plan that was one of appreciation and respect for the land they were visiting, for the people there---for the nearness of the divine in all their encounters. For the land is truly "our land" and the connections we make are truly holy ones. Peace. The experience of God ---as Isaiah said, "flows like a river."

Fred's story today is a true story, of a man, a disciple in so many ways ---one who saw the divine in everything, and sought to bring it to others---one who reminds us that our discipleship includes not just those we see every day, but OUR LAND---the people in it and the environment of the whole world.

Fred:

Perhaps only a few of us have ever heard the name John Muir. Yet this man is responsible in no small way for our appreciation of nature and the protection of our natural treasures in this great country. He fell in love with nature and spent most of his life living in the mountains that inspired him, mountains, that he said, whose "beauty and glorious colors light open a thousand windows to show us God."

He was born in Scotland in 1838 and died at the age of 76 in 1914. He enrolled at the University of Wisconsin at the age of 22 and took some courses in geology and botany. In 1866 he was working as an industrial engineer in a plant that manufactured carriage parts, but after a year an accident changed the course of his life. A tool that he was working with slipped and struck him in the eye. For six weeks he was confined to a darkened room wondering if he would regain his sight. When he did, he saw the world and his purpose in it in a new light. He resolved to "be true to himself" and follow his dream of exploration and study of plants.

John undertook a walk of 1000 miles from Indiana to Florida going by, as he put it, "the wildest, leafiest untrodden way. He then made his way to California, where he set out for Yosemite. He describes his journey with these words, "The landscapes of the Santa Clara Valley were drenched in sunshine, the air was quivering with the songs of meadowlarks, and the hills were so covered with flowers that they seemed to be painted. He knew that Yosemite was to the East and that he would surely find it. Eventually he saw a landscape that was the most beautiful he had ever seen. It was the most famous and accessible of the canyon valleys---the sublime Yosemite where every rock on its walls seemed to glow with life. The Valley looked like an immense temple lighted from above."

Muir spent a good part of the rest of his life living in the mountains, publishing in his lifetime writings and magazine articles all expressing his love for the wilderness. In 1892 a group of distinguished citizens approached Muir with the idea of establishing a local “alpine” club for nature lovers and thus the first meeting of the *Sierra Club* was held and Muir was elected President, and would remain in that position for 22 years until his death. The Club was successful in the campaign to transfer Yosemite from state to federal control in 1906. Today there are 1.3 million members. His writings were to have a lasting effect on American culture in helping create the desire and will to protect and preserve wild and natural environments. Visitors to the valley included scientists, artists, and celebrities and even president Teddy Roosevelt who spent an entire day with him in the Valley. On excursions into the back country of Yosemite he traveled alone, carrying a tin cup, a handful of tea, a loaf of bread and a copy of Emerson. He was an avid reader of naturalist author Ralph Waldo Emerson who visited him in the mountains with academic friends from the Boston area. Emerson was delighted at the end of his career to find the spiritual naturalist he had envisioned long ago. For Muir the visit was a great encouragement to continue to do what he was doing. Emerson offered him a teaching position at Harvard, which he declined. Muir later wrote, “I never for a moment thought of giving up God’s big show for a mere professorship.”

During his career as writer and while living in the mountains, Muir continued to see the presence of the divine in nature. He published over 300 articles and 12 books. He has been called “The Patron Saint of the American wilderness.” His eloquent words changed the way Americans saw their mountains, forests, seashores and deserts. His writings have helped people develop a conception of the relationship between human culture and wild nature as one of humility and respect for all life.

In his later years he would use the metaphor of nature as home to promote wilderness preservation. He wrote, “Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home, that mountain parks are fountains of life.”

In the months after his death, many who knew Muir closely, wrote about his influence. Robert Johnson, editor of *Century Magazine* which published many of his articles, wrote that “the world will look back to the time we live in and remember the voice of one crying in the wilderness and bless the name of John Muir... “His countrymen owe him gratitude as the pioneer of our system of national parks.... His writings and enthusiasm were the chief forces that inspired the movement. All the other torches were lighted from his.”

When we think of the 72 disciples sent out by Jesus we can see the similarities to John Muir, Isn’t the message of peace, of the divine presence evident in all of these disciples? Can we, each in our own way be today’s disciples-- remembering that peace

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flows like a river and that divine connections are as near as the land and the people we meet each day.