

YORKMINSTER PARK REFLECTS

Friday, July 3, 2015

A Reflection from Inga Fjuk

"At the age of eighteen he experienced a profound conversion, that is, a radical change of mind and heart when he saw a bare tree in the middle of winter standing gaunt and leafless in the snow. Anticipating the miracle of that same tree burgeoning with new life the following spring (he) was overwhelmed by 'a high view of the providence and power of God' which never left him and which kindled in him an intense love for God."

Introduction to The Practice of the Presence of God – Brother Lawrence 1611-1691

A few weeks ago in Peter's sermon on creation he talked about how often Jesus chose to be in nature when he communed with His Father. I have read the stories many times... Jesus on the lake, in a boat with his disciples, Jesus getting up early and going outside to pray, using nature references in His teachings... rocks and soil, sparrows and lilies. But suddenly I realized as never before how much nature, creation, was part of Jesus' life. So how much more do I need to pay attention, and care about God's creation!

I read an article by David Rhoades, Professor at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, who helpfully explains that a steward is not "an owner, but one who has responsibility to an owner to treat property with care and respect." And this applies to creation, as much as any other gifts I have been given... talents, money, possessions, time.

But this can seem like such an impossible task. What can I possibly do to make any kind of difference? I am often in such despair when I read about and see the terrible ways we have destroyed God's wonderful gift to us. Global warming, pollution, soil depletion, forests destroyed... the list goes on. And I see what terrible consequences there are to so many millions of people all over the world. What can one person possibly do? There are some people who have been given a great gift and a calling to speak out about these things and they are able to make significant changes. I think we should as much as possible support them, encourage them, and pray for them. But what about me? What about you? In the same article David Rhoades reminds us that each of us has "a small piece of creation". So I ask "what is my small piece of creation for which I am responsible?"

My little part has often involved food, feeding people, as some of you know. Jesus shared food with others as well, blessing the little boy's home made picnic, eating with friends, symbolically sharing a meal with his disciples. Food is a gift, part of God's creation, to be treated with reverence: respecting and caring for the earth that provides it: honouring those who grow, harvest and provide. Sharing freely with others. Always with thanksgiving and always keeping in mind those who have none. I believe it is good to eat seasonally and locally as much as possible. To eat simply – Michael Pollan says (and I really like this) "eat food, not too much, mostly vegetables" – and with a thankful heart.

Peter talked about "nature deficient disorder." May I, and all of us, spend time often in quiet communion and contemplation of nature, God's creation (If Jesus needed to do this, how much more do we!). And as a bare tree spoke so eloquently to Brother Lawrence, may we let His Spirit touch us through His wonderful gifts and may we

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treat them with care and respect. One more thought. It is good to appreciate and thank God for his wonderful gifts in creation. But sometimes I just feel a bit uneasy about how I am so much affected by the weather, by what's going on in nature... the sun is shining, it is mild, no icy sidewalks, no freezing rain, or strong winds... I am full of joy. Then I find myself thinking about Paul and Silas "... after they had been severely flogged they were thrown into prison... about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the other prisoners were listening to them." (Acts 16)

I want my true joy to come from the Lord, no matter what the weather or my circumstances. May creation always bring me back to the Creator.

Once more Brother Lawrence:

"The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clutter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament."