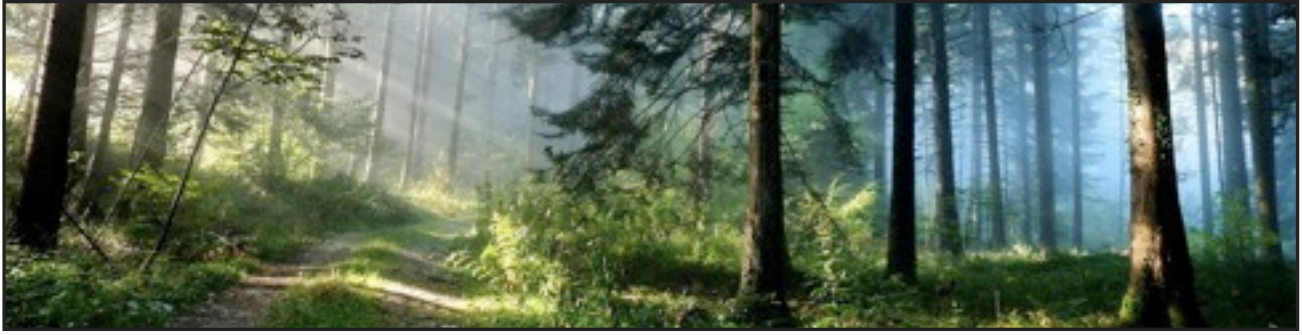


LET THE SPIRIT BREATHE . . .



JESUS SAID, "I AM THE WAY . . ."

Lord, the witness of your life and teachings direct my path. I pray that through your Holy Spirit your words, your lessons will stir my soul and define my ministry. Amen

This month . . . Reflections on ✧ Following Jesus ✧

"Christian character cannot be formed without a kind of thinking that strains the soul." (Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*)

Our spiritual life is grounded in relationship with the Divine: God's relationship to us and our response to God, a formative process of stretching and straining our souls, to become conformed in the image of Christ through the Holy Spirit. "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." (Phillipians 2:5) As we align ourselves with the mind of Christ we come to know our identity, our purpose. Our travel map for our pilgrimage is described in the scripture from John 14:6 as Jesus responds to the question, "How can we know the way?" His reply . . . "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Jesus didn't chart our route or give us an itinerary, but clearly proclaimed, "I AM THE WAY." We set out on our spiritual journey with unmistakable clarity as to whom our guide is, envisioning the possibilities and potentials of sacramental living as the Holy Spirit moves within us. Ours is a journey of trust where God meets us in the ordinary of every day life. As with the rich young ruler (Mark 10:19) Jesus invites, "Come follow me." He asks for whole-hearted commitment, not just when it is convenient or to our advantage but selflessly responding as the Holy Spirit directs our paths in response and ministry. Christ's mission becomes our mission, Spirit led, as we "invite people to Christ, abolish poverty, end suffering, pursue peace, develop disciples to serve and experience congregations in mission." (Community of Christ Mission Initiatives)

A Look Within

"Meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." 1 Timothy 4:15

Read the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5:1-11. Reflect on your attitudes and behaviors in light of the Beatitudes. What have you discovered about yourself? Are you being drawn into a greater desire or need to align your life to these teachings?

Meditate on these thoughts:

God comes, looking for a people to call His own, a people to be shaped and formed in God's own image: loving, wise, compassionate and peaceful.

The people of God are you and me. We come in all colors, with different ways of seeing our Creator. Sometimes we agree, and sometimes we don't. But we are the body of Christ.

We are the people of God's image. We are called to be an example for the whole world of how to live life together. How do we do that here and now?

We are the people of God's image. Look into the mirror. What do you see? You . . . You are . . . You are a person of God's image . . . What do you see?

Worship Feast: Readings, pp. 93-94 adapted

Spiritual Reflections
July 2011
Harriet White, Evangelist



IN THE GARDEN . . .

The symbolism associated with the spiral is Balance, Progress, Direction, Initiation, Centering, Expanding, Awareness, Connection, Journeying, Development.

The Narrow Path

“Scripturally speaking, the spiritual life is simply the increasing vitality and sway of God’s spirit in us.” Marjorie J. Thompson

Recently I read an article about Father John Dear, who through non-violent means has spent thirty years of peace activism against organized military violence. In his 2006 documentary, “The Narrow Path”, he describes an experience that brought him from the margins of peace activism to the high-risk commitment of total public involvement in the cause against violence. He relates that his journey started with a pilgrimage to Israel in 1982. At that time it was the height of that country’s first war with Lebanon. He was at the Chapel of the Beatitudes overlooking the Sea of Galilee, reflecting on the beatitudes when the truth of Jesus’ sermon hit him. He knew he had to follow the reality of Christ’s teachings. He was frightened by the enormity of such a commitment and felt he had to ask God for a sign to strengthen his resolve. Instantly Israeli fighter jets screamed closely overhead, their destination Lebanon. The priest said that it was at that moment he decided to take Jesus at his word . . . blessed are the peacemakers. This, relates Father John, was a moment of conversion, the beginning of his story, his journey.

What is our story, our journey, individually and collectively? Jesus said, “I am the way.” Will we take him at his word, living out his mission?

Our spiritual journey requires we narrow our path, inviting a process of transformation . . . deepening our relationship with God so that we begin to choose God’s ways and purposes as our own.

Reflection moment . . .

“Examination of the world without is never as personally painful as examination of the world within . . . Yet when one is dedicated to the truth this pain seems relatively unimportant.” M. Scot Peck
“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalms 139:23-34



Breathe into me, Holy Spirit,
that my thoughts may all be holy.

Move in me, Holy Spirit,
that my work, too, may be holy.

Attract my heart, Holy Spirit,
that I may love only what is holy.

Strengthen me, Holy Spirit,
that I may defend all that is holy.

Protect me, Holy Spirit,
that I may always be holy.

Prayer of St. Augustine

Scripture focus:

“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you are called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.” Ephesians 4:1-6

“Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interest of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.” Phillipians 2:4-5

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Luke 4:18-19

“Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” Mark 8:34

In perspective . . .

“Only by walking with God can we hope to find the path that leads to life. That is what it means to be a disciple. After all—aren’t we ‘followers of Christ’? Then by all means, let’s actually follow him. Not ideas about him. Not just his principles. Him.” ~ John Eldredge, *Waking the Dead*, p. 97