



Harmony

Reflect on the word Harmony. Take a few moments to think, to hope and to pray about how God might create harmony in your life. How might your reflection shape you, change you and join you and Christ together? After you have taken a few minutes to reflect here, turn the page and read further.

The First Day of Lent - Ash Wednesday

February 17, 2010

Invocation

*So many claims compete for our attention, O God;
They pull us in so many different directions.
Help us to find the place of peace, the point of view
that will allow moments of harmony in our lives:
singing in a choir...knitting...
photographing something beautiful...
a family time filled with love -
so that these may be the dominant colors in the fabric of our lives.*
- Dr. William Longworth

Reflection

"Let anyone with ears, listen!"

- Matthew 13:9

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the forty-day pilgrimage through the season of Lent. Every year, for hundreds of years, it has been a journey shared by Christians around the world. At the far end of the journey, we are promised the resurrection of Easter and new life in Christ. But what does this mean for us now, in early 2010? We, who have lived in a time of unprecedented productivity, have become a people burdened with impatient desires. Ironically, our focus on efficiency and quick results has shackled us to our busy treadmills. We get stuck in our own personal ways of avoidance and denial. Too often, our culture convinces us to follow a way of false highs and lows that do not reflect or feed true life. We settle for "going through the motions" and living a life that threatens to become absurd. Instead, we need "ears of the heart" to truly listen! The Way of the Cross is real and honest. It is rooted and grounded in God's love and compassion. And it does not shy away from nor deny what is rugged, messy... and painful. The promise of Easter is that all voices - the most joyous and most deeply disturbed - are heard. And through being heard and held in God's loving grace, we are given new life and are awakened to a Divine Indwelling. Through the experience of being heard, we hear that we are called to rise and sing with a new harmony. We are formed and transformed through God's loving grace. As the song "Amazing Grace" bears witness: though once blind, we now see. There is a hidden

wholeness in all of God's Creation. Open your eyes to truly see! Listen for the harmony in your heart! The journey is now!

Hymn

*"Silently now I wait for thee,
Ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes,
Illumine me, Spirit divine!"*
"Open My Eyes, That I May See"
United Methodist Hymnal, #454

Benediction

*May you be enriched by your observance of Lent,
and may God fill your heart and mind with
wisdom, love and understanding. Amen.*

Your reflections...

The Second Day of Lent

Thursday, February 18, 2010

"But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

– Matthew 6:6

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

– Matthew 6:19-21

Whether you began this season with an ashen mark of the cross on your forehead, the Lenten journey begins with humbly acknowledging our human limitations. However, this is also a journey of awakening. As we are honest with ourselves about how our "unholy habits" weigh us down, we can be freed from those burdens to discover our deepest desires. As we join with others in communities to "listen for the heartbeat of God," we discover that our deepest desires indeed fit with God's "love longings" for us. God's desire for us is that we awaken to that underlying harmony that weaves throughout all life. It is a deep peace, a Shalom... that passes all understanding.

In this reading in Matthew 6, we are clearly told not to pray for show and earthly reward. Our prayers need to bring us humbly before God. At times it helps to explore what this means in solitude and in secret. But we also need caring communities where we can be vulnerably honest and prayerfully present with one another. Anam Cara or soul friend is an ancient tradition in Celtic Christianity, and offers us a deep and powerful way to join with fellow pilgrims for the journey. Listen with the ears of your heart. Are you noticing some fitting ways you might be called to join with others on this Lenten Journey? Might there be new and holy harmonies to discover together? How are you being called, right now, to be part of the Body of Christ?

Your reflections. . .

The Third Day of Lent

Friday, February 19, 2010

*"Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near."*

- Joel 2:1

*"Yet even now, says the LORD,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the LORD, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love."*

- Joel 2:12-13

In Ecclesiastes, and in real life, there is a time for everything under heaven. This includes times of discord and dying. Sometimes we must grieve and let go. In the 1500s, St. John of the Cross wrote of "the dark night of the soul." It can be a difficult and lonely time. But when we find true soul friends, we learn and grow into a sacred trust that the darkest of nights will lead to the dawn of Easter. What has helped you through the dark times in your life? What will help you hear the sounds of God's holy and healing presence now? Where are you being called to offer that prayerful presence to others?

Your reflections. . .

The Fourth Day of Lent

Saturday, February 20, 2010

*"Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions."*

– Psalm 51: 1

*"Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit."*

– Psalm 51:10-12

Parker Palmer writes: "Vocation does not come from willfulness. It comes from listening. I must listen to my life and try to understand what it is truly about. The word vocation itself, is rooted in the Latin for 'voice.' Vocation does not mean a goal that I pursue. It means a calling that I hear."

How might you listen for the deeper and truer life waiting to be discovered within you? How can you nurture and follow that way that leads to the fullness of life here and now... and what Jesus calls Life Eternal? What do you need to help sustain your "willing spirit"?

Your reflections. . .

The First Sunday in Lent

February 21, 2010

Celebrating the Spiritual Disciplines: *Fasting*

Throughout the Bible, fasting refers to the abstaining from food for spiritual reasons. There are certainly instances of fasts from all food, but it is recommended that anyone who considers fasting from all food recognize that water is essential if such a practice is implemented.

As a spiritual discipline, particularly a spiritual discipline practiced during Lent, many Christians opt to fast from a specific item – usually an item that is very tempting to them.

When we set aside or give something up for Lent, we have created a time to concentrate on our spiritual life and heighten our dependence upon God. Fasting helps us to maintain balance in our lives, and maintain focus on our relationship with God.

Consider some of the ways that nonessentials take precedence in your life. What are some of the things that fasting would bring into focus in your life?

*This Lenten season
Create in me...Harmony,
And now bring me to Purpose
That I may seek God's will
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*