

Oct 1, 2023

Pr. Steve

Texts: Jonah 3: 10-4; Psalm 8; Philippians 2: 1-5; Matthew 5: 4

In the name of God, Abba/Imma, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

There is a friend of Peace who has always had a special relationship with animals, especially dogs, and in retirement worked for various animal shelters, and had this special gift for connecting dogs with their new human friends. It was a magical gift.

One day [he was] sitting in the backyard, morning time, reading the newspaper, enjoying a good cup of coffee, when he looked over at his dog who always sat next to him. And they locked eyes, and he felt and saw the whole universe. It just opened in vastness and infinity. And it felt so warm and connected. It wasn't that long—he has no idea about what length of time—but [it] never happened again. But the sense of contentment and connection was utterly profound. He said he's never really been able to tell that to too many other people...And what the dog experienced, we don't know.

Ken told me this week that he's noticed how all of the plants which come from friends and members of Peace do so well here, especially in contrast to the plants that come from nurseries. Now, usually they're a bit older, and perhaps hardier and stronger, but the key difference is they've been cared for. That's what our grounds are revealing: the love of all of you for the plants and all these dimensions of creation. Thank you. *Look at the love. Look at the love.*

Saint Francis was cherished because he cherished everything—the cosmos, the elements, the creatures, the plants, the trees, the rivers. He could never get enough of all of it. He lived in relationship with everything. He lived in a sacred relationship with everything. He lived in a sacred and familial relationship with everything.

And that is the radical shift which we must engage today--that the earth is a space of sacred presence where we get to commune, in awe and wonder with the beauty of it all. And in the intimacy that we can have with God right here. That's why the earth was given us. Here—not someday, somewhere else—here, the Word made flesh, made real, made incarnate with us.

We are entering what's called the Ecozoic age, the Ecozoic age, which is all about the relationship of human beings and the earth. This is what's going to create the future—or stop it. So, Geologists, right? You remember that's who you are, and what you're doing here? We are all Geologists. Uh, huh... We are here to engage what it is to live in that sacred relationship, and to educate others how to enjoy and appreciate the sanctity inside of which we live.

When we feel cut off from nature, human beings start playing little gods. *'Yeah, 'cuz the earth, you know, it's just a commodity, right? And we get to consume it however we like. It's not a home in which to commune with our God and each other, and all the creatures.'*

Just a couple of weeks ago. We were all invited to a SCOCO dinner—Sustainable Contra Costa annual dinner. It was fabulous—Libby, and Jim, and Michelle and I got to go. It was an evening of nothing but none-stop inspirational stories about all of the incredibly creative things that are

going on right now in our [Contra Costa] County: people working with water, and wastewater, energy, gardens, education, politics, agendas, the young people. Such inspiring hope—endlessly—a whole evening of it!

I see the blank faces right now, going, *'That can't be. It can't be that much fun. Is there that much good stuff going on? Is there?'* Yes, there is. It's incredible. (Next year, we're all going.) 15 years they've been at it. It is stunning!

And, we have one more gift or dimension to offer, and that is the sanctity of this relationship. Because if these are only projects, and we determine their value by whether we get a turn or change that we need, if it's only driven by political agendas, we become desperate, don't we? We're not in it for the long haul. The temptation to despair is too great. But when we're in relationship, we're in it for the long haul. And normally we don't give up on families—sometimes, but—yeah, we're in it together.

And this is where Saint Francis has given us another gift of just divine simplicity. Here's how we begin to encourage it in ourselves. And that is everything, every element of the creation he saw as brother or sister.

*'Brother Sun, another day. We get to be alive. Wow!'*

*'Brother Fire, you seem to be raging these days, terrifying us. Brother, what must we do together to change and heal? Brother, we're in this together. Speak to us, in ways we understand.'*

*'Sister Moon.'* (Can you imagine life without the moon—that quiet, deep, penetrating love in our hearts—messages of hope which are unfathomable [that] just sits in the sky changing shapes?)

*'Sister Moon. Speak to me.'*

*'Sister Water. You seem to be raging to in storms and floods, overwhelming us. What must we do, Sister? Tell us, Sister, how we shall live and change and heal.'*

*'Happy are those who yield—you receive the whole earth.'* The traditional translation is basically wrong. Normally, it's *'Happy are those who are meek or mild or gentle'*, but that's just way too passive. What Jesus is praising are the strong ones. Happy are those who have the strength to destroy, but yield—who will not act aggressively—but they care for, cherish, commune with life, and all of its creatures. Because they know that, in the end, our only lasting possession is not what we've conquered, and not what we've achieved. What lasts is what we give in love and care for life.

Mind the mind of Christ.

Amen.

The peace, which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.