

March 3, 2010
Lenten Lay Reflection

Matthew 20:17-28

I participate in the First Monday Prayer Group here at St. Columba's. I often find it difficult to learn from scripture, yet because of this group, I know that it can be very powerful. We meet on the first Monday of the month for an hour where we pray and reflect on a scripture passage. The group grew out of the Discernment Ministry and has been meeting for about 5 years.

In the First Monday group, we use different models to help us engage scripture. One is the African prayer model; another is the Ignatius model where you put yourself in the bible story. When I read this passage from Matthew, I pictured myself as one of the twelve disciples; a son of Zebedee, hearing Jesus say that he will be handed over to the priests and scribes and condemned to death. And I imagined how it would feel to hear my beloved teacher, hero, spiritual leader talk about himself being killed; and in such a painful way-mocked flogged, crucified. I'm still in the shock and horror of it when my mother asks Jesus to promise that I will be saved and join him in his kingdom, guaranteeing my salvation. Frankly this part feels a bit uncomfortable, but I want to be saved. I want to be the chosen one.

And then Jesus turns to me and says "Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" This is where the story becomes personal. Jesus is speaking to me, not the son of Zebedee. And while I hear myself say "I am able", I wonder if I do know what I am saying. I've read Henri Nouwen's book, *Can You Drink The Cup* that contemplates this question. Can I take in all that it means to follow in Christ's path and with intention live into all the joy, pain and challenge that exist for me, for all humankind? Accept it. Live into it, let go of all the "stuff" of this life and following Christ's path, trusting where it will take me?

In this moment I feel Jesus' loving and piercing gaze. I cannot hide. And I am afraid. Because drinking this cup means that I stop pretending and embrace my own vulnerability. At the end of December, I quit my job. I had actually survived the acquisition of my bank by another company. I wasn't being let go. I was made a director with the promise of earning potential and job security. The job was not a fit for me and I quit at the end of the year. In some ways it wasn't even a choice. I find myself in this interesting place. I've let go of money, title, position, certainty, a destination. My children are grown and launched; on their own journeys. And here I am starting new. It is exciting. It is scary. I find that I need to ask for help, be the one without, not knowing, needing support from others. Showing my vulnerability is a hard place for me to be. I'm much better at giving help.

But I think the Spirit has been at work in my life, especially now. I hope that I am letting Christ be the potter in my spiritual journey, giving me the courage to take a leap of faith. For some time, I have felt called to serve, to integrate my spiritual life into my work and lead a more balanced life. This time of searching and living into who I am is the cup that God is offering me. Accepting and living into my own vulnerability opens me up to God and my fellow travelers. So yes, I drink this cup and embark on my journey, trusting that in my struggle, I also find hope and joy. I may get scared, but I am not alone. Christ is with me. And hopefully the journey will bring me closer to living into His courage and experiencing the promise of salvation.

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