

Becoming Docents-of-Wonder

Rev. Dan Hatch
December 30, 2018

First reading

by Beverly Lanzetta

(as quoted by Richard Rohr Dec. 10, 2018)

In nondual contemplation, the person's being radiates the nirvanic, liberating state we think of as enlightenment. The soul becomes a source and font of healing, wisdom, and transformation. Why? Our being and the divine being are consummated in such a way that the entire soul becomes a window into the holy. Contemplation is not something we do. It is a free gift of the spirit; all we can do is surrender and "let go." Every excursion into openness is a flooding in of the true self, remembering that the Divine is already within, waiting.

Second reading

Colossians 3:12-14

Eugene Peterson's *The Message*

Chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It is your basic and all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

Today is what I call a "Limbo" Sunday. It falls within Christmas-tide, that brief liturgical period with a maximum of only two "Sundays after Christmas" which has bookends of Christmas, which is the end of Advent, and January 6th, the beginning of the season of Epiphany—the supposed date of the arrival of the Three Kings with their symbolic gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. This year the First Sunday After Christmas has two unique characteristics: not only is it a fairly rare fifth Sunday of December, but it's also a fifth Sunday in December with a fifth *Saturday* in December—an extremely rare occurrence. It will be another 832 years before that happens again; enjoy it while you can!

As our Pastor David Gregory has pointed out, nothing was written about Jesus until approximately 40 years after his birth. The Gospel of Mark, the earliest Gospel, was not written until 70 AD. The Gospel of John, the fourth Gospel, was not written until about 100 years or more after Jesus' death. The only Gospels to have anything to say about Jesus' birth are the second and third Gospels of Mathew and Luke, and they do not agree at all, leading to the assumption that they are fictional, especially since it is highly unlikely that any of the four authors of the Gospels had any first-hand knowledge of Jesus.

During that first century, the organized Christian church was just beginning. It was an institution that evolved on the basis of power and control of its membership. Consequently, the foundation laid for the Christian Church was one of indoctrination of its membership, not empowerment. The increasing awareness today of the amount of sexual abuse within the Church gives sad witness to this deplorable reality. Hopefully this issue can be resolved in 2019 as we seek to make the Church more resonant with the empowerment teachings of Jesus.

Christmas, the supposed birthday of Jesus, was not designated as such until Constantine, the first Christian Roman Emperor, did so in 336 AD. December 25th was chosen during Constantine's time as the date on which to celebrate Jesus' birth based on the erroneous belief that it was the day after the Winter Solstice, and therefore symbolic of the coming of the "Light." Christ-Mass, which is where "Christmas" came from, was the only mass allowed to be celebrated after dark, and it ended after midnight, very early on Christmas morning.

So much for history! But what might this history be asking of us, the members and friends of CCC today? This is what I want to explore with you this morning within the context of the two readings I chose for today. In our first reading, Beverly Lanzetta refers to "nondual contemplation." According to my spiritual guru, Siri, this means

acquiring a mature state of consciousness, in which the dichotomy of I-other is transcended, and awareness is described as "centerless" and without dichotomies.

When this occurs, according to Beverly Lanzetta,

Our being and the divine being are consummated in such a way that the entire soul becomes a window into the Holy.

The difficult part in allowing this to happen, and our biggest challenge, is letting go of our own egos. *Nobody else can do that for us!* Beverly Lanzetta ends today's reading by saying

Every excursion into openness is a flooding in of the true self, remembering that the Divine is already within, waiting.

What does this mean for us? Only recently I asked myself the question: *What beats my heart?* So far, I have only found one answer: the Divine! When we are in the womb, our heartbeat is the first sign that others can hear and know that we are alive. It is also one of the last sounds to be heard in a dying body. If that is the case, then the Divine is not only in me, but in every other human being, animal and creature. That Divine presence is waiting for me and every other living creature, to fulfill our Divinely-given potential. It is very unlikely to happen completely within our lifetime, but as life unfolds it is an area in which we can only improve, if we seek to do so.

Actually, CCC has a rich tradition of practicing doing what Beverly Lanzetta is talking about when she states that *"Every excursion into openness is a flooding in of the true self...."* CCC has a strong foundation of spiritual diversity thanks to the incredible 25-year ministry of Rev. Frank Evans (who also had personal issues that cannot be overlooked). Frank, along with his 10-year co-minister, Carol Saysette, encouraged CCC members to explore whatever spiritual

paths they felt called to. This led to a rich tapestry of diversity within CCC which included Spirit Rock, the Enneagram, the formation of the Tribal Elders, Pilgrimage Home, the men's breakfast, guest preachers (including a Catholic nun), guest musicians playing music ranging from folk to classical sitar, Tibetan bells, a rotating juried art show every six weeks, spiritual and family retreats, and much more.

At CCC today we are continuing that tradition at a reduced level; we can do more. We have all heard of docents. Docents are those individuals who have a slightly better knowledge of any program or activity than those encountering that program or activity for the first time and wondering what it is all about. The experienced docent can serve as a "docent-of-wonder," a term I learned early this month from the Rev. Alison Harrington, pastor of the Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson, Arizona. An experienced docent-of-wonder can help focus the attention of those who are wondering, in this case, what CCC is all about. May we all strive to become CCC's docents-of-wonder in 2019 and beyond!

To prepare ourselves for this task of becoming docents-of-wonder, I would recommend following the advice of Eugene Peterson found in The Message version of Colossians 3:12-14, our second reading for today:



Chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It is your basic and all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

Have a wonderful and enriching spiritual journey as you strive to become CCC docents-of wonder in 2019!

An Irish Blessing

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at you back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
and the rains fall gently on your fields.
And until we meet again, may you be cradled
in the palm of God's hand.

