



2nd Sunday of the Epiphany, 1/15/17, Julie Gross

Good morning...

Here we are, the Second Sunday after the Epiphany. The preparation for Christmas is over! It had been going on for months in stores, online, in our heads! And now the holiday has past. Now we analyze, "How did it go?" was there enough food, did everyone get along, was the tree beautiful? Whatever the answers, we move on... We take down the decorations and put away the accumulated stuff. Hopefully our minds will find quiet, and then the real work of Christmas begins.

About ten years ago my friend and spiritual mentor, Renata, sent me a Christmas card with the following quote from Meister Eckhart, a 14th century mystic of the Dominican Order. He said, "Today we celebrate the birth of God's Son in time. It is always happening. And yet, If it does not occur in me, how could it help me?"

Meister Eckhart had a personal epiphany, a striking realization from a place of deep knowing. If this birthing of Jesus does not always happen, and in each of us, how can it help?

I still have this card...a little worn around the edges...

Another quote from Eckhart ..."We are all meant to be Mothers of God, for God is always needing to be born....The seed of the divine nature...is in us." We are all pregnant with God! And it is not only woman's work this time!

Actually, science tells us we all have the original seed, not original sin...the original seed from creation. Call it Divine DNA or stardust. That is for another time...

Eckhart reminds us that Christmas is ongoing...with the potential for the the seed of God, to evolve and grow within you, me, all life and creation. How might accepting this as truth change your life? You are never alone. The God in you is loving and forgiving. The goal is to love your neighbor and acknowledge the divine nature in everyone. Color, ethnicity, religion, sexual

orientation are insignificant. Imagine a connected world of all humanity, in which you are loved, and you are a loving member of that whole. We all share the original seed, the Divine DNA, the Kingdom of God! Jesus said to the people, "Don't say the Kingdom of God is over there or over here. No. The Kingdom of God is within you." ...the Kingdom of God is within you. That is a lot to think about! Let's get a bit more grounded...

A few examples of epiphanies... We just celebrated the finding of the baby Jesus by the three Kings. Their journey and visit with the infant signifies their belief that this was/IS no ordinary child. This was/IS God's gift to all of humanity, the birthing of God's Child into this human world, the birthing of God's Child within each of us, as in all creation. The Kings had an epiphany! After all that hard work traveling for at least months, maybe years, through a desert, following a star as best they could, speaking with the shepherds, suffering hardships in the worst of conditions, being stopped and questioned by Herod, they found a baby, the child... Jesus...maybe they held him! Imagine... Wouldn't that have been something. What would that feel like? They had an epiphany. And when they left to return home, they were not the same men. The Kings chose another path to avoid questioning by Herod. Changed men went home by another way. An epiphany requires some change in direction, whether in a physical, emotional, and/or spiritual manner.

Another example is in today's gospel. Andrew and his friend, both disciples of John the Baptist, walked behind Jesus, following him. After all, John called Jesus the "Lamb of God". What does that mean? So the two curious men followed Jesus to find out.

The gospel tells us: "When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi...where are you staying? (Can you imagine asking Him where he was living? What an ordinary conversations between strangers...)

He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

One of the two ... who followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

1:41 (Andrew)... found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah"...(Andrew had an epiphany!)

1:42 He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter)"

The three men hung out together! I wonder what they talked about? Andrew's human encounter with the human Jesus led to a trusting relationship. A powerful connection began between Andrew's brother Simon Peter and Jesus . Peter, with love and sadness over denying his relationship to Jesus three times, journeyed with him to the Cross. Jesus loved Peter. Jesus does not ask for perfection...

Another translation of Eckhart... "What good is it for me if Mary gave birth to the Son of God years ago and if I don't give birth to God's Son in my person, IN MY CULTURE, IN MY TIMES?"

We celebrate the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. today. He is a profound example of one who gave birth to God's Son in his person, IN HIS CULTURE, IN HIS TIMES?

In 1956 he was a 27 year old man from Montgomery, AL. two days into his role as pastor of the Dexter Ave. Baptist Church. He had been leading the Montgomery bus boycott. As a result, there were numerous threatening letters and late night calls to his home. One call, received in the middle of the night, specifically demanded that he, his wife, and 10 month old daughter leave town in three days or they would be killed. There would be an explosion. (Sound familiar?) It was then that Martin buried his face in his hands and prayed aloud, "Lord, I am down here trying to do what is right...But...I must confess...I am losing my courage." He later explained what happened. "I could hear an inner voice saying to me, 'Martin Luther, stand up for truth. Stand up for justice, stand up for righteousness.'" At that point, Martin had an epiphany, a dream, and followed it to his death.

With a commitment to non-violence and a deep belief that all people are of one family in God, all are children of the same Mother/Father, share the same Divine DNA, he persevered. Martin said the following in one of his speeches..."People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they have not communicated with each other." Speaking to the crowd, he said, "I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. This is our hope. This is the faith that I will go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood."

This is our prayer today as we approach the beginning of a new presidential administration after an election of anger and division. May we be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of sisterhood and brotherhood.

Of course, I will end with a poem...by Edwina Gately...

We are made holy

by our recognition

of God in us.

God is in all and everything.

But the reality of

God's presence

only comes about

through human recognition.

Ah then!

We have the power

to sacralize the world.

By Edwina Gately; There Was No Path So I Trod One (1996).