

Read [Psalm 25: 1-10](#). Please spend a few moments to meditate on the Psalm.



Richardson, Jan. Ash Wednesday Cross. Jan was a seminary classmate of mine and painted this piece after her husband Gary's untimely death. It personalizes the ancient words and the mystery that confronts and comforts us.

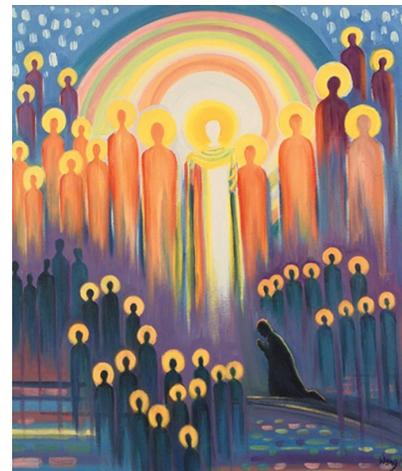
One of my high school classmates has been engaged in a spiritual journey. She has included all of her Facebook friends in her new spiritual discoveries with photos and written remembrances. [1] She is a person of privilege and came to a crossroads in her life asking, "Do I continue to use my privilege for me alone and those I care about, or is there something more?"

The answer to that question unfolded in her personal story, including success and setbacks. Recently she married a person outside of her faith tradition. She grew up a WASP in the wealthy burbs

and his life is different. Roman Catholic by birth, he is more rustic and less refined than she, but deeply spiritual. He is quite active in ministries with the marginalized through his church and started a non-profit in the community to help others. My friend decided, indeed, there is something more and she found it through him. What she found connects with the Psalmist "*Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.*" (Psalm 25:4). She is a transformed person.

There were almost 400 in our graduating class. Most of us privileged. Most have discovered that it is relatively easy to sail through life unaware of others. We are people of the 1980's – the "Me" Generation. Often, we are culturally self-centered and not competent in personal emotional intelligence. I am not sure, but if averages hold, the vast majority of us are spiritual and not religious, some are neither. Many of us make up a fast-growing list of 'Dones' [2] so there is a reason many of us miss the notion that God has gifted us in the service of creating beloved community with each other. God's gifting is a theological conversation, that even "church folk" don't always embrace either.

The Lenten Discipline calls us out of our selfishness and invites us to join something that is bigger than ourselves. What is it? you ask. It is called the Kingdom of God. And personal transformation is the way to the Kingdom. For centuries the faithful have been invited to journey up to Jerusalem, but it is a difficult and painful journey. We are invited to leave our self-centeredness along the roadside and to take up our Cross daily. That's hard to do as a 'Done'. It is hard to do even if you have had years of religious training and worshiped God all of your life. How can you be present to that awareness? The Lenten Discipline calls us to get outside of ourselves and focus on the deeper sensibilities of faith, and that is how we can do it. Our newfound awareness sets up personal transformation. For you cannot be in love with God and neglect what God has created. The tapestry of the hues of skin color, gender and culture cannot be



Wang, Elizabeth. Radiant Light, 2003.

ignored or marginalized. You cannot be in love with God and dismiss relationships that foster inequity and seek to destroy beloved community because you don't want to "rock the boat." It is not possible. The Lenten Discipline calls us to that kind of intentionality. And that kind of intentionality is hard. Could you leave those community damaging things along the roadside on this year's journey up to Jerusalem?

While on that journey to Jerusalem in the way the Gospel of Luke records it, a young man of wealth, who is unaware of himself, comes to Jesus and wishes to join the procession to the Holy City (Luke 18: 18-23). Jesus asks him to leave the most important thing to him along the side of the road. He is asked to part with his wealth. He could not do it. There is no judgement in Jesus, just the silent acknowledgement of the difficulty in letting yourself go. It's in the letting go of our "stuff" that we ultimately find what we desire and are able to move from brokenness to fulfillment.



Richardson, Jan. For Those Who Walked with Us, The Painted Prayerbook Special Edition, 2021.

Richard Rohr talked about that movement in a recent blog post, which he calls *The Great Chain of Being* – “We have been unwilling to see the Divine Image in those we judge to be inferior or unworthy: sinners, heretics, animals, things growing from Earth, and the Earth itself.”[3] He continues, “Once the Great Chain of Being was broken, we were soon unable to see the Divine Image in our own species, except for people just like us.”[4] Rohr describes how we got here by saying that we chose a “fragmented” and “dualistic” world instead of seeing the whole of creation. And this is my point. The Lenten Discipline calls us to renew our wholeness as disciples of Jesus created in the image of God. My friend has been transformed because she had the courage “to learn of the Lord.” My friend left something at the side of the road and refused to carry it anymore. In its place she

picks up her Cross daily and witnesses to the world.

Conversation

- What was the last journey you embarked on?
- Was it a solitary or corporate journey?
- Did you let anything go on the journey?
- Did you pick anything up and claim it as your own?
- In what ways has your life changed?

[1] To protect her identity I am not sharing her name or location

[2] Christianity Today: [Meet the 'Dones'](#)

[3] Center for Action and Contemplation: [Fr. Richard Rohr, The Great Chain of Being, 2.16.21](#)

[4] Ibid

Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Todd".

Rev. Dr. Todd D. Anderson, West Ohio Superintendent
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