

Easter 4C, April 25, 2010

Lections: Acts 9:36-43; Ps.23; Rev. 7:9-17; John 10:22-30

I had lunch with my friend Doris this week. We met as fellow artists in the Foyer Gallery community. We talked for a long time about art but we really began our conversation with our experiences of the sacred, those times when something changed in us deeply; geography had something to do with it, places of beauty – but more important it seemed was a sense of openness to what was right in front of us, taking time to sink deeply into the moment and respond. Doris is an award winning photographer and she has a great eye and an ability to notice; she takes her time to capture the right images.

Time is surely among the greatest gifts we are given by God. We often say that we don't have enough of it (I can't believe how hard it is for me to schedule a lunch!!) or perhaps we feel time slipping away from us. We want more time to do what we want to do but there is little left because we feel there is so much we ought to do. The tension between obligation and enrichment was captured by the ancient Greeks in their words *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos*, as it sounds, is related to chronological and is represented by clocks, calendars, deadlines, and birthdays. *Kairos* invokes transcendence, infinity, reverence, passion, joy, love and the sacred. We live in the *chronos* but we long for *kairos*. *Chronos* requires speed so it won't be wasted; *kairos* requires space so it might be savored.

Doris is hoping to get a grant so that she can pursue a project called sacred spaces. This won't be a photo essay of churches or temples or synagogues. Her goal is more adventurous – to ask people where their holy spaces are, including the places we spoke about. Her broad vision is wonderful; a holy space could be the chair where a wife or husband sit, the hospital room where a child was the recipient of life-changing surgery, the back of an ambulance, the tree planted at the cottage under which a favorite toy has been sheltered in its roots. Doris wants us to see the sacred from someone else's story; I hope she gets the grant.

Today's scripture lessons might do the same, give us an expanded sense of the sacred. A room where the weaving of Dorcas was laid out, the pastoral scene near a river from the psalm, an assembly of diversity where those who had offered their lives for justice had found a bit of a rest from the journey, and even the threshold place of conversation in the gospel where speaking and listening are intentional. The theological meaning of these four lessons is *kairos*, where time or its physical details are less important than the sacred opportunities to acknowledge the holy and to trust God who has graced it all.

"I shall not want," says the psalmist. What God has given is sufficient – life itself, communion and community with all of creation. The capacity to feed and to be fed, to savor, to cherish, to be accompanied, to trust that none of these times are neglected or unacknowledged are all gifts. The twenty third psalm is a beloved opportunity to rest in *kairos* time, to move deeply into the sacred. I am glad that it was considered an essential part of scripture to be memorized as a part of my childhood. Whether sung or said it brings peace and a sense of God's love undergirding all of life's experience.

The celebration and focus on Earth Day this week ask us to pay attention to water, to the ground which nurtures plants and animals and the complex web of creation, its sacred character. The renewal of marriage vows this morning for Chris and Melissa, next week's luncheon offering a welcome hospitality to those who have newly come to join this faith community, the time taken today to clean up this building and its grounds are all opportunities to notice the gifts of this time, this place, these people.

Our faith asks us for a willingness to experience – this journey is less about doctrines and creeds and forms, I believe. It is about living lives that are able to identify what is holy, transcendent, beautiful and full of meaning. Jesus was more to his disciples than a title hung around his neck or on a cross; he was how they learned to step into God, into kairos time.

My conversation with a friend who produces beauty from her hand, my experience in the garden – knees and all, the diversity in a group of poets called The Recipe at an antiviolence event at city hall, the opportunity to define myself when meeting new people of other faith traditions made a week of opportunity to experience more than just chronos. The last time I had an overwhelming kairos moment I was in France, in a little monastery which is a way station for travelers in pilgrimage to Compostelo. The former abbot was an artist who created lovely tapestries; the bookstore was great, the church simple and ordinary. But as I sat to say my prayers I was suddenly captured by God in a way I didn't expect. It wasn't an experience I expected; I had done nothing special except to sit, to be quiet, to begin a prayer. I fell into what Joseph Campbell would have called bliss. Really I fell into God or God's presence reached up and grabbed me. I can't call it a collapsing or an expanding; I only know it was a kairos time.

I don't know where that will happen for you this week or next; I do know that the occasion will give you joy and a sense of the holy, of the sacredness of the ground on which we travel to each other and to God. Time out of time and beyond time. A holy business we are in.

Amen+

The Rev. Dr. Linda Privitera