

Proper 8, year C
June 28, 2010, final Aboriginal Awareness, Metis Sunday

Lections: 2 Kings 2:1,2,6-14; Ps. 77:1,2,11-20; Gal. 5:1,13-25; Luke 9:51-62

While researching the texts for this week I came across a sermon I had written years ago touching on one of today's lessons and an experience from the Benedictine community at Weston Priory in Vermont where I will be on retreat this week.

“One particular Sunday morning at the Eucharist the monks walked in singing with their guitars as is their custom, but in their midst, actually in the middle of them - physically protected and surrounded by the brothers – was a Guatemalan refugee family that was being sheltered by the monks as a part of the Sanctuary movement. Songwriter Betsy Rose was there that day also and wrote a song about this event; it is entitled “Open the Door Again.”

Welcome cross the border all you weary freedom fighters
Oh my country born in freedom's name, open the door again.
To the children of our faded dream, keepers of the flame
We must not refuse the gifts they bring, open the door again.

Welcome Margarita and your children shining bright
Smuggled in a pickup truck under the rifles of the right
Your crime was teaching women how to read and how to write
And your husband disappeared one summer night.

Our winters are much colder here, the food is not your own.
Our place of worship is all we have to give you for a home.
And we cannot promise safety, they have broken other doors,
Pulled the children from the altar, nothing is sacred anymore...

We give our lives to work and prayer and the hearing of God's word
Now there's laughter in the chapel, your language fills our prayers.
You have taught us faith walks hand in hand with fear.”

Elisha on the road with Elijah, walking hand in hand with fear. It is easier to avoid that journey. Today's psalmist writes a lament about the hardness of that road and Jesus heading for Jerusalem seems to have few companions who can go the distance of leaving family behind, or letting go of griefs.

Today we celebrate the Metis people who have known the journey of those who left, who have had their own grief. Aboriginal women who married French men became disenfranchised, losing their status, no longer welcome on the reserve. Their husbands also had to leave their families and communities. They were called the road allowance people for they pitched their tents along the 1000 foot road allowance where the Canadian government allowed space for the road's expansion. Some settled close to the

stores where they sold their pelts, near the Hudson's Bay Company stores or the Northwest Company. From Ontario to BC, they became a nation only 15 years ago. No one could have known what faith would be required to walk such a road. Jesus, himself heading for his own sacrifice, seems struck by his own lack of rest or welcome.

In the letter to the church in Galatia, Paul says the yoke of slavery is not life-giving... "for freedom Christ has set us free, stand firm." Sometimes faith is not recognized as such. It is described as 'surviving,' 'hanging on,' or 'doing what you have to do.' And yet it somehow makes peace with the fear, moving alongside it, until eventually it is the one thing that remains. That kind of faith is dug from a deep center of wisdom and strength. And many of you have walked that road with relatives and friends and sometimes even strangers who became family.

Bondage takes many forms. We can fill our lives with a list of the terribles which Paul names – 'if we cannot depend on the love of God, we will find other forms of dependency,' says one writer. If, however, we choose the road of faith we will love our neighbors as ourselves and find the fruits of the Spirit as we are freed to love. Freedom to love and serve in the pattern and path of Jesus is God's intention for all of humanity.

I pray that like the monks of Weston we might learn how much love God has enabled us to give away. At this Eucharistic table, at the kitchen downstairs or the one at home, with all of those whose feet have walked in fear, in loss or loneliness, we place our hands in each other's and, opening the door again, we're on the road of faith.

Amen+

The Rev. Dr. Linda Privitera