

Homily, January 7, 2024

Wisdom 24:1-5a, 12-20; Psalm 141; Ephesians 3:1-1; Matthew 2:1-12

Silence. Have you ever been drawn to something because of its sheer beauty, its fragrance, colour or the atmosphere of the place? Maybe a food, or a flowering plant, maybe a sport, a newborn baby, forest in autumn, or a waterfall? Have you ever been overtaken by sudden tears or perhaps the need to bow down? To fall to your knees, to stay still and listen, maybe bend over to get closer to something or someone, perhaps to hear their last words? In other words, have you ever been one with that beauty, or won over by beauty?

I was in Jordan at some ruins that we were walking through and I came to one area, a room of some sort with no roof left, not much in the way of walls, but I was overcome with the feeling that I had to kneel on this mosaic floor. It was a holy place. I'm sure sacred rituals or prayer must have taken root there, maybe for millennia. It didn't matter to me that other tourists moved about or stood beside me, or that there were no instructions written anywhere to kneel. The space felt so holy I had to reverence it with my body, an acknowledgment of Wisdom's presence.

I noticed a theme of the supernatural, the mysterious in today's readings. Harry Maier of the Vancouver School of Theology, in a lecture I heard yesterday said, "God is in the business of communicating with us." In the first reading, Wisdom fashioned songs and gave off the scent of incense and a offered meal that tastes of forever. "I have yielded a

perfume like cinnamon. “I have spread my branches like terebinth, and my branches are glorious. “I am the mother of beautiful love, “Come to me. Eat your fill of my fruit.” What an invitation!

Then Paul in a letter from jail, recalls his dramatic encounter with Christ communicating with him in light and Christ’s holy, questioning and loving voice. Small Man Paul says “The gift of Creator’s great kindness came to me in a powerful way and created in me a desire to serve this good story.” It is a sacred vision he’s experienced.

Today’s gospel characters, the wisdomseekers listened to messages of their dreams, their inner intuitions and the night skies in order to come to the place of a cosmic child’s birth. A little person sent forth as the royalty which embraces the universe with love.

There is an Anishanabe teaching, I’m reminded of, that Creator’s thoughts in the darkness, the void before life came to this earth, in all its beauty, these thoughts of the Divine, of what Wisdom describes in that first reading, Creator’s thoughts were what became the physical manifestations of life on earth. According to this Elder’s teaching, the seeds, the leaves, the fruits, the animals are Creator’s thoughts brought into a physical reality. Humans embody the Great Spirit such that living our lives is how Creator’s thoughts can be felt and experienced by Creator as we receive and appreciate with our senses all of life.

A takeaway message for me today, is that spirituality, our sensing of beauty, involves much more than the mind, dogma, determination to do things right or morally. Spirituality also involves connection with earth’s

gifts through our senses. A manifestation, an epiphany of Holy Wisdom herself is in our midst like a newborn child.

I will play the final remarks of the Anishinabe Elder's teaching at the World Parliament of Religions. His central message is that "Everyone (an important word for today) has the right to feel good about who they are." Within that teaching is the one I mentioned above, that Creator experiences life through our interactions with the world, whether sight, taste, smell, sound or touch. All of creation is connected.

We all carry Creator's Spirit within us. This is the incarnation of Creator's love brought into the world. This is what draws the wise ones of the story to move through the uncertainties of foreign countries and dangers of conniving kings to arrive at a manger vulnerable with a baby so beautiful in spirit they had to kneel.

Jim Dumont, Onaubinisay "*He Who Walks Above the Ground*," from the Marten Clan, originates from Shawanaga First Nation, Georgian Bay. Onaubinisay says "Everyone has the right to feel good about who they are." And much more. Here's the end of his talk. (Find it here: LTIV.ca, Session 1 "Beginnings" 39:40 – 43:38).

Question for you today: Comment on anything from the liturgy or answer the question: When have you been in the presence of beauty of wisdom and noticed that gift profoundly?