

A Lenten Message From Your Rector

Dear Parish Family and Friends:

Thomas Merton claimed, “there is in all things . . . a hidden wholeness.” This is a quote I found in Parker J. Palmer’s book: *A Hidden Wholeness, The Journey Toward An Undivided Life*. After reading this quote I wondered how it reflected on Jesus as he abandoned the desert to begin the work of his ministry? Lent can certainly be a time when we seek to discover and bring out that “hidden wholeness” we all have within us. Most of us -I fear - go through life captive to our divided selves, never really allowing that hidden wholeness to fully surface.

Using himself as an example of the “divided self” Palmer writes: “I yearn to be whole, but dividedness often seems the easier choice. A still, small voice speaks the truth about me, my work, or the world. I hear it and yet act as if I did not. I withhold a personal gift that might serve a good end or commit myself to a project that I do not really believe in. I keep silent on an issue I should address or actively break faith with one of my own convictions. I deny my inner darkness, giving it more power over me, or I project it onto other people, creating “enemies” where none exist.” It takes enormous personal integrity and honesty to admit these things, and for myself I can only say “been there, done that” we all have.

One of the attributes I most admire about Jesus was his courage and integrity to be his true self. Thank you Jack Spong for pointing this out. That could only come about in a person who had discovered his deepest hidden wholeness. His 40-day journey into the desert undoubtedly took him to a place of completeness, and that is what we ultimately seek during this dreadfully sacred time in our liturgical calendar called Lent.

Who wants to be a divided self? I certainly don’t, it’s no fun, and it robs us of the joy of living. Palmer further explains that: “Wholeness does not mean perfection: it means embracing brokenness as an integral part of life.” Please, let’s bring Christ down to earth and acknowledge that he too probably experienced his own brokenness when he made his desert journey, how else could he have been tempted?

I struggle almost on a daily basis with the suffering I see around me in the world, be it caused by natural events such as the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, or “people made” scenarios such as the economic crisis we are living birthed by the greed of the divided selves of multiple corporate CEO’s from the financial sector. I also struggle with my own limitations and frustrations but Lent is a reminder that the desert experience can lead to new and deeper discoveries about ourselves. In the end it can take us to our hidden wholeness. It did for Jesus. Lent is not a journey to wallow in guilt and self-flagellation; it is a journey of liberation. There is a hidden wholeness in each of us.

Ash Wednesday marked the beginning of our Lenten journey, this most holiest of times, and as we move forward in penitence, self-reflection, prayer, and the certainty that we are moving towards wholeness, it behooves us to keep our focus on the Rabbi who showed

us the Way. Lent calls us to be true to our deepest and authentic selves. We are called to imitate Jesus in that regard.

Embrace the desert, and leave the divided self behind in the wilderness where it belongs. A hidden wholeness awaits us. Do we dare make the journey?

Blessed Lent!

The Rev. Wilfredo Benitez,
Rector