

Holy Play

A South Carolina Lutheran Via de Cristo Publication

“Knowing When to say When”

In last month publication of Holy Play, you were asked to consider the question, “Are we there yet?” This question along with Tom Ramsey’s verse from Chapter 15 verse 5 of the Gospel of John was received with positive response. So, let’s consider looking at this a little deeper.

Johns Gospel reads: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit.” Please allow me to speak from my heart and in doing so expose the human nature in me and possibly all of us.

For years while living in North Carolina, I remained in contact with dear brothers and sisters within the S.C. community. It did not take long to realize that S.C. Lutheran Via de Cristo was not running smoothly. When Linda and I decided we would be moving to South Carolina, deep within me was the reoccurring thought that I might be able to help in some way. This discernment did not go away, so, when I arrived, I called Sharon Crout, then Lay Director. As a result, I was elected to The Secretariat filling a one year unexpired term.

When we are called to be active branches of His vine, it is so easy to lose focus of where and from whom we get our nourishment. We become controlling and begin believing we know what is right and how it should be done. When that happens, our intent to be connected to the vine abruptly ends, even though we appear to remain attached to Him.

By the time you read this message, Linda and I will have moved returning to live in Hendersonville, North Carolina. One of the purposes for which we moved to Murrells Inlet was to be with our grandchildren. Their parents because of a great job opportunity with Chick-fil-A required they move to Atlanta, taking with them our grandkids. Imagine that!

I have found it literally intoxicating over the last few month listening to the Trickster tell me why I should remain a member of the Secretariat Committee in S.C. while living in N.C. I could fill a complete page of reasons and cause you to question my spiritual sanity for such thoughts, and maybe even laugh a bit at such self-centered thinking. Yet, all these thoughts are designed to separate me from His vine.

We know with our head that this is God’s movement, not ours, and that we are to listen to His will, but do we really know this truth with our heart. This is such a constant struggle this battle between our head (Trickster driven) and our heart (Holy Spirit driven).

Human selfishness, greed, power and control surround our every thought. We are in a battle we cannot win. When we succumb to this trick and it is so to fall into this trap, suddenly

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there is a major shift and everything changes. We believe we know all the answers and begin controlling outcomes our way. It becomes a battle of my way and others are wrong.

We just completed a national election and learned that there are ultra-conservatives and ultra-liberals fighting each other chasing that illusive power and control. Both believe their way is the only way, while the majority of Americans are moderate thinking and caught in the middle of both factions.

The election process for Secretariat has been extended because of a lack of candidates willing to serve. At this writing, I do not know the outcome, but this I know. If we allow God to guide each of us, all will be fine. Remember, we are not there yet, nor will we ever.

The Secretariat Committee will be seeking to elect four new members and one Spiritual Director. Also, there is a smooth transition taking place where there will be a new web master, with the committee's intent to modernize and updated the web site. Dale Knight, we thank you for your years of service with the web site and as a member of the Secretariat Committee. And to Sharon Crout, Vivian Knight, Bob Benjamin, I know first-hand how much the community appreciates and thanks you for your years of service. Enjoy your deserved retirement.

It would be easy for me to conjure up the self-centered thought that at least in my mind and for all 'my' justifiable reasons, I should remain on the Secretariat Committee or from a distance try educating the committee to do things my way. Those reasons would again be driven by the Trickster.

Knowing when to say when is not always easy. We all feel a strong need to be needed and valued. In many ways, this can be our central identity. When this happens it then becomes all about us and our personal power trip. And then we put God in a box and sit on our self-created throne. Not good for us, not the community and this act goes in direct conflict with God being the vine and us the branches.

So as Dale, Vivian, Sharon, Bob, and I step far away, who will answer the call? Is God calling you to be a healthy branch to be nourished by His vine? Pray, then listen to the Holy Spirit's discerning call for you. I did and I know my time serving here has come to an end.

As we move closer to the Christmas celebration, my prayer for each of you is simple. "May you always see Christmas through the eyes of a child." Peace...Gus Martschink

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