



Redeemer Review

The Episcopal Church of the Redeemer
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From the Vicar

Notes from the Coach: The Merry Month of May

Every Wednesday, as a way of focusing our minds for Bible study, I've taken to finding and sharing a poem. Reading poetry, especially with others, is different than reading prose. Poetry is suggestive rather than informational, metaphorical rather than literal -- what did T. S. Eliot really mean when he wrote "April is the cruellest month?" It is, therefore, the perfect doorway into the equally suggestive and spiritual world of sacred story. It's been a long time since I've studied poetry in any depth and preparing for these weekly meetings has become my latest joy. For example, did you know that, among serious modern poets at least, there seem to be far more poems about winter than any other season, followed by autumn, then summer, with spring taking up a rather pathetic last place? This surprised me, because I expected to find volumes of spring poetry -- the return to new life, flowers breaking open the dormant earth, the awakening of love. Chaucer's medieval *Parliament of Fowles* was an old time spring classic. But today's poetic world is spare and lean and seems to have little time for the riotous world of spring.

I noticed this because as Christians we are people of spring. Not just because of Easter, though Easter is the foundation of our faith. We are people of the spring, because as Christians we do not shy away from life with all its diversity, complexity and fragrance. Spring is the time of year that most accurately reflects the wild diversity of the human condition. There can be no cover ups when everything is coming out to bloom, or as Jesus said, "I will reveal what is hidden since the foundation of the world."

On the second Sunday of Easter, I talked a little about Earth Day, about how our faith hallows the world in which we live. It's a theme I plan to explore in more depth and joy during the summer, culminating in our Labor Day camping trip at Hendy Woods. Whatever literally happened in creation we will probably never know, but the Church's teaching that life comes from God has vast implications for the way in which we live lives. Life is holy. It is a gift. The world with its air, water, food, minerals, sky, oceans, mountains and trees is also a gift. Like the trees, the fish and the animals, we are living, organic creatures, which is why much of the so called religious objection to evolution seems to me objectionable. In my mind no teaching better expresses the beautiful interconnectedness between us and the world than evolution, just as the teaching that Jesus is both fully God and fully human expresses to me that my physical life is divine. More and more, however, we are talking about ourselves, each other and the world, not as living, God touched creatures, but as machines. "Hard wired," "functional," "programmed," these are machine terms. Medicine is often seen as "fixing" rather than healing. The gift of the earth is too often viewed as "resources." How do we make sense of all this?

Most of us go back to nature when we need to find refreshment, peace, discernment. Especially in Marin, this sense of ourselves as beings in nature is very strong. Our daily walks and runs through the trees are times of prayer. While other Bay Area counties slept, we set aside vast tracts of open space for our children's legacy. Good for us! I wonder if Redeemer may be being called to a ministry in nature. A thought to share in the Spring.

Perhaps it is no accident that spring is the season in which the Diocese of California is electing its eighth bishop. By the time you get this latest issue of the *Review*, the election will have most likely been accomplished. Something new will grow. All that we need to do is keep the faith. We are a people of the Spring. It is in our very institutional nature to thrive.

Rev. Carol