



Sunday September 6, 2010

Pentecost 14

Father Joe's Message

Thunder Shirt

Good Morning again Saints, those with us here in our newly repainted All Saints Sanctuary, and those worshipping with us virtually on Facebook Live. No matter by what means you are joining with us this morning, we are grateful, and we treasure the diversity you bring into our community of faith.

We have been gifted an interesting set of Scripture Stories to work with this morning. We heard them this morning and I hope you found them both diverse and challenging. From the Old Testament, we have the Prophet Ezekiel; we have a piece from Paul's Letter to the Romans and lastly some telling words from Matthew. So, here we go: Today's Message is entitled "The Thunder Shirt."

In our small group meeting this past week, our own Martha Stephenson took us on a learning journey about a beautiful and challenging way to engage our scriptural Sacred Stories. It is an old monastic practice that has deep spiritual roots, emanating from the earliest centuries of the Christian Church being developed, practiced and perfected by such early Church thinkers as Origen, Ambrose, Augustine and Benedict. In Latin, the practice is called, *Lectio Divina* which translates as Divine Reading.

There are basically four steps in the practice of *Lectio Divina* that can be described in several ways. The classic and traditional steps are:

Step 1	Read	Bite
Step 2	Meditate	Chew
Step 3	Pray	Savor
Step 4	Contemplate	Digest / Absorb

There is another, much more contemporary way of describing Divine Reading that I really like, and it goes like this...

- Step 1 Bite
- Step 2 Chew
- Step 3 Savor
- Step 4 Digest / Absorb

And today, I'd like to add a new 5th Step to the process, Wear.

"What? Did I hear Father Joe right, wear?" Yes, you heard correctly, Wear, as in "put on." Let's go deeper and have a look.

Being wrapped and swaddled has been comforting to us from the earliest times of our being in the physical world. It seems like a fussy child can always be comforted by a good, tight swaddle. Psychologists and physicians seem to think that it may be related to our early times in our very tight womb space capsule, where we were warm and safe, fed and nurtured...and protected. The next opportunity to test the wrapping theory is the cradle board. This amazing piece of Indigenous technology allowed mothers to wrap, swaddle, protect, transport, **put on and wear... that which they loved.** In many indigenous languages the words for "I wrap you" and "I love you" are identical. Another translation is, "I put you on...I wear you."

This very same idea is with us in contemporary society as well. The "putting on" or wearing of something that not only protects us but nurtures and soothes us at the same time. Each 4th of July, dog lovers all over the United States purchase and use The Thunder Shirt to help soothe their animals from the noise and trauma of our annual fireworks assault. Parents and specialists who work with young children on the autism spectrum have also realized that a simple weighted vest, snuggled tightly can calm and soothe an anxious child through a troubling time. I know one little one who always calls it "putting on their superhero armor" to help them through a difficult patch. And who of us hasn't delighted with the comfort and peace of sleeping under a weighted blanket. Saints, all examples of one "putting on" and "wearing" that which both comforts and protects.

Paul talks about this clearly in his Letter to the Romans this morning. Like Jesus did several years prior to Paul's Letter, the Jesus Movement message is reduced to its lowest common denominator. As Paul says clearly this morning, **"For the**

one who loves another has fulfilled the Law.” There are those times when this Priest disagrees strongly with Paul...but today certainly isn't one of them.

Romans 13:8-14

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet;” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Besides this, you know what time it is. Let us put on the armor of light; let us live honorably and put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, just like last Sunday, our Jesus Movement message is ringing out loud, clear and strong. “Put on...wear” the armor of Light, put on...wear our Lord Jesus Christ. That which both protects and comforts, shields and soothes. Let us put on our “Superhero armor vest;” our Thunder Shirts, wear our weighted blankets; our cradle boards and swaddle ourselves in the protection and blessing of Creator, of Spirit and of Jesus. Put on and wear this Medicine proudly, “the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.” The Prophet Ezekiel this morning in challenged by Creator....speak out! Do not be silent...Be my voice...Speak what I have told you to speak! And in Matthew today, whenever two or three are gathered together, wrapped in the “armor of light” I am in the midst of them.”

So then, here Saints is the Lectio Divina challenge that I have for you today and every day. Before you start your day, before you go out into the world, before you greet your family...before anything, take this phrase from Paul today and hold it close as the Sacred Medicine that it is.

“For the one who loves another, has fulfilled the Law.”

Bite it....take a big, juicy chomp

Chew on it....roll it around, grind it up, release all the flavor

Savor it...taste the nuance and all the flavor notes it possesses

Absorb it....allow it to become part of you

And lastly wear it!

Put this Medicine, this simple truth on, button it up, zip it tight, strap it solidly to our bodies, minds and spirits. Feel the protection...feel the soothing comfort. It is our “Armor of Light”, our Spiritual “Thunder Shirt.”

Each day before we enter the world to be Creators, eyes, ears and hands...as we engage the world to Gather-Transform and Send. Make sure we have everything we need...Keys – Wallet- Phone- Mask – and now our Thunder Shirt.

The Elders tells us...I wrap you, I love you, I wear you....Kitahole!