

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, May 17th 2016

This morning I watched a brief video created by filmmaker Louie Schwartzberg (TED Conference 2015, Vancouver; "Mysteries of the Unseen World") which filled me with wonder and awe for the intricacies and mystery of creation. With time lapse photography we are able to watch a mushroom "grow" and see the "aliveness" of our earth-home; through the "eye" of a high-speed camera we can observe that a dragonfly has four wings – and see them all moving in different directions at the same time; through the electron microscope we are able to see the beauty and delicacy of a butterfly egg.

I found the readings for today quite jarring after this beautiful video that magnified the complexity, unity and harmony of our created world. The letter of James speaks of the conflicts within this early Christian community and within each person that divide, destroy and separate us from each other and from God. "Do you not know that to be a lover of the world means enmity with God?" In this context, it is important to understand that "world" refers to the "world" of the prior age - before Christ, or the "world" of desires that lead us away from God – not the "world" of creation. Humility is the path that leads us home. The word "humble" is from the word "humus" – meaning "earth" or "from the earth". When we are "grounded" in creation, when we know that we are creature, born of the earth and returning to the earth, we are humble. We remember who we are, and to whom we belong - and that we do not create ourselves nor anything that is in existence. We are in harmony with our earth, one another and we are surrendered to the Divine Presence, to Grace.

The Gospel of Mark begins with Jesus teaching his disciples: "The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise." Not understanding, the disciples resort to arguing amongst themselves about who is the "greatest." How very familiar! When faced with mystery and things we don't understand, we talk about something we can measure and more easily "get our arms around!" Let's talk about who's the greatest – who has the most wealth, the most votes, the most power to influence, the most status, the biggest grants, the longest resume, etc.

Jesus has another idea – the one who is the greatest is the one who serves. And then putting his arms around a child, says "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me." His illustration of "service" is an interesting one! To be of service is to receive our lives and all of creation as a child does – with directness, wonder and humility. To be of service is to embrace the child within us – the one who is non-judgmental, open, lacking the hard shell of life's conditioning. To be of service is to receive the child within that needs tender care and a listening presence, not harshness. To be of service is to receive the child in others that needs understanding and guidance, not judgment and punishment.

Ignatius of Loyola writes in the "Principle and Foundation" of the Spiritual Exercises "The human person is created to praise, reverence, and serve God Our Lord, and by doing so, to save his or her soul. All other things on the face of the earth are created for human beings in order to help them pursue the end for which they are created."

Today I am grateful for the technology that, at least for a few moments, has allowed me to notice what usually speeds by; to notice what is ordinarily too small for my eyes to see; to notice the growth in what ordinarily looks like "nothing is happening." Each of these moments has helped me approach the

world with openness and wonder, and to remember who I am, and to whom I belong.

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