



Creation Season

Seventh Sunday of Easter, Year A, May 4, 2008

Water: Our cleanliness/footwashing
Humans can be the enemy of the rest of creation

Information and Reflections for Homilists, Liturgists, and Clergy of the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota

There are several Themes for this Sunday:

Lectionary themes

Those who trust in God recall the former deliverance
Gospel theme: So that they may be one

Creation themes

Our cleanliness/footwashing
Humans can be the **enemy** of the rest of creation

Revised Common Lectionary Readings:

Acts 1: 6-14
Psalm 68: 1-10, 33-36
1 Peter 4: 12-14, 5: 6-11
John 17:1-11

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. [Jesus] got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"

John 13:1, 4-9

Accent by the author of the reflection

How often we fail to recognize our own culpability in the sacrilege of the world. We imagine that the destruction of the environment is the fault of our neighbor. Global warming is China's fault. Overpopulation centers in India. Lax environmental protections are found in Mexico.

When Jesus, dressed as a servant and with basin and towel in hand, came to Peter, Peter's response was, "You will never wash my feet." We can surmise from the passage that Jesus came first to Peter. As a leader among the disciples, Peter was the first disciple to be bathed by his Lord. Or was it because Peter was the most resistant? "Never!" Peter said. It can't be that I need that kind of attention. Surely I'm not the one who needs to be washed! When Jesus says that all will be washed (which we might be able to infer could be either 'washed in the blood,' or 'washed in baptism') Peter knows that he doesn't want to be left out.

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Water: Our cleanliness/footwashing – Humans can be the enemy of the rest of creation

21st century Americans cannot be isolationists. We are part of the web that is our world. Economically, socially, educationally, recreationally, and environmentally we are connected to the whole. We can no more disassociate ourselves from the economics of Bangladesh than Amish schoolchildren in Pennsylvania can be distanced from gun violence.

Real questions of today include:

How do we live so that the species upon which our lives depend will continue to live?

Are we done living so sanctimoniously that we don't think we need other parts of God's creation?

What are the new and renewed ways we honor the Creator and creation that bring integrity and justice to all life forms?

We cannot stand in judgement of creation by being the arbiter of the relative value of a species or eco-system that may seem irrelevant to our life of the moment. But moving to an ethic of environmental justice is not about being goody two-shoes. It is rather about letting Jesus wash our feet, thereby reawakening in us the awareness of our rightful place in creation.

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The Minnesota Episcopal Environmental Stewardship Commission (MEESC) has prepared Creation Season materials for the Season of Easter, 2008, with a focus on water. If you find the information on these inserts to be of interest, you may wish to visit the MEESC website for more information (www.env-steward.com). Members of MEESC are available to visit your congregation to assist you and them in an environmental stewardship walk.