

Grace

NOTES

A Letter from the Dean

My dear Friends

Turning our Questions into a Quest:

Many of us (although, I suspect, too few of us) have the privilege of winding down a bit over the summer. It's a time for vacations and for getting away. Some of us find it hard to slow down and I was struck by a phrase from the English poet, the late Philip Larkin who wrote, "I don't want to go around pretending to be me." When we slow down many of our pretenses are exposed (that's why so many of us are addicted to velocity!). On the other hand, it is a great relief to give up the pretense and know something of the joy of an integrated life.

I was sent Robert W. Fuller's book, *Somebodies and Nobodies: Overcoming the Abuse of Rank*, by a friend a couple of months ago. Fuller quotes the late Wallace Stegner who said, "The guts of any significant fiction – or autobiography – is an anguished question." Fuller comments, "The same is true of our lives. At the heart of every life lies a question and, like the heroes in novels, many of us recall exactly where we were and how we felt the moment it first struck us. Our questions generate our individuality. Through our response to them, we define ourselves, we become someone in particular. Long before we're even aware of them, they shape our every move. A question generates a quest and a quest crystallizes an identity, transforming us into someone who, regardless of how others see us, we experience as somebody."

He goes on, "In the core of our being, we all feel open and vulnerable, even when others view us as a somebody. In those places where we're most alive, we are questions, not answers. These change as we age. One has to listen carefully, again and again, to detect new ones, which usually announce themselves in whispers. *At any age, our questions define our growing edge.*



So long as we've got a single one, we're not dead. If all we have are answers, we might as well be."

Two Conflicting Views of Religion:

Here is expressed the defining differences between two conflicting views of religion – indeed of life itself. Many people look to religion as that which answers all their questions and if we have all the answers we might as well be dead. Let me repeat Fuller's comment: In those places where we're most alive, we are questions, not answers. Such a thought is anathema to many religious people. And we all "die" a little bit when we are so afraid that we close our minds and hearts. The wonderful adventure of being human has to do with keeping the great questions alive and moving deeper and deeper into them so that questions are transformed into a quest. The old name for this was *Peregrinatio*.¹

Peregrinatio is almost untranslatable "but its essence is caught in the ninth-century story of three Irishmen drifting over the sea from Ireland for seven days, in coracles without oars, coming ashore in Cornwall and then being brought to the court of King Alfred. When he asked them where they had come from and where they were going they answered that they 'stole away because we wanted for the love of God to be on pilgrimage, we cared not where.' ... There is no specific end or goal such as that of reaching a shrine or a holy place . . . a passionate conviction that they must undertake what is essentially an inner journey. Ready to go wherever the Spirit might take them, seeing themselves as *hospites mundi*, 'guests of the world,' what they are seeking is the place of resurrection, the resurrected self, the true self in Christ, which is for all of us our true home." And *all pro amore Christi* – for the love of Christ.

The cost? Becoming a stranger to all that is familiar and safe. The enemies of the *peregrinatio* are thoughts which encourage us to be competitive and comparative and which cause us to lose touch with gratitude and thanksgiving.

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Taking a vacation from the self!

When I think of the great Quest Abraham and Sarah immediately come to mind. "Free men, like nomads, are those who do not know where they are going," wrote Olivier Revault D'Allonnes.² "Abraham is the sedentary man who becomes a nomad, the man of the city who leaves it for the wide open spaces. Why? To escape what Brecht will call the Jungle of Cities, to be no longer an extra cog in the machine, in short to say no and by this very movement to set himself up and affirm himself." This is what it is to be human: to refuse. A human being is one who has a place of refusal, of negation, of criticism. Saying No to slavery and Yes to freedom (to God).

So, you might think of your summer differently this year. By all means slow down and take a break but how about going deeper and take a vacation from velocity and the self. Be like those Irish pilgrims who stole away because they wanted for the love of God to be on pilgrimage, they cared not where. Refuse to be a cog in the machine. Refuse to be programmed. Let's be part of a cooperative universe and resist a competitive one.

Deep Connection and Protective Charity:

John of Salisbury, the twelfth century medieval philosopher, wrote about a coherent universe in which all the parts supported each other: "For the creative Trinity, the one and true God, has so ordered the parts of the universe for the sake of a more firmly joined connection and protective charity that each one requires the assistance of the others and a defect in one is repaired by the others, insofar as each individual part is like a member of the other individual parts. All things are, therefore, incomplete if they are disconnected from one another, but otherwise they are perfected if they are associated, because everything stands in a firm relation of reciprocal aid."

If we take a real vacation (and even those of us who cannot get away can take a vacation from the self every day) we might come back refreshed and ready to be co-creators with God of a healed and glorious world. The world is in need of pilgrims who understand deep connection and travel *pro amore Christi*.

With love and prayers,
Alan Jones, dean

¹ See Esther de Waal, *The Celtic Way of Prayer*, New York: Doubleday, Image Books, 1996.

² See Martin Marty's *Context*, April 15, 2003.

Spiritual Gifts Workshop

As part of our ongoing support of the amazing array of ministries at Grace Cathedral, Congregation Council is developing a new workshop, "Discerning Your Spiritual Gifts." The workshop is responding to a particular need frequently expressed. Specifically, congregation members often initially choose a ministry based on early enthusiasm or a particular opportunity. As our involvement with congregational life deepens, however, it's helpful to have a more thoughtful approach to matching up our gifts with specific ministries.

The seminar will be led by Canon Fran Tornquist and facilitated by lay catechist leader Scott Elsishans. The inaugural session, scheduled for Sunday, June 22nd, from 12:45 to 3:00 p.m., is designed as an extension of the Inquirers Class process. A repeat performance, scheduled for Sunday, September 14th, will be open to all congregation members. That's a week after our annual fall celebration, Congregation Sunday. So come learn more about the ministries of Grace Cathedral on September 7th, and then determine which might be the most fulfilling for you on the 14th! For additional information, please contact Mary Wood, Associate for Congregational Life, at 415-749-6327, or maryw@gracecathedral.

Lunch and Conversation With the Vice-Dean & Canon Pastor

Sunday, June 15 1:00-2:00 p.m.
Chapter House Dining Room

Several Sundays each year we offer an opportunity to have conversation with the Dean and other members of the Chapter over a light lunch of pizza or sandwiches. This is an excellent time for old-timers and newcomers alike to get better acquainted with our staff and programs.

Pastoral care and oversight of the many programs and ministries that make up our vibrant congregation are among the areas where the Rev. Fran Tornquist exerts her leadership. Grace Cathedral plays many roles in our diocese, in our city, and to the countless visitors who come here as tourists and pilgrims. Canon Tornquist serves as the head of the congregation who call this their church home. Come to listen and to discuss this compelling role played by the Cathedral. RSVPs are not necessary, but for further information, contact Mary Wood, Associate for Congregational Life, 415-749-6327, or maryw@gracecathedral.org.