

An Experience of Healing and Reconciliation: Thoughts On A Process

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NOTES;

- Everyone here lives with the experience of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, ‘God among us’. We as individuals and as the Anglican tradition journey into the mystery of the Holy Spirit, which will guide us in the Truth and Reconciliation process.
 - A learned theologian gave a sermon at St. Mary’s Metchosin about the Trinity – he got up, said ‘It’s a mystery’ and then sat down.
 - I’m taking longer, but I declare also that ‘It’s a mystery!’ Alleluia!
- What are the plural commandments that Jesus calls us to keep? #11 is ‘Love others as I have loved you’ – an extended form of family love. Were the others #1 to #10? Or were they new commandments that the Gospels don’t mention. I say that we do not and cannot know, and
 - that’s more than OK,
 - it’s central to the Christian experience. Let me explain:
- The ideal modern history is a 24/7 video of all that was said and done. The Gospels – not so much! But, even if they were a three year 24/7 video, Jesus said that there is more for us to learn of God than he could teach in ministry. There is anticipation and mystery in our faith.
- Our Christian tradition grows over personal and generational time, as we stretch ourselves to understand God’s love and will. What seemed acceptable, normal and even wise in one age may not be so in another age. Jesus did not directly attack the institution of slavery, but the Christian William Wilberforce did with brilliant force and conviction. There is a lesson from that for us and the residential schools issues.
- How does the Advocate, the spirit of truth , the Holy Spirit affect us and those impacted directly and indirectly by residential schools?
 - No one knows everything. The wisdom of the group is greater than the wisdom of any single person. On Vancouver Island, there is a collision of continental plates, which cause earthquakes and volcanoes, and the pattern of the world changes. It is the same with the collision of the First Nations and immigrant cultures.
 - There are people here with family members married into First Nation communities, and there may be some with First Nation ancestors. This is not about them and us. There is a deep overlap that comes from time and sharing space on earth. There are also differences, and we usually concentrate on those – but don’t let the differences hide the sharing.

- Allow me to talk about my thoughts on First Nations, the peoples, the challenges, the issues among our neighbours.
 - Canada's historical experience has important differences from the United States. We were a trading people first, and agriculture came not at all, or much later. Traders need friendly relations with people to do business; farmers need 'empty' land. Children came from marriage, not from slavery.
 - First Nations cultures
 - Hierarchy
 - Elders
 - Family/friends
 - Sometimes: Hatfield's and McCoy's
 - Reserves and urban areas (maintaining culture in a dispersed community)
 - Truth and Reconciliation
 - South Africa and Bishop Tutu
 - National (so what?)
 - Local
 - Can I 'look me in the eye and apologize'? Should I? Why?
- Beyond individual tragedies, there were some common, or group, tragedies. One is the difference to family life of deciding to send a child to a residential school, and an external authority taking a child to a residential school.
- Brother John is an Anglican monk (!). Let me finish with a story he told me on Wednesday. Over a decade ago, at the invitation of Bishop John Hannah, an adopted Nisga'a, Brother John began to attend the Elders' Lunch among Vancouver Island First Nations. A band hosts the lunch, and people from many Nations attend. At first, it was very awkward for him. He received a lot of anger born of the residential school issues of abuses and weakened families. Gradually, over years, he grew to know people, and they him. Now Brother John is on the Board of Directors of the Elders' Lunch.
- Will your story and my story be the same? At one level, clearly not. Each of us is unique in gifts and DNA, and our life experiences also differ. God was there with Brother John and the elders, as He is everywhere, and with us.
 - A deep tragedy of residential schools is that good, Christian people tried to make their FN neighbour to be like them. Let's not make that mistake.

- I believe that we can explore truth and reconciliation with gentleness and reverence, as Paul said in the reading today. If we suffer, let it be for doing good. When we face God, is there anything else you would rather have on your heart?